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NEW MALE STUDIES – AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2 – 2017



PREFACE

Welcome to New Male Studies, Volume 6, Issue 2, the second issue for 2017. This issue sees the *Journal* continue live up to its name as an International Journal by offering challenging and thought-provoking submissions this time from the USA, the UK, New Zealand, Denmark and Germany.



While looking forward to the new issue we are also saddened to see the departure of the Journal founder and inaugural Editor-In-Chief, Professor Miles Groth. The editorial staff, academe, our readers and male studies owe a debt of gratitude for Professor Groth's courage in mounting a Journal that offers a forum, to explore the male-experience unencumbered by the restraints of political correctness and the glib gender-political doctrine of the post-modern era. While Professor Groth is stepping aside from an active editorial role with the Journal, he will remain connected in the capacity of *Emeritus* Editor-in-Chief.



With regard to the Journal's future, we are delighted to announce that Professor Groth will be succeeded by Professor Dennis Gouws PhD. Dr Gouws is a Professor of English at Springfield College in Massachusetts, U.S.A. and a Lecturer in English at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, U.S.A. He has resident status in Australia, and lives in Canberra for several months of the year, working with Australian colleagues in the fields of male health and male studies. He serves on the editorial board of *The International Journal of Family Research and Policy* and on the advisory board of *The Foundation for Male Studies*. His recent publications include "Manhood and Mettle in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and



The Mill on the Floss: Male Characters Negotiating Victorian Material Culture.” *The Confidential Clerk*. (Centre for Victorian Studies, Jadavpur University, India) and “Orientalism and David Hockney’s Male-Positive Imaginative Geographies.” *Oriental Interiors: Identities, Performance, Space*. (John Potvin, Ed.)

INTRODUCTION

Professor Groth’s last Issue as Chief Editor explores topics including sexual harassment, post traumatic stress in returned servicemen, divorce, male circumcision, male gynaecomastia, relationships, and male child abuse. As always, the authors present their positions with well-reasoned argument underpinned by considered thought, sound evidence and in selected cases, lived experience.

Issue 6.2 opens with a thoughtful essay by *Paul Nathanson*, who as co-author with Katherine Young, has penned several books that explore misandry in the modern era. Paul posits that while sexual-harassment scandals are good news for women they are bad news for men because they unfairly tar all men with the same brush and place them on trial, collectively, in the court of public opinion. In these days of social media and the ritual outrage that often accompanies it, neither the presumption of innocence let alone the presentation of evidence is afforded. He proposes a new way of thinking about harassment, which while holding (individual) men accountable for the sexual harassment of women men, also makes women accountable for the identity harassment of men.

In a first for the Journal, we publish a rebuttal to an article in the same issue. In this case from *Katherine Young*—Nathanson’s long time co-author—who among her other concerns provides response to what she fears is Nathanson’s trivialization of several types of sexual harassment, and that his doing so will simply fuel the fire of misandry and ultimately deny justice to both men and women. She remarks that Nathanson takes only rape and violence seriously and trivialises other forms of harassment. Among other issues Young is dismissive of the implication that if women wear provocative clothing they are themselves responsible for the sexual harassment that might ensue. Similarly, Young points out the inconsistencies in Nathanson’s



explication of ‘double-talk’ as it relates to sexual behaviour between men and women including in the workplace.

The next article is a research piece by *Gary Senecal* and *MaryCatherine McDonald* that explores why current treatment strategies for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among combat veterans remains difficult to treat. They posit, using data from a phenomenological case study of a decorated war veteran, that sub-optimal treatment results from both a failure to look critically at the theoretical underpinnings of the disorder as well as the tendency to look to reductionist explanations and treatments.

In the following article *Gerhard Amendt* expands on the hidden perspectives in the discourse of divorce. He posits that the political discourse about the consequences of divorce is dominated to a large extent by clichés about fathers (Unwilling father) and mothers (Malicious mother) and discounts the impact on the children. Among his propositions is that in divorce proceedings and settlements, children are the real losers because of their parents’ inability to deal with conflict, which plays out in an adversarial court system, often to their detriment. The oft result is fathers given limited access to their children and children to their fathers, yet still with the expectation that fathers are expected to provide for their now estranged family, which often then results in support disputes. Amendt remarks that the limited measure of understanding and empathy afforded divorced fathers in places like the family court and at youth welfare offices, denies the root causes of ensuing conflicts, denies reality and hampers solution-oriented action.

From the subject of divorce we move to two articles dealing with circumcision. The first by Drs *Lindsay Watson* and *Tom Golden*, presents the results of a study evaluating the experiences of 22 men suffering grief as a result of circumcision . They found that the emotional turmoil arising in some men following circumcision is an under-recognised cause of male body-loss grief, and under-acknowledged when compared to the grief attributed by female ‘genital modification’. They found that therapists were reluctant to accept that the grief was real, were unaware of foreskin functions, denied circumcision had physical or psychological sequelae and tended to minimize patient grief using humor, cultural aesthetics, controversial health benefits, sexism and an erroneous understanding of penile anatomy and sexual function. Recommendations to improve



therapeutic outcomes are provided. The second article by independent researcher *Steve Moxon*, explores the motivation for genital modification (GMO as he terms it) in both males and females. Moxon proffers that GMO for both males and females functions proximally in both sexes to denude sexual sensitivity, reducing propensity to engage in sex, and is designed to impede the likelihood of sex outside marital relations. He posits that the distal function of GMO diverges: that male GMO is controlling, whereas female GMO is 'honest signaling' of future fidelity. Moreover, contrary to accepted wisdom, he presents compelling evidence that GMO in females is both performed and advocated overwhelmingly by females, and that GMO advocated by males is directed at males only.

The Issue's next offering is a tragic tale by *Daniel O'Ciardha*, of child neglect and abuse, including sexual abuse inflicted on an innocent 'paper boy' from a poor, alcohol-saturated Irish household in the US Midwest rust belt during the 1960s and 70s. With no senior familial or sibling support, this evocative memoir describes the lasting trauma resulting from the experiences and the slow and painful emergence to a life of some normality.

Dr Howard Siegal, a retired plastic surgeon specializing in breast surgery offers up the next paper on the subject of Gynaecomastia, or female breast tissue development in males. In it he explains that gynecomastia is more common than generally appreciated and that it affects boys' and young adolescent males' lives emotionally and socially as well as physically. He advances that a better understanding of the causes of 'female breasts' in males is important in ensuring those affected receive the correct information about the condition and are aware of the range of options for its treatment.

In the penultimate offering of Issue 6.2, Gerhard Amendt returns this time with a considered piece on the potential dismal future of gender relations stemming from the 'ritual outrage' arising from memo¹ by disenfranchised Google™ employee, James Damore. Dr Amendt suggests that it is time to dispel the intellectually unsophisticated gender-political doctrine that alleges differences between men and women are to be attributed only to sexism. While

¹ A link to the 'offending' full memo is provided in the article for those interested.



acknowledging, as does Damore, that men and women are different in many regards, he suggests that when given equal chances, differences in choice of the life course, including career choices, will by no means disappear but rather increase. In an egalitarian society women will still never be like men and men never like women, and that political and institutional efforts to create equality, are doomed to fail

Last but not least, is another photographic essay from renowned photographer and visual artist *Jan H Andersen*. In this powerful offering Jan presents another beautiful set of images this time exploring the sometimes distorted view of the boy from both within and without.

We hope you enjoy the issue.

Best wishes,



Gary Misan PhD
Production Editor

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IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

Acknowledging Sexual Harassment and Identity Harassment

Paul Nathanson¹



ABSTRACT:

The sexual-harassment scandals are good news for women but bad news for men--not merely for the men who actually harassed women but for all men. All men are on trial, collectively, in the court of public opinion. And that court neither requires nor allows the presumption of innocence (let alone the presentation of evidence). At issue are two things: the absence of a voice for men in the public square, specifically as men, and the inability of boys and men to create a healthy collective identity in the face of societal indifference at best and implacable hostility at worst. This essay begins by discussing significant moral and intellectual problems in the fallout from these scandals. It continues by outlining a new way of thinking about harassment, one that not only holds men accountable for the sexual harassment of women (or other men) but also makes women accountable for the identity harassment of men.

Keywords: sexual harassment, identity harassment, gender, sex, misogyny, male studies, men's studies, feminism, ideological feminism, women, Me too, Believe Women

INTRODUCTION

The title of this essay originated in three closely related principles of Hillel the Elder, who lived a generation before Jesus. “If I am not for myself,” he asked, “who will be? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”² All three questions would be very helpful to ask now in connection with relations between men and women (or any other groups in conflict). I have chosen the third question for my title, however, because the allegations of sexual harassment by powerful men, beginning with those against Harvey Weinstein, make it so urgent for men to think independently about harassment of all kinds. What follows is not primarily about the alleged or admitted behavior of these men, because no one could possibly defend that. What follows is primarily about the *fallout* from those allegations: the *public discourse about men*—that is, about men in general.³ The time for doing these things is never convenient, of course, or without risk. But the cost of hiding from conflict is abandoning hope.

Beginning in the first week of October 2017, a quickly growing number of women began to make allegations against Weinstein, a very powerful Hollywood mogul. A few women accused him of rape, the others of sexual harassment: unwanted touching or other unwanted behaviours such as flashing his genitals or asking them to watch him masturbate.⁴ Because most or all of these women were aspiring movie stars, their allegations amounted more specifically to *quid pro quo*; they believed that refusing Weinstein’s advances would mean jeopardizing their careers. Some of those who complied did, in fact, become movie stars. And some of those who refused to comply did not.

Those events provoked this essay. Of major interest here is not, however, Weinstein himself. He became a symbol almost immediately of the archetypal boogeyman, but he was only one of many powerful men who succumbed to allegations of sexual harassment. Of major interest here is not the entertainment industry, moreover, because that is only one industry of many where women encounter sexual harassment. Of major interest here, finally, is not the story of #Me Too. That story is of profound importance but has already been the topic of countless interviews on news shows, articles in newspapers, cover stories for magazines, blogs and so forth. *Time*⁵ has announced that the women behind this story are its collective Person of the Year. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* has declared “feminism” its Word of the Year.⁶ Of primary interest in this essay is the impact of these developments specifically on *men*. And I use that word without a qualifier. I am not referring to “some” men or “many” men or “most” men. I am not referring specifically to men who sexually harass women (or other men). Rather, I am

referring to men in general, to men as a class.⁷ Among them are men who actually care about the future of both men and women.

BACKGROUND

The background of this essay is a society that has for several decades silenced men in the public square, denied them a legitimate voice specifically *as men* in any discussion of the social or cultural forces that have profound effects on them legally, morally, intellectually, spiritually, physically and psychologically. By now, women have the “dominant,” “privileged” or even “hegemonic” voice, one that commands respect, or at least demands it very effectively. And men, at the moment, have no legitimate or even acknowledged voice at all. This is not to say that no man ever speaks in public life. But very few men do so specifically *as men*. And even they usually speak from the perspective of feminism⁸—that is, depending entirely on the voice of women.⁹ In other words, they merely react to what *women* are saying about men.¹⁰ This silence of men has become so pervasive by now that few people are even aware of it. In connection with harassment, for instance, they hear only what women say about both themselves and men. Not every man experiences this silencing in the same way or to the same extent, of course, but fewer and fewer men—along with fewer and fewer of the women who care about them—can ignore the resulting silence from men without succumbing to the hypocrisy of political expediency.

The very possibility that men could be harassed, either by women or by other men, is now unimaginable to most people in a society that has classified women as one of its official victim classes and (white) men as its official oppressor class. These classifications rely on equation of “sexism” with “misogyny. I often read or hear that the misandric sexism of a gynocentric society, which flourishes at a national level despite the current president and his minority of supporters, amounts to nothing more than payback for the misogynistic sexism of an androcentric one. But that argument is about revenge, not justice, and therefore has no moral legitimacy at all. It is an excuse to condone misandry. It has nothing to do with equality, moreover, and everything to do with hierarchy. So, this essay is unambiguously one-sided. It must be one-sided, and I do not apologize for its one-sidedness. I write specifically about the ways in which men—boys and men—experience one significant cultural conflict at one particular moment in our shared history.

My immediate goal here is thus a limited one: to prepare the ground for both dialogue between men and women as classes (but also as individuals). Why only prepare? The answer is simple: Our society is very far from ready for inter-sexual dialogue. It might, however, be ready for inter-sexual debate.¹¹ Both forms of discussion require at least two personal or collective voices, not one. There can be no dialogue without a foundation of truth, however, and we have no way of establishing truth without debate. This essay is not in itself an example of inter-sexual dialogue, to be sure, but it is one side—the missing side—of an inter-sexual *debate* about harassment and therefore part of the necessary preparation for inter-sexual dialogue. Even writing it from the perspective of men has meant denunciation and even retaliation. My ultimate goal, nonetheless, remains to prepare for inter-sexual dialogue—which is to say, for men and women to negotiate as equals in the creation of a new social contract.

In what follows, I discuss the following: (1) sexual harassment and (2) the parallel phenomenon of identity harassment, which lies at the heart of my effort in this essay.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is *not* the primary focus of this essay. Before turning to the primary focus, however, I must discuss the current conflict over sexual harassment—not sexual harassment itself, for the most part, but the conflict over it, the *public rhetoric* that frames it. And I must do so from the perspective of men—not the men who actually harass women, but men in general.

The Weinstein scandal set a pattern for many to come. (That of Roy Moore was somewhat unusual because of its relation to an election and that of Al Franken because of its relation to political polarization even within his own party). The scandal was clearly an important news story, but it broke within the larger context of several other highly unusual and obviously important news stories: wildfires raging out of control in California, unparalleled devastation from Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, threats of nuclear warfare not only from North Korea but also from Washington and genocide in Myanmar. And yet, Weinstein was, in effect, the cover story for all American news shows that day, that week, that month and beyond. The allegations against him were serious and therefore worthy of coverage, but were they as serious as genocide or nuclear war? Countless journalists and pundits thought that they were. Coverage was both repetitive and politically slanted, to say the least. Turning on CNN for news about ever more heads rolling became something like a daily ritual. Every viewer became the equivalent of

Madame Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities*, who records the names of condemned aristocrats in her knitting while gleefully watching the guillotine dispatch them in Place de la Révolution. It is surely useful, therefore, to ask precisely how this mentality came to prevail here and now.

From the beginning, when the Weinstein scandal broke on 5 October 2017, a general consensus emerged that sexual harassment was far more pervasive than anyone had imagined. In one case after another, moreover, a standardized vocabulary and a ritually enacted performance emerged to express and alleviate intense anxiety. Journalists and pundits would inform viewers of the latest allegations against “sexual predators.” Alleged victims would say that the latter had “shamed” or “humiliated” them or left them feeling “frozen.” After a day or two, the alleged perpetrators would respond. Some would deny the allegations against them. Others would admit their “inappropriate sexual behavior” but deny the sinister “interpretations” of it. Still others would confess at least some of their sins by issuing a formal apologies. First, they would explain that they had never known how “terrifying” their behavior must have been but should have known. Next, they would promise to enter therapy or take “sensitivity training” of some kind. Finally, they would agree that they deserved punishment—that is, unemployment and public humiliation—in any case.¹² Confessions in these circumstances function at least partly as attempts to assuage public opinion and thus to limit personal damage. Whether these men were actually guilty as charged or innocent—in which case they were merely bowing to public pressure or relying on financial inducements from their employers—was another matter, because none of these allegations actually went to court (although allegations of rape eventually will do so). If this pattern sounds both familiar and formulaic, there is a good reason. This is the pattern of ritual expiation that was so characteristic of the “show trials,” “purges” and “self-criticism” of Stalinist Russia and Maoist China.

The more women (and occasionally gay men) who “came forward,” viewers learned, the easier it would be for all women to “share” their stories and for society to “believe” them. And this has clearly been true. The tidal wave of allegations continues. The result is clearly a watershed for women and a breakthrough for one group of feminists. But these are ideological feminists, unfortunately, not egalitarian ones. Feminist ideology, like others, is a worldview that rests on a foundation of, apart from several other diagnostic features,¹³ dualism: the belief that all of history is a titanic struggle between good (represented by “us”) and evil (represented by “them”). Some ideologies are on the political right, others on the left. Some are religious, others secular. Ideological feminism, which emerged from philosophies of both the right and the left,

both religious and secular, is as dualistic as every other ideology, which is what distinguishes it from egalitarian feminism. Ideological feminists have long been trying to convince all other feminists, let alone all women, of the need for concerted efforts to expose a pervasive “rape culture” and its matrix in “patriarchal privilege.” From this point of view, sexual harassment is not about sex at all but about *power*, about men using power *in order* to control and oppress women. In other words, male sexuality itself is about power. Sometimes, sexual harassment, like rape, really is about power. The obvious example would be some quid pro quo arrangements. At other times, though, it might actually be about sex. I will return to this topic.

By far the most commonly proposed solution to sexual harassment, at any rate, has been to ensure that more women than ever before are in positions of power. And this is surely a worthy egalitarian goal in its own right. (It makes no difference to commentators, by and large, that women are neither more nor less likely than men to misuse their power.¹⁴ After all, any powerful man or woman can intimidate relatively powerless men or women).¹⁵ But activists, who demand elaborate codes of sexual and political “correctness,” want to go much further than that. For them, these recent allegations of sexual harassment seem to prove their main point: that men really are brutal beasts and misogynistic bullies who can be tamed and controlled only by an stringent codes of sexual correctness and administrative (or legal) policies that favor the accuser instead of the accused. I do not think that we not need sexual correctness, or the smug self-righteousness that it encourages, but I do think that we need sexual etiquette; otherwise, communal life would be unbearable. And we clearly need a new one. But we need a *negotiated* code, not a code that one sex imposes unilaterally on the other. Meanwhile, corporations and other institutions need policies and procedures that are effective in deterring harassment and bringing to justice those who do harass.¹⁶

The prevalent interpretation of sexual harassment relies, I think, on surprisingly flimsy analysis. Much of it comes ready-made, in fact, from theories that have long been conventional wisdom among ideologically oriented feminists and “social justice warriors”. No reasonable person would argue against those who want to end sexual harassment by politicizing it. How else could women expect widespread acknowledgment of a longstanding problem, after all, and promote both legal and other attempts to solve it? The only question, from my point of view, is *how* they are politicizing it—that is, which interpretation of sexual harassment should be institutionalized.

In this section, I discuss some of the problems that conventional analyses of these sexual-harassment scandals have so far either oversimplified or ignored: (a) female victimhood; (b) female innocence; (c) the trouble with sex; (d) legal and constitutional problems; (e) moral problems and (f) cultural and political problems.

Female victimhood

By now, it seems outrageous to many people that any news story could be as serious as one that involves female victims, especially female victims of men.¹⁷ (How many missing people are featured on news shows unless they happen to be female, young, attractive—and white?) From the perspective of men, though, it is lamentable that “violence” itself has come to mean “violence against women” and by men. Violence against women is not qualitatively different from violence against men. And even though most violence against men comes from other men,¹⁸ this does not make their male victims less worthy of justice and compassion than female victims. Violence against men is not morally trivial. I disagree with General John Kelly, therefore, who claimed (in another context) that women (not men) are somehow “sacred.”¹⁹ The fixation on women as a victim class is precisely what has “empowered” women, as more than a few women commented on blogs about the allegations, because every grievance mobilizes resentment and enough resentment requires a political solution. This is why Americans have a Violence Against Women Office, for instance, but no counterpart that monitors violence against men or, better still, an office that monitors violence per se. This is why Canadians have a government office called *Status of Women Canada*²⁰ but no counterpart for men. This is why Canada has launched a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women but not for indigenous men (whose dismal fates outnumber those of indigenous women).²¹ Meanwhile, not all men are alpha males; men in general are actually moving downward when it comes to medical, psychological, legal, educational and cultural matters. Women, though, are quickly moving upward.

Female innocence

Also, the Weinstein scandal and many similar ones have revealed a very common but dubious link between female victimhood and female innocence. I am not referring to the incontestable fact that victims are never morally responsible for what victimizers do to them. Rather, I am referring to the fact that adult victims, like all adults, are responsible for their own behavior—and the fact that even victimized people often find political or other reasons to victimize people in turn or to condone those who do. Men are by no means unusual in this respect.²²

The alleged victims of sexual harassment claimed to have been “young and innocent” arrivals in Hollywood before encountering his depravity. And some of them had been. They claimed not to have known that their employers were likely to seduce or even rape them.²³ And some had not known. The trouble is that almost everyone else either did know, or should have known, what was going on and had been going on for a very long time.²⁴ Many of the women who “came forward” against Weinstein attacked all people, including powerful women such as Hillary Clinton, who eventually admitted that they had long known about his sexual harassment of women but remained silent for various personal or political reasons. Ross Douthat noted that political opportunism, which led them to distinguish carefully “pigs from prudes,” is not good enough to ensure healthy relationships between men and women or even the future of society.²⁵

But public interest continued to focus less on the hypocritical behavior of these powerful bystanders, who were indeed of secondary importance, than on the shameful behavior of powerful men—or all men. At least one writer for the *New York Times*, for instance, commented on the silence of male power brokers in Hollywood, arguing that it was the responsibility of men per se to protect women.²⁶ This was a striking about-face for feminists, however, who have long insisted that women should be autonomous—that is, never dependent on men. And being protected by men really is inconsistent with being “equal” to men, let alone being independent from men.

Scandals of one kind or another, usually involving extra-marital affairs, divorces or “love children” but sometimes even murder, rocked Hollywood over and over again from the very beginning. The studios always tried to hide these scandals. But the “casting couch” was an “open secret” as early as the 1920s—and therefore long before the 1960s, when hedonism, exemplified by both Hugh Hefner’s *Playboy* and Helen Gurley Brown’s *Cosmopolitan*, came to prevail in society as a whole (a topic that I will discuss more fully). It now seems hard to imagine any potentate in Hollywood who refrains from sexual relations with other members of the community. Why would anyone be surprised at the accusation that these sexual relations often amount to sexual harassment? And straight men are not the only ones to face that accusation. Although very many gay people have contributed to the movie industry, they remained in the “closet” until recently. Now, even gay men “come forward” with allegations against producers, directors, musical performers and actors. Among the more infamous accusations have been those against Michael Jackson and, more recently, Kevin Spacey; in both cases, the alleged victims were little or teenage boys. Moreover, the casting couch was a feature of life not only

behind the camera but also in front of the camera; many movies were actually about ambitious and beautiful or talented women who used whatever advantages they had to get ahead. And these movies did not necessarily condemn them for doing so.²⁷

As I say, though, not even the most naïve person deserves harassment of any kind. My point here is only to raise questions about claims of victimization. Today, society responds to these claims, especially by women, with an attitude that approaches reverence, in accordance with doctrinal orthodoxy, and therefore precludes careful analysis.

The trouble with sex

The prevailing assumption is that sexual harassment has nothing to do with sex, to repeat myself for emphasis, but everything to do with power and hatred (misogyny). I do not believe that facile assumption, because what ends up as sexual harassment often begins with sexual interest: teasing, flirting or even what earlier generations called “courtship.” Sometimes, in short, the motivation for sexual harassment amounts to play, no matter how clumsy and inappropriate. The trouble is that sexual behavior is too complicated, too easily misunderstood and too irrational, or at least non-rational. It always has been and always will be. There are too many mixed messages and crossed signals. This is what makes sexual play fascinating and delightful—Camille Paglia²⁸ has for many years defended it against denunciations by the puritanically inclined ideological feminists—but also disturbing. Not surprisingly, cultures have been preoccupied, to varying degrees, with its danger and the need to control it, whether heavily or lightly. Ideological feminists would explain my words in the most cynical possible way, of course, as the need of men to control *women*. That is definitely not what I am saying. I am saying merely that every society must ensure communal cohesion. And because sexual behavior does not always coincide with reasonable behavior, it is one feature of human existence that can easily threaten cohesion.

When the Weinstein scandal broke, many people said that they were “shocked” and “horrified” over such “atrocious,” “traumatic” or “sickening” allegations. I find those words very hard to square with some actual descriptions of what had happened (excluding rape). Not many women will thank me for saying that, and yet I am not quite alone in doing so. By early December, at least a few *women*, mainly maverick feminists, were expressing the same skepticism about public response to the allegations. Among them were Janice Fiamengo²⁹ and Claire Berlinski.³⁰ More about them in due course.

Allegations against Weinstein ranged from his fondling female genitals to fondling his own genitals in front of them. The allegations against Charlie Rose included his fondness for lewd jokes.³¹ The allegations against John Conyers included verbal abuse and wearing only his underwear.³² The allegation against Steven McLaughlin amounted to asking for nude photos of a woman on his staff.³³ The allegation against Garrison Keillor was touching a woman's bare back.³⁴ These experiences might be very unpleasant for most people, to be sure, but would they be life-shattering? Not many men would say so (not unless their jobs depended on compliance).³⁵ My argument here is what will surely anger many women, whose experience of sexual behavior will probably always be significantly different from that of men, but I refuse to hide from honest debate. To put it another way, I agree with Matt Damon.³⁶ I insist on making a distinction between relatively innocuous sexual behavior and harmful sexual behavior.

Premier Brian Pallister, of Manitoba, faced public censure for beginning his state of the province speech thus: "I want to thank Johanna [Hurme] for dressing up. I want to thank her for those heels. I notice they're a foot high," said Pallister, one arm still in a sling as the result of a hiking injury in New Mexico. "It's a humbling experience to come to you today, not just in this condition but having Johanna cut my meat for me meant a lot to me. Johanna—good luck in your upcoming term. Congratulations and thank-you for taking it on."³⁷ "Honestly," said Nahanni Fontaine, "in this day and age it's unfortunate and disappointing that women are still getting comments like the premier's about their bodies and appearance and you know, honestly they're quite shocking." Rebuked, Pallister explained that his remark had been "intended to be a joke about his height." His height is six feet eight inches. Besides, I doubt that outrage over any remark about female appearance is confined to "harassment" the workplace.³⁸

A similar story reveals much about this new world that we have entered. It is surely not a representative story in any statistical sense, but, like the preceding story, it is a warning of what can happen when common decency and even common sense become acceptable casualties of a good cause. Sherry Romanado is a member of the Canadian Parliament. In early December, only weeks after the Weinstein scandal broke, she accused James Bezan, another member, of "humiliating" her. She was referring to a photo op with Bezan and one additional member several months earlier. "While standing for the picture," Bezan had to admit, "I made an inappropriate and flippant comment by saying, 'This isn't my idea of a threesome,' which was intended as a partisan comment about being in a photo with a Liberal member of caucus."³⁹ Bezan found it necessary to apologize not once or twice but five times⁴⁰ for trying to make what

sophisticated people, both men *and women*, had once enjoyed as a “risqué” joke.⁴¹ By no means all women would lodge a formal complaint over that, not even today, but Romanado found his remark deplorably “sexual in nature.” She was neither a member of Bezan’s party nor his employee; he had no authority over her at all. Nonetheless, this incident had caused “great stress” for Romanado. It had “negatively affected my work environment.” Even some women find that reaction, well, reactionary.⁴² I can hardly get inside her mind, but I must admit finding it hard to avoid the suspicion that her motivation in “coming forward” was to take advantage of the historic opportunity to attack a man, perhaps any man. That, too, causes humiliation.

You could explain the tearful reactions to some of these allegations as orchestrated attempts to mobilize resentment for political purposes. I prefer to explain them, however, as evidence that the sexual habits or interests of men and women do not always coincide and keep changing in any case both collectively and personally. What seems so shocking to some women now—the sight of a naked body, say, or the feel of an unwanted kiss—might not seem at all shocking to many men, including gay men. More to the point, they might not seem at all shocking even to many women. Otherwise, how could we explain the popularity among women of novels and movies that feature sex, including sado-masochistic sex? To take only one well known example, I would cite *Fifty-Shades of Grey*.⁴³ Enormously popular among women, it quickly became a cultural “meme.” We need to expect some level of confusion over sex, although, as everyone agrees, we need also to insist on some lines that no one may cross⁴⁴ and, in cases of doubt, on administrative processes that are fair to everyone.

The primary message that women have been sending with these sexual-harassment allegations is, of course, about far more than repeated episodes that they find unpleasant. It is about *intimidation* in the workplace. I see nothing trivial about that. The “quid pro quo” system amounts to an implicit or explicit bargain. If you do something for me, I’ll do something for you. One hand washes the other. As I say, bargains of this kind, what President Trump would call “deals,” do not necessarily rely on intimidation. But they can do so in the context of a power differential. This context makes the bargain look different. If you *don’t do* something for me, *I won’t do* something for you. That, I suggest, more than the acts per se (apart from rape), is what troubles so many people in the workplace—and with good reason.

But I must add several additional factors, which complicate matters. Sexual harassment really can be about sex, at least sometimes. And male sexuality is not, as some ideological

feminists, even male feminists, have argued, innately brutal.⁴⁵ This is not a minor matter. It is central to the entire discussion of sexual harassment. Egalitarian feminists believe that men and women are not only equal but also the same except for gestation and lactation. From this they conclude that men feel what women feel. More important, they conclude that men should *not* feel what women do *not* feel. Those men who fail to fit this paradigm, therefore, are perverts who must be controlled by rules, policies, laws, psychotherapy or incarceration. It seems most unlikely that men and women will agree in the foreseeable future on precisely which behaviors are acceptable, or tolerable, and which are not—except for intimidation and violence, of course, which are always unacceptable. Ideological feminists, however, do not make that argument. They do not argue for innate sexual equality. On the contrary, they argue that male sexuality is not only innately different from female sexuality but innately inferior to it. Male and female sexuality are not only innately different on physiological grounds, they add, but also intrinsically different on moral grounds. Unlike female sexuality, they argue, male sexuality is driven not by pleasure at all but by the urge to control, dominate or oppress. Of more importance to these feminists, (straight) male sexuality is driven not by pleasure but by the urge to control, dominate or oppress *women*.⁴⁶

Before even considering possible solutions to the remaining power differentials in workplaces, therefore, we must first account for the stubborn difference between male sexuality and female sexuality. I do not argue that “men are from Mars, and women are from Venus.” They are much more alike than unlike in most ways, and that includes sexuality.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, I think that we must account for a few significant differences. We can quibble over the degree of difference between the sexes and extent of variation within each sex, but we cannot argue effectively, as egalitarian feminists have tried to do for many years, that men and women in the same circumstances or with the same opportunities have the same sexual needs, desires and expectations. At the very least, we must acknowledge the following problems while entering negotiations for a new code of sexual etiquette and its relation to sexual harassment.

First, we cannot eliminate the physical attraction between men and women (or, in some cases, between people of the same sex). Men and women now work side by side and will continue to do so unless we resort to sexual segregation, which is common in other societies but reviled in this one. Men and women in general, especially those who work together every day, will always flirt with each other and sometimes form “relationships.”⁴⁸ But the line between flirting and harassment is sometimes blurry. This is partly because sex is a very complex and

subtle phenomenon, one that has both physiological and psychological (and sometimes spiritual) dimensions—but also one that has several functions for both men and women. Moreover, the cultural rules that govern sex tend to change from one time and place to another. This is precisely what explains the enduring allure not only of sexual adventure but also of both sexual seduction and the enduring comedy of sexual incompetence. More to the point here, it underlies the conflict over what people now call “sexual harassment” (but have sometimes called sexual play even in the recent past).

Consider the firing of Charlie Rose by both CBS and PBS after allegations of his sexual “misconduct” emerged. The allegations were, as in many other cases, hardly the stuff of horror movies; among his worst alleged offenses were unwanted caressing and lewd jokes. Rose claimed that women had responded favorably to his attentions. It all amounted, nonetheless, to “she said, he said.” Norah O’Donnell and Gayle King, who had worked closely with Rose as co-hosts on *This Morning*, announced Rose’s fate without expressing the slightest doubt that he was a “sexual predator” and therefore that he deserved his fate—which is to say, that the allegations must have been true. Only hearsay and a half-hearted confession to “inappropriate behavior” sustained the allegations—Rose confessed to most of the allegations against him but rejected the prevailing *interpretation* of them. Both co-hosts made the moral (and political) decision to believe the women who had accused him. King was visibly upset. She did express personal shock and distress about her former friend and colleague. Like O’Donnell, however, she took the opportunity to denounce Rose and all other (alleged) offenders. She and O’Donnell protected themselves (and CBS) by saying what viewers clearly wanted to hear. In short, they exploited Rose’s fall from grace by preaching moralistic sermons to the converted instead of doing what they had so often done in the past—notably with Rose—by asking viewers to think carefully about what was going on in the news. In this case, that would have meant taking seriously the perspectives of both women and men.

Second, male sexuality depends heavily on visual stimulation,⁴⁹ a biological phenomenon that many feminists now link with the infamous “male gaze” or “the objectification of women.”⁵⁰ (This is not to say that men lack the ability to *love* women, only that the male experiences of love and copulation do not necessarily coincide.) Men will always want to have sex with beautiful women (or beautiful men), although they can also respect, like or love their female (or male) companions. Straight men will always try to seduce physically attractive women. And by no means all women want to eliminate seduction even in the workplace. “While plenty of women

are frustrated by unwanted romantic attentions,” writes one perceptive male observer, “how many would prefer the prospect of becoming an adult without ever having been desired?”⁵¹ This does not mean raping them, although it can sometimes amount to harassing them. We cannot eliminate male sexuality, at any rate, without resorting to lobotomies or chemical castration. We can, however, use culture effectively to create an environment that discourages men from afflicting women with unwanted sexual attention—as long as we ensure that both women and men participate equally in the creation of that environment.

Third, men have evolved—whether through nature, culture or both—to take the initiative in sexual contacts and therefore to take the high risk of rejection (although women who take the initiative directly or indirectly, psychoanalytical theory notwithstanding, are by no means rare). This is why teenage girls used to wait anxiously for boys to ask them out on dates, but teenage boys used to wait just as anxiously for the courage to ask girls out. Men must learn how to back away and admit defeat without accepting the humiliation of being undesirable. Most men learn to do this by trial and error, which is neither easy nor safe. And it is infinitely more difficult and more dangerous when even trying to show interest in women, no matter how ineptly, is defined as sexual harassment—that is, an act of hostility. Sometimes, it might be. At other times, it might be something else entirely. So, in a moral universe, women must learn how to tell the difference just as men must learn how to accept “no.”

Finally, those whose beauty attracts the powerful, straight or gay, will probably always enjoy some degree of preferment, or “privilege,” whether directly or indirectly. That is unfair, but no spiritual luminary has ever said that life is fair. Sexuality makes human existence possible and often joyful but not easy.

The best explanation for what women experience as sexual harassment is not necessarily that of either egalitarian or ideological feminism. A better explanation would be much more complex and subtle than either one and therefore deserves closer examination; otherwise, if we criminalize male sexuality per se, the results will be catastrophic for both men and women—that is, for society as a whole. The best solution to these problems, in fact, is to establish rules of conduct that make sense to everyone, both men and women.

Moral problems

Everything about the mentality that underlies both these allegations and the responses to them by both men and women has a moral implication. But several problems are worth highlighting here.

As soon as male editors, journalists and pundits began to discuss their own places in the scheme of things, some of them resorted to an oblique form of self-righteousness: admitting silent complicity but also taking the supposedly high moral road of admonishing other men by emphasizing the personal responsibility of men to intervene on behalf of women. Some women used the same argument. “We need not just sensitivity training,” said Sheryl Sandberg, “but also accountability. That means firing not only the men who sexually harass but also the men and women who are complicit.”⁵² By “complicity,” which quickly became a “meme,” she meant those who fail to intervene. Some commentators went further. “The responsibility extends, we are coming to understand, beyond the perpetrator, implicating an entire network of people who help create the conditions that allow harassment to occur—and to go unpunished.”⁵³ The authors continued with hypothetical situations in which “bystanders” overhear what they consider disturbing remarks or jokes and witness what they consider inappropriate gestures but say or do nothing. Instead, they should either intervene personally or—better yet—inform the boss. Otherwise, they are accomplices or collaborators. In a purely practical way, this makes sense. It is relatively easy to stamp out crime or even dissent, after all, by encouraging people to collude with the state (another form of complicity). But do we really want to support the mentality of vigilantes (those who take matters into their own hands immediately instead of resorting to slower procedures such as due process in courts of law)?⁵⁴ Do we really want to revive the kind of mentality that classified men as protectors of women (and therefore, by definition, the dominators of women)? Do we really want to encourage and reward informers (whose mentality would resemble that of the countless Stasi informers)? I doubt that many people would like the idea of spies watching or listening to them from behind the water-cooler, of tattle-tales spreading rumors that depend on suspicion and so forth. That would not only foster psychological liabilities such as self-righteousness but also undermine moral virtues such as loyalty to friends. After all, friends give each other the benefit of the doubt—and some level of doubt is likely in connection with gossip over such notoriously subtle matters as sex. Whatever the answer might be, it surely is not among these proposals.

And then there is the problem of revenge, or triumphalism. Many women would like nothing more than to rectify the problem of sexual harassment and get on with their lives—with their sons or brothers, their husbands or boyfriends, their male colleagues and so on. But some women want much more than that and say so proudly in the most influential venues. They want to *punish* men, not this or that man who is guilty of sexually harassing someone, but men in general. What appeals so strongly to these women is not only the actual victory of victims over victimizers but also, and possibly more powerfully, the symbolic victory of women in general over men in general. The German word for this is *Schadenfreude*: joy over the downfall of others—whether those others actually deserve their fate or not. This victory is not exactly a moral victory, because moral victories produce, if not immediately then eventually, forgiveness and reconciliation. I am not surprised to find that some women are still unready to forgive and reconcile with men in general. I am deeply discouraged, however, to find that some women are *unwilling* to do so.

According to Leeann Tweeden, Al Franken, the senator and former entertainer, harassed her in 2006 while performing a comedy sketch with her. Franken kissed her and then, in her words, “mashed his lips against mine and aggressively stuck his tongue in my mouth.” Fast forward eleven years. Tweeden sees a photo of the sketch and tells a reporter, in tears and with the by-now standard vocabulary, that she “felt violated all over again. Embarrassed. Belittled. Humiliated.”⁵⁵ Writing for the *New York Times*, Michelle Goldberg took what was becoming a common position. Franken’s apology, she declared, would not be enough to satisfy her and women in general. He should resign immediately, even though he had done good work for women and would continue to do so. Without Tweeden’s example and others like it, she reasoned, the momentum of women “coming forward” might eventually diminish. She advocated throwing Franken under the bus for a minor offense, in other words, and despite a career that he had marred only by a lewd comedy routine that he had made eleven years earlier. It was okay for Goldberg to indulge in political expediency (following public opinion to focus attention on sexual harassment), evidently, but not for others to do so from a different point of view (opposing public opinion to benefit from Franken’s feminist policies). Is it any wonder that cynicism is now rampant? Goldberg concludes, though, on an even more disturbing note: “The question isn’t about what’s fair to Franken,” she said, but what’s fair to the rest of us. I would mourn Franken’s departure from the Senate, but I think he should go, and the governor should appoint a woman to fill his seat. The message to men in power about sexual degradation has to

be clear: “We will replace you.” Only three months earlier, bigoted protesters at Charlottesville had chanted that “Jews will not replace us.” The trouble is that equality is utterly incompatible with replacement, just as justice is utterly incompatible with revenge. The road ahead is surely bleak if people can fail to understand even that fundamental moral logic. And many obviously do fail.

Even worse is a shift of attention from the guilt of men individually to that of men collectively. I am referring here not to men who are actually guilty, in other words, but to all men—to men as a class. The only explanation for this slippage is that some women really do consider all men guilty of sexual harassment. But “collective guilt” is philosophically incoherent, because it has no room for the personal choices that must be open to any moral agent. It is morally despicable, moreover, because it is the foundation for enduring hatred.⁵⁶ It would be folly, therefore, to gloss over this phenomenon as a temporary emotional rush that will eventually be replaced by sober moral insight. This is why I find Amber Tamblyn’s op-ed piece in the *New York Times* so disheartening: “Not everyone in my industry is in support of how quickly things are moving. There’s a lot of collateral-damage dread, a cloud of unease that has covered the industry lately with talk of potentially harmful side effects of such decisive actions. What if an innocent man is falsely accused? What if the repercussion doesn’t fit the crime? Whatever happened to innocent until proved guilty?” Those questions do not concern her. What concerns her is the future of women, not of men. “Can there be one [a new start] for men, free of humiliation, shame and violent assault against women? Women who are their wives, daughters, mothers and friends sitting next to them on couches? And what would it take to achieve it? That’s the question for men and their text chains right now, not the question of how soon they can ask about redemption. Redemption must be preceded by atonement. It is earned, not offered. If you want amends, you have to make them.”⁵⁷ Tamblyn uses the word “men” here with no qualifier, thus referring to men in general, not only guilty men. Every man is guilty, by implication, if not personally then collectively. Here is a vulgar example of the same thing. Campaigning for attorney-general of Michigan, Dana Nessel says in her ad: “So when you’re choosing Michigan’s next attorney general, ask yourself this: Who can you trust most not to show you their penis in a professional setting? Is it the candidate who doesn’t have a penis? I’d say so.”⁵⁸

Legal and constitutional problems

There is nothing wrong with making an allegation. How else could anyone initiate procedures in the hope of finding justice? The trouble is that not all allegations occur in a court of law or any quasi-legal context that respects due process. Most of these sexual-harassment allegations, including those of the #Me Too campaign rely heavily—even entirely—on hearsay, not evidence, in the court of public opinion. And sometimes the allegations are anonymous—which, as Christie Blatchford points out, require *no courage whatsoever* from those who make them.⁵⁹ This does not necessarily mean, of course, that all allegations are false.⁶⁰ Even those that are true, however, can be problematic in view of their consequences. After learning of an allegation against him, Dan Johnson committed suicide.⁶¹ In effect, this meant capital punishment. And, unlike his state of Kentucky, not all jurisdictions allow capital punishment.

Some people argue that allegations are probably true, because so many people “come forward” with them. But they might just as easily be false, precisely *because* so many of these people use the same standardized vocabulary, which could indicate a learned response rather than a spontaneous one. Worse, so many people believe them and use “social media” to make corporations do quickly what other institutions do slowly. President Trump’s populism, including the resentment that he fosters against legal immigrants, is thus by no means the only kind of populism that now threatens democracy.⁶² In any case, history shows clearly that even multitudes of respectable citizens are sometimes motivated by fear, say, or malice. Consider the Nazi movement. Closer to home in time and space, consider the moral panic that was known first as Recovered Memory Syndrome but then as False Memory Syndrome.⁶³ For ten or fifteen dizzy years, most people took that seriously. Many psychologists believed all children, as a matter of professional principle, who told them that their parents had molested them. And some of these parents really had done so according to whatever facts came out in court. But these psychologists relied on the same principle, believing children who told them that their parents had joined depraved satanic cults and committed such crimes as human sacrifice and cannibalism.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, social workers were destroying thousands of homes by removing children from their families, legislators were changing laws accordingly and police officers were arresting parents. And then the moral panic was over. Enough people realized that children do sometimes lie or confuse what they imagine with what is true. Others realized that the lawyers were asking their clients leading questions in court. Still others realized that psychologists were giving their clients drugs to help them “remember” what had happened to them, decades earlier.

In short, things had gone way out of control.

Those presumably repentant professionals should worry about a closely related problem right now: the Believe Women movement. Although this movement did not originate with the Weinstein scandal and its many spinoffs, its ostensible goal has always been to make the courts “sensitive” to the needs of women who charge men with rape or, now, sexual harassment (an important distinction that not all members of this movement agree to make). Sensitivity is always a good thing, and the accuser surely deserves the same level of it as the accused does (which is, lamentably, not always high). But why abandon due process? For feminists such as Lindy West of the *New York Times*, the answer is simple: speed and efficiency.⁶⁵ Not all women would do so, and several have already come out of the closet to say so. I have already referred to Claire Berlinski, for instance, who rejects the prevailing approach to sexual harassment as a witch hunt.⁶⁶ She was a pioneer. After only a few months, the list of female dissenters now includes foreign female movie stars such as Catherine Deneuve (and one hundred other Frenchwomen)⁶⁷ and American female academics such as Christina Hoff Sommers⁶⁸ but also feminist icons such as novelist (and author of *The Handmaid’s Tale*) Margaret Atwood⁶⁹ and even Germaine Greer.⁷⁰ Sarah Vine calls the movement a “feminist jihad.”⁷¹ The case of Aziz Anansi, who was accused of bad manners more than anything else, provoked even more controversy among feminists: Lindy West of the *New York Times* argued that men deserve to be hunted down, because feminists had been trying for years to warn them of a reckoning to come.⁷² But for other feminists, this case was the last straw. Heather Wilhelm of the *Chicago Tribune* accused contemporary feminists of waging a war on common sense. By this, she meant discouraging women from taking responsibility for their own behaviour. And she was not by any means alone.⁷³

Even the *New York Times* published one article by someone who challenges its own feminist editorial policy. Bari Weiss discusses what has been going on among her male friends and colleagues in the wake of so many allegations of sexual harassment. “While we women revisit our sexual histories,” she writes, “the men I know—old and young, liberal and conservative—are doing the same from the flip side. An older conservative friend told me that he was considering reaching out to a girl he went on a date with in high school to apologize for kissing her in the car. She didn’t say no, and she kissed him back. But he worries that she felt pressured. A close friend, a progressive, told me about a college hook-up he regrets. He is spending time wondering about how the woman thinks about the experience: Did it leave a scar?”

Or is it arrogant to even assume she remembers his name?”⁷⁴ These innocuous and almost amusing stories leave her more than a little uneasy. Though grateful for the women who have challenged sexual harassment, she worries about the new movement’s effects on both men and women.

I can’t shake the feeling that this mantra [“believe women”] creates terrible new problems in addition to solving old ones. In less than two months we’ve moved from uncovering accusations of criminal behavior (Harvey Weinstein) to criminalizing behavior that we previously regarded as presumptuous and boorish (Glenn Thrush). In a climate in which sexual mores are transforming so rapidly, many men are asking: If I were wrongly accused, who would believe me? I know the answer that many women would give—are giving—is: Good. Be scared. We have been scared for forever. It’s your turn for some sleepless nights. They’ll say: If some innocent men go down in the effort to tear down the patriarchy, so be it. Emily Lindin, a columnist at Teen Vogue, summed up this view concisely last week on Twitter. “I’m actually not at all concerned about innocent men losing their jobs over false sexual assault/harassment allegations,” she wrote. “If some innocent men’s reputations have to take a hit in the process of undoing the patriarchy, that is a price I am absolutely willing to pay.”

Talk is cheap, of course, because Lindin herself would pay nothing at all; innocent people would do all the paying. “I think the worry is justified,” continues Weiss.

And it’s not because I don’t get the impulse to burn it all down. It’s because I think that “believing all women” can rapidly be transmogrified into an ideological orthodoxy that will not serve women at all. “If the past few weeks have shown us the unique horrors some women have faced, the answer to it can’t be a stringent new solidarity that further limits the definition of womanhood and lumps our highly diverse experiences together simply based on our gender. I don’t think that helps women. Or men. I believe that the ‘believe all women’ vision of feminism unintentionally fetishizes women. Women are no longer human and flawed. They are Truth personified. They are above reproach. I believe that it’s condescending to think that women and their claims can’t stand up to interrogation and can’t handle skepticism. I believe that facts serve feminists far better than faith. That due process is better than mob rule.

By early December, more feminists were having second thoughts about what was going on at least in Congress. Zephyr Teachout focused on the hasty removal of Al Franken from elected office. She began with a prudent disclaimer: strongly supporting both #Me Too and “zero tolerance” for sexual harassment:

And yet, a lot of women I know—myself included—were left with a sense that something went wrong last week with the effective ouster of Al Franken from the United States Senate. He resigned after a groundswell of his own Democratic colleagues called for him to step down.

Zero tolerance should go hand in hand with two other things: due process and proportionality. As citizens, we need a way to make sense of accusations that does not depend only on what we read or see in the news or on social media.

Due process means a fair, full investigation, with a chance for the accused to respond. And proportionality means that while all forms of inappropriate sexual behavior should be addressed, the response should be based on the nature of the transgressions ...

Finally, the nature of the behaviors matter, too. Proportionality means that after investigating, Congress should fully consider the best response to the revealed conduct.

My first job out of law school was representing people on death row in North Carolina, where I often saw the impact of hasty prosecutions. I represented a man on death row whose lawyers had spent all of eight hours looking into his claim of innocence. I met men whose lawyers had never looked into their backgrounds. I also lived in the legal environment that produced the Duke University lacrosse case, in which three students were falsely accused of rape by the prosecutor in the case, who was later disbarred for his conduct. The quick rush to public condemnation of the players, fueled by the media, ended up hurting the accuser and the accused.

As citizens, we should all be willing to stay ambivalent while the facts are gathered and we collect our thoughts. While the choice to fire the television hosts Charlie Rose and Matt Lauer were the choices of private companies, condemning a sitting lawmaker is a public choice and one our representatives should make judiciously.

Congress should empower an independent arbiter to investigate complaints—like a Government Accountability Office, with trained experts in the field. Clearly understood mechanisms for reporting should be established. A timetable should be set that ensures complaints receive a prompt response. Both the accuser and the accused could submit questions and would have access to trained advocates and free legal consultation.

The independent arbiter would then make a nonbinding proposal addressing what happened and what should be done. It could include a call to resign or for censure, or a range of other responses tailored to the findings.

We need a system to deal with that messy reality, and the current one of investigating those complaints is opaque, takes too long and has not worked to protect vulnerable women and men from harassment. And the current alternative—off with the head of the accused, regardless of the accusation—is too quick, too easily subject to political manipulation and too vulnerable to the passions of the moment.⁷⁵

By now, many commentators forget to use the word “alleged.” By now, moreover, politicians find it politically expedient to proclaim, “I believe the women.” This is what Mitch McConnell said in connection with the allegations against Roy Moore even in the absence of any evidence against Moore.⁷⁶ Worse, this movement of believers wants to dispense with due process for the accused.

But I have an additional and entirely different reason for challenging the Believe Women movement. If belief replaces due process, the result undermines not one but two fundamental principles of our society. Yes, it allows the court of public opinion to take precedence over the court of law, as it has in connection with so many of these allegations. And yes, it overturns the presumption of innocence. In addition, though, “belief”⁷⁷ undermines constitutional law, which separates church and state. If we allow this principle to succeed, it would mean establishing in law a secular orthodoxy that amounts, in effect, to a religious orthodoxy. And that would make rejecting any of its doctrines tantamount to religious heresy.

Cultural and political problems

Stephen Baskerville⁷⁸ has argued persuasively that sexual politics is no longer merely the result of applying egalitarian principles to gender according to the pattern already established in connection with class and race. Rather, he says, gender has become the final and ultimate frontier of utopia. The goal of sexual politics is now to eliminate not only gender but also sex and thus to erase an earlier distinction, gender being a cultural system and sex a given of the natural order. This explains the rapid evolution of sexual politics to include the “transgender” movement, which asserts an infinite variety of shifting sexual identities and behaviors, all of which are equally legitimate and thus worthy of the same status and the same rights that society once accorded only to males and females. This, in itself, is not problematic in an egalitarian society. Very problematic, though, are at least two closely related beliefs.

One belief is that every institution, every tradition, every identity, every behavior and indeed every boundary, including both sex and gender, is a spurious “social construction” that allows some people—that is, straight, white, men—to oppress others. Another belief is that we can “deconstruct” all of these—and must do so—in order to create a utopian society for women (and minorities). Revolution, not reform, is therefore the ultimate goal; the new social order can be built only on the old one’s ashes. Even the most cherished and durable institutions, notably the family and the university, must be destroyed root and branch.

Baskerville points out, though, that sex, unlike class or race, is private and intimate. As the feminist proverb puts it, nonetheless, the personal is political. It is no longer enough to rely on objective legal codes and due process to scrutinize and punish public behaviors; we must now rely instead on *subjective* intuitions or *fleeting* sentiments to scrutinize and punish private behaviors. Not even the most intimate features of daily life are beyond the scope, therefore, of contemporary moral panics⁷⁹ or witch hunts.⁸⁰ Consequently, sexual politics requires a level of speech control (punishments for political incorrectness) and thought control (ideological indoctrination) that even totalitarian regimes of the last century seldom reached.⁸¹ Not all feminists agree with these ideas, which are clearly extreme even now. Most women do not, obviously, which is why they continue to love the men in their lives. But like so many ideas that sound extreme, or radical, at first, these are quickly becoming widespread, even fashionable, in the most influential circles—especially in the ideological circles that produce not only “social justice warriors” but also journalists, lawyers, judges, social workers, psychologists and so on.

In short, both the Sexual Revolution and this current Sexual Counter-Revolution have gone out of control. Their analogue is the French Revolution, which ended up as a Reign of Terror (but without the blood). Ideology has become an end in itself. Revolution has taken on a life of its own. This sounds apocalyptic, I know, but history is littered with similar dead, or deadly, ends. No one in our time needs a guillotine, of course, to attain revolutionary goals. Any powerful movement (one example being that of President Trump and his relatively few but intensely loyal supporters) can easily pervert democratic institutions and sweep away legal or moral traditions—seriously harming huge groups of people in the process.

Weinstein and many of the other alleged offenders are surely coarse, vulgar, brutal men. Many observers point, not surprisingly, to President Trump as an obvious analogue (although I will suggest later that Trump is both similar to and different from Weinstein.) But how did he and Trump get that way? Were they born that way (as either males or mutants of some kind)? Or are they the products and perpetuators of a “rape culture”? Is the only difference between lewdness and rape one of degree? And have women contributed in any way at all to conflict between the sexes? These are some of the questions that have guided my own efforts, direct or indirect ones, to interpret the sexual-harassment scandals and, indeed, sexual harassment itself.

IDENTITY HARASSMENT

I turn now from what has rightly attracted a great deal of attention to what has wrongly attracted no attention at all: the cultural context of sexual harassment, which includes the parallel phenomenon of *identity harassment*. Though hidden, so far, this is a major problem. It is also the primary focus of this essay. I suggest that we will never solve the problem of sexual harassment without also solving the problem of identity harassment.

Like sexual harassment, identity harassment is a kind of collective sickness, or neurosis. For too long, men have tried to ignore the harm that identity harassment has done to them. Everyone knows that admitting vulnerability (or hiding from it in the case of cowardice) is what men consider the “fate worse than death.” Women know this as well as men, and some have always used that knowledge to their own advantage. But things are changing. This much would be clear to anyone who reads Janice Fiamengo’s new collection of autobiographical essays by unusually articulate men: *Sons of Feminism: Men Have Their Say*.⁸² One man, the son of highly educated immigrants from India, experienced both racism and misandry throughout his years in elite schools and colleges. “Feminism,” he writes, “was a cultural force that had the effect of dehumanizing me in a manner far more severe than the experience of racism that people make TV movies about. The key difference between racism and feminism is that people cared about the effects of racism on us. But nobody cared about the effects of feminism on its sons.”⁸³

Given the current and dramatic context of so many sexual-harassment allegations, it would be easy to assume that my focus here would be on the identity only of those innocent men who face allegations of sexual harassment. Their personal and professional reputations are on the line, after all, and society considers them guilty until proven innocent. But that assumption would be wrong. Of primary importance here is not the personal identity of men as individuals, but the *collective* identity of men as such and therefore of all men—all boys and all men.

My metaphorical framework is a medical one, although I do not argue that the problem is actually a medical one. (I do not argue, for instance, that Weinstein and similar men are the hapless victims of “sex addiction.”) For the sake of convenience, though, I discuss this problem as a cultural and collective pathology with (a) its symptoms; (b) its diagnosis; (c) its etiology; (d) its prognosis; and (3) its cure, if any.

Symptoms

I have already said that the sexual harassment scandals are dramatic symptoms of a much deeper problem than any privileges that our society gives to men and denies to women. I now add that this deeper problem involves the privileges that our society *gives* to *women* but *denies* to men. Why is this problem “deeper” than the other? That is simply because the former is now very visible, the latter still deeply hidden. The two problems are actually two sides of the same coin, but I discuss here the one that so many other people ignore.

Despite a few allegations of rape, public outcry has focused mainly on allegations of sexual harassment. Not many observers found it necessary to make a clear distinction, thanks to many years of linguistic inflation for ideological purposes, between “sexual harassment” and “sexual assault.” Sexual harassment can include everything from lewd remarks or a pornographic picture on someone’s desk to groping, quid pro quo arrangements with the office manager and even rape. Sexual assault can include rape but also sexual harassment. There was a reason for this blurring of legal terminology—that is, for using very broad categories instead of narrow ones. It was to convince the public that seemingly trivial problems are actually at one end of a continuum that *begins* with trivial problems such as looking at someone a few seconds too long but ends in rape. These trivial problems are, by extension, forms of rape. Almost every man is a rapist, therefore, not only in theory but also in practice. Given this premise, it might make sense to talk about a “rape culture”⁸⁴ in which all men control all women by fostering the constant fear of rape. This point of view should remind Americans of the Jim Crow South, when the Ku Klux Klan terrorized all black people by lynching some of them and thus fostering constant fear in all of them. So now, all men, including black men, are supposedly the equivalents of Klansmen. That is the essence of misandry, the sexist counterpart of misogyny.⁸⁵

Here is one case study: the many ways in which male students are harassed on college campuses. These problems are pervasive and their proposed solutions crude. More important, contempt for men in general is both implicit and explicit. (The reverse phenomenon is seldom explicit, because male students lack institutional support for their harassment of female students; misogyny is a counter-culture, if anything, not the prevailing one.) The lingua franca in academic settings is no longer some form of Marxism but some ideological form of feminism. Most colleges have daily student-run newspapers that comment routinely from a feminist point of view on current events and therefore function as organs of propaganda. They advertise or promote “women’s centers,” “rape crisis centers” and “safe spaces for women” but oppose them

for men.⁸⁶ Many colleges require new students to attend lectures that indoctrinate them on current standards of both sexual correctness⁸⁷ and political correctness, warning them of penalties for failing to conform or even to question political orthodoxy. Women's groups on campus organize "take back the night" protests or encourage other forms of protest against "rape culture." Some of these groups indulge, without fear of censure, in explicit hatred toward men.⁸⁸ In Canada, university chapels hold annual liturgies on 6 December to commemorate the mass murder of women by Marc Lépine in 1989 and indirectly to promote the belief that he was a *typical* man, not a deranged one.⁸⁹ Faculties offer courses in "women's studies" or "gender studies," which seldom refer to men at all except as the ultimate problem that women and sexual minorities must overcome. Activists disrupt classes and silence those who speak at or attend "offensive" lectures by classifying them as "misogynists" or "rape apologists" (apart from anything else) and thus undermine the principle of free speech. In addition, they introduce the formerly religious notion of orthodoxy: doctrines that no one may challenge. Teachers at many colleges must provide students with "trigger warnings" before mentioning anything that might prove challenging, including any attempt to question feminist doctrines. Public opinion on campus supports the silencing of any man who dares to argue with this or that aspect of feminism. And those who do so in crude ways can end up suspended or even expelled for creating an "offensive" or "threatening" atmosphere for female students. On V-Day (once Valentine's Day and now Vagina Day) female students (and possibly some intrepid male students) can attend performances of *The Vagina Monologues*.⁹⁰ It all adds up to a very censorious, hostile and intimidating environment for young men, many of whom become either apathetic and listless or truly hostile to women. And the latent hostility that arises from an environment that ignores men at best and denounces or punishes them at worst is particularly dangerous on a college campus. This is where the prevalent mentality of both male and female students is adolescent, after all, and the most popular social events involve binge drinking.

And in the temporary absence of serious charges, trivial ones will do. Consider "mansplaining," men explaining to women what women already know.⁹¹ Never mind that many women enjoy explaining "patriarchy" to men, condescendingly at best, despite the deluge of "information" festooned on walls, featured in campus newspapers, and included in mandatory indoctrination sessions for first-year students. And now there is "manspreading," men taking up too much room on public transportation.⁹² Never mind that women do the same thing, usually because they are either wearing pants instead of skirts (and therefore have no need to worry

about opening their legs) or because they like to use adjoining seats for purses or parcels. It must seem to many male students (let alone men who are not students) that women have developed an infinite capacity to keep inventing new accusations against them. If men take up too much room on the bus, then maybe, they take up too much room in the world. Even the label “sexual predator,” now ubiquitous (both on and off college campuses), is very problematic. That word is a zoological reference to instinctive killing (albeit for survival). Equally problematic are standardized references to the “survivor” of harassment or rape. People survive only when death is the alternative, as it is for those who end up in extermination camps or have cancer. The same linguistic inflation is clear in references beyond hospitals to “toxic” masculinity or beyond chemistry labs to “testosterone poisoning.” The verbal assault on male sexuality, male students, male bodies, male conversation—the male sex—is both prevalent and relentless on most campuses (and, of course, everywhere else). This is ironic, to say the least, given the fact that many students—both male and female, both straight and gay—continue to have sexual relations with each other.

But the harassment of men on campus, which is where so many young men “come of age” and therefore try to solidify their identities as men, involves much more than theories and words. And it flows from the top down. Feminist lawyers and legislators have found ways of modifying legal and quasi-legal policies to favour female students and punish male students (even, once again, by undermining the fundamental principles of due process and the presumption of innocence). Consider the official interpretation of Title IX in the *Civil Rights Act*,⁹³ which the Obama administration made mandatory in the form of guidelines for all universities that receive federal funding (which is to say, almost all of them). The “dear colleagues” letter interpreted Title IX in a way that required colleges to set up what amounted to kangaroo courts for those accused of specifically sexual offenses. Hearings took place behind closed doors, not in public courtrooms. Although colleges had some leeway, the accused did not necessarily have the right to be represented by lawyers, to see the evidence against them and to question or even to know the identity of their accusers. Administering many of these hearings, moreover, were not impartial college officials. On the contrary, they were often from the local Title IX office, which had a vested interest in getting convictions (and therefore suspensions or expulsions). This meant a conflict of interest. Above all, these hearings required the lowest possible standard of proof.⁹⁴ In effect, the accused were often presumed guilty until proven innocent (as they are in the court of public opinion, not in a court of law).

This system dispensed in short, with fundamental features of due process for the accused.

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos rescinded these guidelines in 2017, partly because so many “guilty” students and teachers were suing their colleges and winning. But defenders of those guidelines are most unlikely to concede defeat in the near future.⁹⁵ Activists in California proposed a bill in 2017 that would have enshrined the guidelines in state law, but Governor Jerry Brown vetoed that bill. Not all governors, however, will follow his lead.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the Canadian parliament is considering legislation that would undermine defense attorneys in sexual-conduct cases by forcing them to reveal their cases to the prosecution, thus shifting the historic focus of legal protection from the accused to the accuser.⁹⁷

Although the overt negativity toward male sexuality is probably most common on college campuses, whether many female students welcome that negativity or remain ambivalent, it presents a challenge to all relationships between men and women. This negativity relies heavily on the notion that men “objectify women.” And men do precisely that in erotic contexts (just as women objectify men in erotic contexts), because that is an inherent, though fleeting, feature of *every* erotic encounter whether straight or gay. The problem is that some men come to think of women *only* as sources of physical pleasure. But some women come to think of men only as sources of physical pleasure (although, historically and cross-culturally, women have objectified men primarily as sources of material resources and prestige). But the word “objectification” still refers always to men as the perpetrators, not women (and not only, I think, because male sexuality is probably more visually oriented than female sexuality). The implication is that any effort to seduce a woman, or even any sign of attraction to a woman, is evidence of “objectification” and therefore of misogyny (as if sexual desire itself were tantamount to hatred). Given this profoundly cynical mentality, it is hardly surprising that many ideological feminists follow Andrea Dworkin⁹⁸ in denouncing *every* act of heterosexual intercourse, even one that appears to be consensual but cannot be, she said, because no women can ever truly consent under patriarchy. So every sexual encounter, for women, amounts to rape. Moreover, these feminists follow Sheila Jeffreys,⁹⁹ who said that marriage is a form of legalized prostitution.

And this openly misandric atmosphere follows men from college into the larger world. After graduating (at a rate much lower than that of women),¹⁰⁰ they can expect no respite at work or even at home. It is another “open secret,” for instance, that hiring committees in many fields covertly favor female candidates.¹⁰¹ Family courts, moreover, routinely deny fathers many

of the rights that mothers claim for themselves.¹⁰² The message to boys and men is that fatherhood amounts to assistant motherhood at best and a liability to families at worst. Single motherhood is now a matter of heroic struggle against poverty for some women and an admirable choice for wealthy women. And the advent of gay marriage has reinforced that message. I am gay, but I differ from many other gay men by opposing gay marriage. My reason for doing so has nothing to do with gay relationships, which I strongly support, but with the need of children for both mothers *and fathers*. I disagree with supporters of gay marriage, therefore, who believe that two mothers are just as effective for children as both mothers and fathers (although, logic and consistency notwithstanding, no one seriously argues against the idea that children need mothers).

In fact, fatherhood is eroding quickly. This leaves men with an *unprecedented* problem. They face not only society's hostility (bad though that is) but also its indifference.¹⁰³ Unless boys and men can create a healthy collective identity for themselves (not allowing women to impose a negative one on them), the outlook for harmony between men and women is very dismal. By a "healthy" identity, I mean one that would allow men to make at least one contribution to society that is (a) distinctive; (b) necessary; and (c) publicly valued.¹⁰⁴

Because women can now be providers and protectors, either on their own or with help from the state, neither of those historic functions can serve any longer as a source of identity for men. But can women be fathers as well as mothers? If so, then the last source of healthy identity for men is gone. And many people now do believe that fathers amount to nothing more than assistant mothers. This source of social tension¹⁰⁵ will not go away merely by changing laws or policies (some of which might still be necessary) even with the best of intentions (which is not always the case).

Diagnosis

Our society suffers from the harassment of men by women no less than that of women by men. I do not refer primarily to specifically sexual harassment of men by women, although that is by no means missing from the picture.¹⁰⁶ Rather, I refer to another form of harassment, one that women use very effectively against men (partly because they have created a climate that silences opposition by both custom and law). I must discuss this other form of harassment here, because no one else, to my knowledge, has isolated it as the direct counterpart and functional equivalent of sexual harassment¹⁰⁷ (although I see no causal link between them). Before

proceeding, I must make two things clear.

First, I am discussing mainly collective identity, not personal identity. At issue for me here is how men think and feel about being male, not so much about being whoever they are as individuals. Of course, collective identity and personal identity can be closely related. I say “can be,” because most men seldom thought of themselves as men at all until very recently (unless there was a war going on, say, or a ship going down), which is why establishing a men’s movement was difficult (although early feminists found it just as hard to recruit complacent women.) Most men thought that only horrible men or perverted men got into trouble for criminal behavior, that only bad fathers lost contact with their children, that only lazy or inadequate men lost their jobs, that only vulgar men got into trouble with women and so on. Now, men must think more carefully their collective identity. They have no other choice, because women have thrown down the gauntlet. All men are under attack at all times in the public square. The personal has become political for men no less than for women.

Second, identity harassment is closely related to sexual harassment but also significantly different from it. In both moral theory and legal theory, *motivation* is a necessary factor in understanding offenses or crimes. Is the motivation of a sexual harasser to harm the *identity* of a victim? Was that what Charlie Rose, for instance, really wanted to do? I doubt it. I doubt that even Harvey Weinstein did. I see no evidence that he cared at all about his targets, let alone about their identity as women. Nor do I think that men in general approve of this behavior for that reason (if they do at all). Rather, I think that sexual harassers care only about satisfying their own urges with or without consent from women (although they almost certainly prefer consent, even if only for practical reasons). It is true that victims might experience sexual harassment in a way that calls into question their own identity as women. Some alleged victims have used the word “humiliated,” which does suggest an undermined identity. But this does not mean that sexual harassment is *about* identity and therefore one aspect of it. And what if the sexes were reversed? There are women who sexually harass men, and some men might experience these sexual advances as humiliating enough to undermine their identity as men. But other men, possibly most men, would experience this phenomenon as a fantasy that has come true (unless the initiator were ugly or poor, of course, or repulsive in some other way).¹⁰⁸ But my main goal here is to describe societal phenomena (what people actually say and do collectively), not personal ones (which are, at least to some extent, inaccessible).

The motivation of an *identity* harasser, however, really is to harm the identity of a victim. Identity harassment is the deliberately cultivated and carefully designed product of a movement. The motivation really is, both implicitly and explicitly, to undermine the identity of targets—that is, of boys and men. Identity harassment is about the deliberate shaming and humiliating of male people per se. It has the explicit approval of society, moreover, which is why the state has been able to institutionalize it in many ways— including legal and quasi-legal ones.

Within one or two generations since the advent of second-wave feminism, ideologues have created a society that allows them, routinely and without fear of retribution, to ridicule, shame, silence, denounce and punish men as a class or at least straight, white, men.¹⁰⁹ Not all women take advantage of this arrangement, to be sure, but they can do so very easily. And, at this particular moment, more than a few radicals do precisely that. This has created and even institutionalized a double standard. Women may say whatever they want about men without fear of being denounced for sexism, but men may say whatever they want about women only at the cost of being denounced for sexism—a denunciation that, like racism, can have serious consequences. If we were to adopt a single moral standard, of course, both women and men would think twice before indulging in sexism. This seldom-discussed or even noticed problem, this double standard, has had dire effects on boys and young men. I say this partly because of statistics on their rates of dropping out of school, committing suicide and turning to crime and other forms of antisocial behavior. All of these rates are much higher for men than they are for women. It is no secret among women that men are quickly falling behind women in almost every way,¹¹⁰ including one of the most important of all: education.¹¹¹

Identity harassment is the result of sexism in the form of misandry. Those who wield identity harassment as their weapon of choice are primarily women (along with a few male feminists), and those who suffer from it are boys and men. Those who wield sexual harassment as their weapon of choice are primarily men, and those who suffer from it are girls and women. I suggest that both harassment and sexism come in two flavours, therefore, not one. The two forms of each coexist, but most people notice and acknowledge only one of each: sexual harassment (of women) and misogyny (contempt for women). Misogyny has long been a major preoccupation of society. Misandry remains below the radar. Women have tended to ignore it and sometimes condoned it for political reasons, but even men have tended to do so for reasons of their own.¹¹²

So harassment, whether of women or men, is one symptom of a deeper problem. What I find most troubling about public response to sexual harassment is not the fact that it draws attention to ugly things that some men say or do to women, which are indeed deplorable but also denounced over and over again. What I find most troubling is the way that it hides ugly things that women say or do to men, which are either ignored or condoned. The hypocrisy of this double standard emerges whenever the bad behavior of some powerful man creates a major scandal. If we reject that double standard, and I do, then we are left with only one possible diagnosis: profound and pervasive sexual polarization.

Etiology

How did we get here? I have already alluded briefly to Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* and Helen Gurley-Brown's *Cosmopolitan*. Both publications were products of, but also instigators of, the Sexual Revolution. They would have been impossible without the birth-control Pill, to be sure, but they encouraged readers to explore this technology's implications far beyond the original medical and demographic ones. Both publications advocated rebellion against the sexual morality of earlier generations. Both advocated the same hedonistic way of life, which featured sexual "freedom" along with freedom from many other constraints on personal behavior. Among those constraints had been respect for restraint in general, which included respect for etiquette in particular as it had applied to both "ladies" and "gentlemen." For a while, those who had grown up in the early twentieth century (and those who still lived in conservative religious communities) fought back. But they lost the cultural war.¹¹³ The collapse of an older moral code, along with the material prosperity of a burgeoning economy, made a hedonistic worldview increasingly attractive. It should surprise no one that more than a few of the men who are now succumbing to allegations of sexual abuse came of age, so to speak, at a time when the "rules" really had been very different—which is to say, when there had seemingly been no rules at all. There were still rules of common decency, in fact, but some alpha males chose to ignore them.

Society's attitude toward sex is changing quickly but not necessarily in ways that deserve applause. In one way, we are going into reverse by replicating and even exaggerating an earlier attitude toward sexuality. As I say, the Sexual Revolution has turned into a Sexual Counter-Revolution. Many women, especially young women, have had second thoughts about that earlier revolution, which had given them sexual freedom but at the cost of sexual danger. I think that their proposed solution, vigilantism, is even more dangerous. In any case, Mona Charen concludes that feminists need at least to rethink a fundamental alliance that accompanied the

birth of their own movement.

Beyond partisanship, the feminist record is unhelpful. From the inception of “second wave” feminism in the 1960s, the movement embraced sexual “liberation” as part of women’s liberation. Feminists weren’t so much upset that some men behaved like pigs as they were that women couldn’t do the same without loss of reputation. It was the “double standard” they took aim at, not sexual license itself. In fact, much second-wave feminist literature was devoted to boosting the idea of women’s supposedly superior orgasmic capacity compared with men. In *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millet declared that “all the best scientific evidence today unmistakably tends toward the conclusion that the female possesses, biologically and inherently, a far greater capacity for sexuality than the male ...”

Like the New Left they emerged out of, feminists joined hands with sexual revolutionaries in rejecting all of the old sexual mores—including marriage. “Destroy the patriarchy,” they chanted. They agreed with the Playboy Foundation (a contributor to the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund) that linking sex with morality at all was an outdated idea.

And so professional feminists actually helped midwife the loose sexual culture we have today. Arguably, this culture has permitted men to behave even more shabbily toward women than the old mores did. This may sound odd, but I think it’s true—even the sexual harassment has become grosser than it was a few decades ago. I know of a few women who faced harassment in the 1970s and 1980s (myself included), but honestly, it was practically as polite as a Victorian drawing room compared with the stories we are hearing now about Louis C.K. or Harvey Weinstein or Mark Halperin. Womanizers used to at least make an effort at seduction. Now they seem to act out repellent narratives from porn movies ...

To find our way out of this mess, we need to apologize to our ancestors who understood that sexuality requires careful fencing. Openly sexual talk—such as Matt Lauer and others apparently indulged—does not belong in the office. Watching porn should not be normalized. And at the risk of being called a prude, I’ll also add that we should clean up our language. Profanity defiles. Let’s rediscover aspiration.¹⁴

Now, some women want to have their cake and eat it, too. Intentionally or unintentionally, they send a double message to men. They still demand freedom to have sex with men (or with women) in any circumstances that they like. But they now demand in addition, at least in the workplace, freedom *from* men, including even the most innocent expressions of sexual interest from men. In short, we have returned to the days of “look but don’t touch,” except that even looking is now taboo in connection with the “objectification” or at least discomfort of women. This is definitely not a symbolic message of respect for men. And it suggests, ironically, that men need not show much respect for women in return (although rape

and all other forms of violence are inexcusable in any circumstances). To put it another way, women expect men to treat them as equals, to treat them just as they treat other men. That would be fine except for the fact that not all men treat *other men* with respect. Weinstein and the others exemplify what happens when equality amounts not to equal respect but to *equal disrespect*.

Similarly, women now claim the right to dress in ways that men (or other women) are likely to find sexually provocative or at least seductive. And no one advocates a revival of medieval sumptuary laws. Both men and women should have a legal right to wear, or not wear, whatever they like. But rights entail responsibilities, and those are clearly not high on the list of priorities for either sex right now. Many women argue that they use clothing, or lack of it, as a form of aesthetic, social or political self-expression. And who would oppose freedom or self-expression? But that does not make their choices immune to criticism. Clothing, or lack of it, is not only a matter of freedom or self-expression. It is also a symbolic language that reaches beyond any individual to the community and therefore imposes the need to dress in ways that respect other people. This is definitely not to say that the clothing of women, or lack of it, is the cause of rape (which would make no sense, in any case, of a phenomenon that is by definition coercive). It is to say that women are responsible for their own behavior, including the double messages that they sometimes send through clothing that they themselves buy.

Underlying that historical factor is an additional one: the rise of neo-Romanticism. Underlying that historical factor is an additional one: the rise of neo-Romanticism. I refer here to the growing preoccupation with personal feeling, which found fertile soil in post-war prosperity, materialism and conformity. Many people sought private refuge from increasing public cynicism, too, and found it in charismatic Christianity, pop psychology and therapeutic movements. This was the beginning of a "cultural revolution." In the 1950s, young people such as the beatniks began to rebel against the bourgeois conformity and respectability of their parents. In the 1960s, many young people became hippies and thus part of a much more pervasive "counter-culture." This took many forms, among them the political agitation on college campuses and elsewhere but also widespread interest in communes and other "alternative lifestyles." These often fostered interest in Asian religions but also new religious movements that advocated meditation or the use of psychedelic or other drugs to achieve altered states of consciousness. By the 1970s, this focus on the non-cognitive, often in amorphous movements, was being institutionalized in explicitly therapeutic movements or institutions for the rich such

as EST and therapeutic talk shows such as Oprah Winfrey's. What united many—not all but many—of these phenomena was the gradually increasing focus on self instead of community, on personal gratification or “growth” instead of communal needs and, especially, on feeling instead of thinking. Noticing this phenomenon in the 1970s, Tom Wolfe referred to the “me decade.”¹¹⁵ Christopher Lasch referred to roughly the same thing as a “culture of narcissism.”¹¹⁶

What makes this brief look at cultural history relevant to this discussion is what it reveals about the context of sexual harassment. Neither the hippies nor their parents gave men permission to indulge their sexual appetites in any circumstances or at any cost. But two things separated the hippies from their parents. First, the hippies sincerely believed that men and women had the same sexual appetites. Second, they sincerely believed in hedonism and were therefore inclined to indulge in pleasure as an end in itself. Cultural standards notwithstanding, in short, some men did whatever they liked. But even those men sometimes had to hide what they were doing. The public square has recently come to indicate both continuity and discontinuity with all that. Weinstein and men like him inhabit a cynical world that assumes the counter-cultural rejection of rules such as formal etiquette but extends that rejection to include a rejection of basic morality. So these men represent discontinuity not only with the historic past of gentlemen but also with the recent past of hippies. Their victims, on the other hand, inhabit a world that assumes the enforcement of rules in the form of excessively elaborate and punitive codes of sexual or political “correctness.” In that sense, these women represent (unwitting) continuity with the historic past of ladies. At the same time, though, the preoccupation of both young women and young men with feeling, not thinking, has been with us since only the 1960s. By now, it has led to implacable demands for “safe spaces” and “trigger warnings” instead of intellectual rigor.

Some observers, mainly bloggers, either suggest or say that all or most men harass women sexually. (To my knowledge, no one suggests that Weinstein represents all or most Jewish men, Bill Cosby represents all or most black men, Kevin Spacey represents all or most gay men.) To many, it seems that the very similar allegations against many other men confirm the notion that men, uniquely, are prone to evil. The accusers generally refrain from stating that Weinstein (or fill in the blank) is Everyman, which would be impossible to prove. But many have either said or implied that he took from women forcibly what *all* men feel “entitled” to take from women. So he and other powerful men determine the identity and cause the behavior of all other men. In short, all men are always on trial in the court of public opinion. To cite only one example, listen

to Michelle Goldberg in an op-ed for the *New York Times*: “Sure, [Al] Franken made plenty of sexist jokes when he was with “*Saturday Night Live*,” but I thought he was one of the good guys. (I thought there *were* good guys.)”¹¹⁷ And, given the current tendency to forsake due process in hearings about sexual offenses by “believing” women, the court of public opinion most often finds that all men are guilty as charged. From that point of view, all men are like germs in the body politic. This brings me to the conspiracy theory of history, on which rests the basis of ideological (but not egalitarian) feminism.

Gender was supposedly established in the remote past exclusively by men and exclusively for men. This is why feminist ideologues refer to our society, no matter how much has changed for women and how quickly, as “the patriarchy.” It is self-evident even to the ideologues that not all men actually become alpha males—who are members of an elite group by definition—and therefore do not benefit substantially in terms of wealth, power and prestige. But all men, supposedly, benefit in some measure from the system and therefore support it (the exceptions being either minority men or perhaps converts to feminism of one kind or another). All men supposedly hope, no matter how unrealistically, to become alpha males—if not factually then at least vicariously or symbolically. From that point of view, Weinstein was not some grotesque anomaly; on the contrary, he was a “traditional” masculine role model. From my point of view, it is politicization of this kind, exploiting highly sensationalized high-profile scandals by interpreting them ideologically, that we must challenge.¹¹⁸

The sexual harassment of women by men is an androcentric perversion of male identity, I suggest, and identity harassment of men by women is a gynocentric perversion of female identity. I focus here on identity harassment and its historical link with sexual harassment, as I say, because no one else has. Identity harassment originated with ideological feminists.¹¹⁹ According to them, despite their “diversity,” all of world history revolves around women—or, to be more subtle and more precise, around a direct or indirect conspiracy of men to oppress women. But here is a very significant problem. This theory fails to explain Weinstein’s behavior along with that of President Trump and some other alpha males. If women were the archetypal victims and men the archetypal victimizers, a symbolic polarity that Hollywood itself has made ubiquitous in popular culture since the 1980s (during the replacement of egalitarian feminism with ideological feminism), then we would still have to explain the fact that Weinstein, like Trump, was widely known as an equal-opportunity bully. When it came to intimidation, he acted very badly with both women *and men*. He reacted with screaming tantrums and even

violence to any man who got in his way. He was notorious, in fact, for his vulgar verbal and physical abuse of other *men*. He lunged at men or punched them in the face, often in front of witnesses. (Weinstein felt the need to *hide* his attacks on women, however, which indicates that knowledge that his own behavior toward *women* was transgressive and not an acceptable feature of “rape culture”.) Many of these bullied men considered pressing charges but ended up settling out of court, receiving payments in exchange for their silence. In business, he was ruthless with other men in getting what he wanted.¹²⁰ Weinstein repeatedly ridiculed, humiliated, exploited and intimidated other people, women or *men*, to suit himself. In short, he could treat *anyone* with contempt.¹²¹ Had Weinstein been gay, he would surely have made sexual advances on other men. So, if I must apply a specifically moral category to a fundamentally amoral person, I would call Weinstein neither misogynistic nor misandric but misanthropic. And I would use the same classification for President Trump, although there is one big difference between these two men.

Weinstein knew very well that he was acting in ways that society would *not* openly tolerate—and had not openly tolerated, or at least not consistently tolerated, even during the heyday of *Playboy*; quid-pro-quo sex went on, yes, but behind closed doors. This is why Weinstein tried so hard to prevent these women, through bribery or blackmail or some other form of intimidation, from talking. This is why he hired an “army of spies,”¹²² years before the scandal broke, to find ugly secrets about the women who eventually accused him of harassment or rape. President Trump, on the other hand, might not have known that he was acting badly ten years earlier when bragging to his confidant on the infamous *Access Hollywood* tape. His words suggest that he saw himself as a playboy, whose wealth and status made him irresistibly attractive to women. He clearly says, in the way of an adolescent boy, that women liked being groped by him. He says nothing about them resisting him, which really would have been tantamount to admitting criminal behavior. Trump might well have been lying or deceived, of course, but the evidence that we actually have does not indicate that he was lying or deceived. This does not, of course, make him a nice man, much less a gentleman.

My point here is this: Whatever the origin of either Weinstein’s or President Trump’s behavior might have been, it was something other than either personal or cultural hostility specifically, much less uniquely, toward women. Misogyny is not, therefore, an all-purpose explanation.¹²³

Prognosis

In early 2018, the prognosis seems very negative indeed. Women now have many opportunities to discuss the sexual code (or lack of it) from their own point of view, which is at it should be. Men have very few opportunities to do the same thing, however, which is definitely *not* how it should be. It is hard to make this argument convincing, because it depends on ideas that seem counter-intuitive in a world that relies increasingly, though often unwittingly, on ideological feminism—beginning with its assumption that evil is characteristic of men, not women. Must we believe that men have a great deal to learn about women but not that women have anything to learn about men? Must we assume that the solution to every conflict between men and women is to make allowances for women but either punish men or send them off for “sensitivity training”?¹²⁴ President Trump and his dogged supporters notwithstanding—they rule today only because of a flaw in the electoral system—feminism has become the lingua franca among our society’s most influential members. To the extent that they adopt ideological forms of feminism, their hegemony is not a good thing. I am glad that millions of people are now listening to women and dismayed that they are not listening to men.

But history is full of surprises.

Cure

Is there a cure to this cultural sickness in two forms, sexual harassment and identity harassment? I must admit that I do not actually know how to answer. Otherwise, I would have the Nobel Peace Prize. I do know that abandoning hope would still be premature.

Sexual harassment and identity harassment coexist as two sides of one coin, so we are very unlikely to cure one without also curing the other. It makes no moral or therapeutic sense to denounce Weinstein’s habit of harassing women but to ignore his habit of harassing men. Of much greater importance, it makes no moral or therapeutic sense to denounce the ways in which men harass women but ignore the ways, no matter how different, in which women harass men. The very idea of women harassing men still sounds preposterous to those who assume that “men have all the power,” which is what most people (including the alpha males who actually do have more power than most other people) continue to assume. It sounds much less preposterous to those who study the statistical and other evidence, no matter how surprising.

In any case, women have already taken steps to solve their own problems by using their own historic forms of power: forms of power. They can manipulate men through shame or fear

and bypass the legal system to punish men." Whether they succeed or fail will depend ultimately, however, on how men react. And men have only begun to analyze their own problems, let alone to solve them. By now, they can choose from several strategies, few of them promising. Some agree to become metaphorical lap dogs or trained seals, conforming to whatever passes as politically correct and hoping that women will pin medals on them as a result. Male feminists in particular, are at least as likely as other feminists to adopt ideological versions of feminism despite the cost: self-loathing for themselves and contempt from men who reject feminism as an expression of male identity. Other men try strategies that are more radical but not in good ways: dropping out of school, out of society or even out of life itself. Among them are those who stay safely away from women, known as Men Going Their Own Way. Also among them are those who rebel. They say, in effect, that even a negative identity is better than none at all. The most pragmatic and admirable strategy, I think, is to serve the community of men (and indirectly society as a whole) by providing the services that boys and men desperately need: legal advice, medical advice, psychological counseling, study groups, mentoring, shelters for male victims of domestic violence and so on. In my own part of the world, these men join the Canadian Association for Equality.

And yet I can think of only one way to go *beyond* applying bandages, necessary though that surely is, and actually end sexual polarization along with the resulting harassment of both women and men: challenging both misogyny and misandry through inter-sexual dialogue. This method would begin by cultivating empathy, not suspicion and resentment. As I say, though, our society is not even remotely ready for dialogue (in which both sides win) and not really ready even for debate (in which one side wins and the other loses but truth emerges).¹²⁵ First, we must acknowledge the crisis. "They have treated the wound of my people carelessly," warned Jeremiah, "saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace."¹²⁶ As for the foreseeable future, we are more likely to see peace in the Middle East than we are to see peace between men and women. We have no "national conversations" about anything these days, only ranting on both sides. This is due largely to the current hegemony of identity politics (which ultimately precludes concern for society as a whole), of comparative suffering (which assumes that suffering can be quantified adequately and therefore compared "objectively" but with competing political goals in mind) and the mobilization of resentment (which hides behind the notion of "levelling the playing field"). Dominating public discourse is not merely fragmentation, in short, but polarization: men vs. women but also blacks vs. whites, liberals vs. conservatives, rich vs. poor

and so on.

Meanwhile, some men would avoid any controversy that might endanger whatever remains of good will between the sexes. (Millions of men and women actually continue living happily together no matter how many scandals reach the news, to be sure, but they might well turn out to be anachronisms.) I can hardly disagree on how dangerous it would be to fan the flames of enmity, even inadvertently, but there is another danger to consider: that of passively allowing further erosion of collective identity among boys and men. That would be catastrophic, because boys and men have already endured half a century of being collectively on trial in the court of public opinion, let alone the courts of law that ideological feminists have so effectively “reformed.” Worse, what begins as defensiveness often ends up as offensiveness—and I am not referring merely to lewdness or other “micro-aggressions.” (Consider the rise of President Trump as one analogy; he is the almost inevitable result of some people not listening to other people—which is to say, of the very political correctness that he deplores.) In my opinion, doing nothing about the current state of affairs would be expedient but also counterproductive and morally bankrupt. It would be self-destructive, at any rate, for the very people who want to create a healthy collective identity for themselves as boys and men.

The current focus on sexual-harassment and indifference to identity harassment, gives women the advantage in conflicts with men. This state of affairs *gives power to women*, in fact, and they wield it very effectively though not always wisely. The same state of affairs *denies it to men*, even the power to defend themselves. What would happen, though, if men began to make their own allegations of *identity* harassment? It could hardly increase the level of tension between men and women, but it could sustain the current level. Or, it could create a balance of power and thus support the case for negotiation through dialogue. What, then, about all the anger on both sides? Remember that anger is not incompatible with dialogue. Indeed, there would be no need at all for dialogue in the absence of conflict that generates anger. And that means anger on both sides, not only the side that his adversaries promote. The goal is not to hide that anger but to control it, or channel it, in ways that can lead eventually to reconciliation.

We could begin by noticing and then rejecting double standards. We can hardly have men grabbing women (or other men) with abandon, for instance, so we can hardly afford to dismantle the laws or policies that regulate sexual relations. But if we are going to ban men from “indecent exposure,” for instance, then we should ban women from doing the same thing; they

got on well enough for centuries without breast-feeding on the streets or going topless on public beaches. If we are going to protect the identity of accusers in rape trials, moreover, then we should protect that of the accused as well. If we are not going to assume that a woman's sexual history defines her behavior ever since, then we should not assume that a man's sexual or criminal history defines his behavior ever since; we should judge every case, in other words, on its own evidence. If we are not going to identify alleged victims, then we should not identify alleged perpetrators. And if we are going to have laws against perjury, then we should apply them to everyone—including those women who bear false witness in rape cases. This kind of adjustment is do-able before the Second Coming, I think, and would respect the underlying psychologies of both sexes.

CONCLUSION

It seems clear that the tidal wave of hostility toward men, some of it but not all of it earned, will make it extremely difficult in the foreseeable future for men to defend themselves effectively as a class. But men must find a way to do so. And defensiveness is not necessarily a sign of neuroticism, much less of unmanliness. Sometimes it is a flickering sign of hope. It is among the few resources that men have.. And yet men must use it without falling into the tempting trap of blaming others—that is, women—for all of their problems. Men are not wrong for rebelling against identity harassment, after all, but women are not wrong for rebelling against sexual harassment. This moral balance gives me some hope.

Whatever goes on now, we must at least try to prepare ourselves for the possibility of a more promising future. If we allow even one more male generation to marinate in self-pity and self-loathing, then the consequences for everyone will be unbearable. This is what makes all three of Hillel's sayings provocatively applicable here. I paraphrase the first two, below, by using plural forms to indicate collectivities. Both men and women should read each carefully with that in mind.

If we are not for ourselves, who will be?

But if we are only for ourselves, what are we?

And if not now, when?

AUTHOR PROFILE


Paul Nathanson has a BA (art history), a BTh (Christian theology), an MLS (library service), an MA (religious studies) and a PhD (religious studies). Of particular interest to him is the surprisingly blurry relation between religion and secularity: how religion underlies seemingly secular phenomena such as popular movies and political ideologies. With Katherine Young, he is writing a series on the problem of masculine identity in an age of identity politics and sexual polarization. Four volumes are already in print: *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture*; *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men*; *Sanctifying Misandry: Goddess Ideology and the Fall of Man*; and *Replacing Misandry: A Revolutionary History of the Male*

Body. The fifth and sixth volumes will be *Managing Misandry: Men's Voices on the Meaning of Manhood* and *Transcending Misandry and Misogyny: From Feminist Ideology to Intersexual Dialogue*.

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- ¹ **Editor's Note:** Paul Nathanson has collaborated with Katherine Young on four volumes on misandry, with two additional volumes forthcoming. Dr. Nathanson's essay is followed in this issue by a response from Dr. Young.
- ² Pirkei Avot 1:14.
- ³ It might seem unnecessary to preface every last statement about it with disclaimers such as "some men," "many men" or "most men" (unless statistical data are readily available, which is by no means always the case). Similarly, but for different reasons, it might seem unnecessary to preface every last statement about women with disclaimers such as "a few women," "many women," "most feminists" or even "in some feminist circles." Readers should know from the context which men or which women are under discussion in any passage. And they should know from universal experience of life in this world that virtually nothing applies to all men or all women—not even the configuration of sex chromosomes. Unfortunately, these qualifiers really are sometimes necessary in this overheated conflict, no matter how tedious they might be for readers.
- ⁴ Some of the allegations were very serious ones. Rape is always a very serious matter. Other allegations could be arranged on a continuum between somewhat serious and not serious. This is very difficult to say, because of the intensely emotional and politicized environment that these allegations have generated. Besides, even the "not serious" allegations have serious cultural implications for everyone who wants to create a new social contract. I do not argue that anyone should ignore the discomfort of coarse behaviours, which would be aberrations in any legitimate code of sexual etiquette. I do argue, however, that we must distinguish between violent crimes such as rape and non-violent ones such as lewdness joking, sexting, groping, or flashing. One young man has alleged that he was groped, at the age of fourteen, by Kevin Spacey. Sitting with him in a bar, Spacey reached into the young man's pants and fondled him. This was very distressing to the young man, partly because he not gay and therefore worried about ridicule. Many other people have alleged that they had to watch men masturbate in front of them or even listen over the phone to men masturbating. These things should not happen. But using a combination of public shame and criminal penalties to *destroy the lives* of these men is surely overkill. A better answer, I suggest, would be to find consensus on a new code of sexual etiquette and then make sure that everyone learns it by the time that they reach college or go to work.
- ⁵ Editorial board, "The Silence Breakers: The Voices That Launched a Movement," *Time*, 18 December 2017.
- ⁶ John Patrick Pullen, "And Merriam Webster's Word of the Year Is ... *Time*, 12 December 2017.
- ⁷ By "class," I do not mean an economic class, because every economic class includes men, but a demographic one.
- ⁸ See, for example, Michael Kimmel, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (New York: Harper, 2008). He believes that boys grow up with a sense of "aggrieved entitlement" to privileges that women have not had and should not have. I argue that boys do indeed grow up with a sense of aggrieved

entitlement—not to privilege but to a healthy collective identity. I will return to that topic.

- ⁹ Justin Trudeau, the current Canadian prime minister, prides himself on being a feminist. He refrains from accusing all men of brutality, being a man himself, but he does call for the government to arouse more public attention (and more money) than ever to the cause of (male) violence against women without even acknowledging violence against men—that is, violence per se. By doing so, he demonstrates that Canada has room only for those who support women (which is a good thing) but who also, either explicitly or implicitly, that it has no room for men (which would be inconceivable in any society that cares about all segments of the population). Trudeau’s “comments also come at a time when industries ranging from politics to entertainment have been grappling with widespread allegations of sexual misconduct, commonly featuring unwanted overtures toward women. ‘Ending gender-based violence means transforming a culture that devalues women and dismisses their voices,’ Trudeau said in the statement released Saturday. “Together, we must challenge the prejudices and inequalities that allow this violence to persist ... To change this reality, we must actively seek out and listen to the voices and needs of women, especially those cast furthest to the margins.” (*National Post*, 26 November 2017).
- ¹⁰ Some men react with hostility to the gendered beliefs of *outsiders*. Others react with respect for gendered traditions within their own communities. But they all react. Even in this age of President Trump, men do not set the agenda for public discourse about sex and gender. The ideal would be for men to *participate actively with women* in doing so.
- ¹¹ Debate is symbolic warfare. One side wins, the other loses; one idea is more convincing, the other less convincing. Out of intellectual conflict, though, truth can emerge. We use debate very effectively for legal, legislative and academic purposes. For some purposes, though, it is not so effective. For those, we need dialogue, which is symbolic reconciliation. Both sides win, because both endure.
- ¹² Not all women are comfortable with these public humiliations and apologies. See Claire Berlinski, “The Warlock Hunt,” *The American Interest*, 6 December 2017, the-american-interest.com/2017/12/06/the-warlock-hunt/. “For God’s sake,” she writes, “why are these men all humiliating themselves? It’s not like confessing will bring forgiveness. They *must* all know, like Bukharin, that no matter what they say, the ritual of confession will be followed by the ritual of liquidation. If they said, “You’ve all lost your fucking minds, stop sniffing my underwear and leave me the fuck alone,” they’d meet exactly the same fate. Why didn’t [Nikolai] Bukharin say [to his Soviet jailers during Stalin’s “purge” of 1937], “*To hell with you. You may kill me, but you will not make me grovel?*” I used to wonder, but now I see. Am I the only one who finds these canned, rote, mechanical, brainwashed apologies *deeply* creepy? Isn’t anyone else put in mind of the Cultural Revolution’s Struggle Sessions, where the accused were dragged before crowds to condemn themselves and plead for forgiveness? This very form of ritual public humiliation, aimed at eliminating all traces of reactionary thinking, now awaits anyone accused of providing an unwanted backrub.” Berlinski uses the word “warlock” in her title, presumably for the male victims of this witch hunt, even though the word “witch” can refer, and did for many centuries, to both women and men.
- ¹³ See Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 194-233. In addition to dualism (“they” are inherently or even innately evil), the diagnostic features of ideology include essentialism (“we” are inherently or even innately good), hierarchy (“we” should dominate, and “they” should submit), collectivism, selective-cynicism, consequentialism (the end justifies the means), utopianism, revolutionism (as distinct from reformism) and quasi-religiosity (functioning in many or most ways as the functional equivalent of religion).
- ¹⁴ Josh Rottenberg and Amy Kaufman, “The Fallout: How the Harvey Weinstein Scandal Exposed Sexual Harassment as Hollywood’s Dirty Little Secret,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 October 2017. See also note 29.
- ¹⁵ Sexual harassment is a form of intimidation, or bullying, and therefore one of its defining features is a *power* differential. After all, it would make no sense for people to try bullying those who are *more* powerful than they are.
- ¹⁶ Rape is a criminal offense and therefore accusations of rape should go courts of law, not college committees.
- ¹⁷ In 1992, Women’s Urgent Action dedicated a monument in Ottawa’s Minto Park to “all women abused and murdered by men.” This monument listed the names of 39 local women. Controversy erupted, however, only eight years later, when the group learned from a court that one of the listed women had not, in fact, been murdered. The group had to erase her name but announced that it would replace that name with the name of another woman whose status as a murder victim was still pending in the court system. According

to Simone Thibeault, “a former social worker and member of the women’s group, “The justice system has not been there for a lot of women, has not been respectful of what these women are going through in these types of situations. Therefore it’s difficult to respect it. I think it’s improved over time, but there’s still a long way to go.” Thibeault says it would be wrong to wait for closure by the legal system when naming victims. She says her group would end up waiting years to properly grieve for women who have been murdered” (“Minto Park Monument Controversy,” *CBC News*, 31 March 2000) cbc.ca/news/canada/minto-park-monument-controversy-1.248385.

Many monuments commemorate Marc Lépine’s murder of 14 women at the University of Montreal on 6 December 1989. These have become pilgrimage sites, visited with particular solemnity on the anniversary. Colleges across Canada mark the occasion with liturgies that rely heavily on those used for commemorations of the Holocaust. For more on that, see Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 53-78.

- ¹⁸ According to the FBI, 90.2% of violent offenders (murder) were men, but 77.4% of the *victims* (murder) were also men. Clearly women are not equal to men either in being violent or in being the victims of violence. See “Crime in the United States,” United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010, ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded/expandhomicidemain.
- ¹⁹ Jonathan Lemire and Catherine Lucey, “Kelly Defends Trump’s Condolence Calls, Lashes out at Congresswoman,” *Globe and Mail*, 19 October 2017.
- ²⁰ The Minister of Status of Women is a member of the federal cabinet in Canada; most provinces have ministers with similar responsibilities.
- ²¹ Adam Jones, “Aboriginal Men Are Murdered and Missing Far More Than Aboriginal Women: A Proper Inquiry Would Explore Both,” *National Post*, 27 April 2017. “According to Statistics Canada data compiled by my research assistant Penny Handley, approximately 2,500 aboriginal people were murdered in Canada between 1982 and 2011, out of 15,000 murders in Canada overall. Of the 2,500 murdered aboriginal Canadians, fully 71 per cent—1,750—were male, and 745 were female (and one was ‘of unknown gender’).”
- ²² See, for example, Marlene Jaeckel, “The Empress Has No Clothes: The Dark Underbelly of Women Who Code and Google Women Techmakers,” *Medium*, 3 December 2017, medium.com/@marlene.jaeckel/the-empress-has-no-clothes-the-dark-underbelly-of-women-who-code-and-google-women-techmakers-723be27a45df.
- ²³ Powerful people, including powerful women, said the same thing to excuse themselves from remaining silent instead of informing on Weinstein. They resorted to hypocrisy in the wake of early allegations against Weinstein. Hillary Clinton, for instance, eventually had to excuse her silence about Weinstein, a close friend and a generous supporter to her campaign and to other liberal causes, by claiming that she had known nothing about his unsavory behavior. Who had really known, after all, what was going on behind closed doors in the offices or houses of movie moguls? Years earlier, moreover, she had found it expedient to blame her husband’s dalliance with Monica Lewinsky as much on her as on him. Feminist supporters of Bill Clinton, including Gloria Steinem, announced that his sexual behavior with Monica Lewinsky was trivial compared to the good that he had done and could still do for women. *Quid pro quo*. When scandals target people of your own sort, especially if you take their money and use their support, denouncing them is problematic. It was not in the interest of liberals or feminists to denounce Weinstein, for instance, because he supported their causes generously. Ironically, you could say that he and they had a *quid pro quo* arrangement: He supported their causes, and they ignored his sexual activities.
- ²⁴ Thelma Adams, “Casting-Couch Tactics Plagued Hollywood Long Before Harvey Weinstein,” *Variety*, 17 October 2017.
- ²⁵ Ross Douhat, “Our Broken Sexual Culture Goes Far Beyond Disgusting Harassment: As a Society, We Are Actually in Some Serious Trouble on the Mating and Propagation Front,” *New York Times*, 5 December 2017.
- ²⁶ See Roxane Gay, “Dear Men, It’s You, Too,” *New York Times*, 19 October 2017.
- ²⁷ During the Depression, Warner Brothers produced several backstage musicals, in fact, which refer by innuendo to casting couches in New York’s theatre industry. By far the most famous and successful of its kind was 42nd *Street* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933). Viewers learn very quickly that the ambitious show-girls will do *anything* to leave the chorus line and become stars. Ruby Keeler plays Peggy, a dancer who is not merely ambitious but *hungry*. Illicit sex might be a fate worse than death back home, she learns from her new

friends, but it is better than starving to death in the big city. And yet she refrains from a romantic involvement with Julian, the producer. This is because she has found true love with Billy, the show's young tenor. Viewers never find out if he has the same *coveted opportunity* as Peggy does to become a star. In the original novel by Bradford Ropes, however, Billy does indeed sleep with Julian and reaps the reward for doing so. Hollywood movies made it clear, moreover, that casting couches operated not only in the entertainment industry. In *Baby Face* (Alfred E. Green, 1933), Barbara Stanwyck plays Lily, an ambitious and self-confident woman who sleeps her way up, socially and economically, from a bank's clerical offices on the ground floor to its managerial ones on the top floor.

It is true that what caused most public outrage against old Hollywood was due to what went on in front of the camera, but the close link between debauchery in front of the camera and debauchery behind it was obvious to everyone—and not only within the entertainment industry. Moviegoers in “Peoria” knew or at least suspected what was going on, which is why they routinely denounced Hollywood (and often New York) for decadence and sinfulness, which eventually forced the entertainment industry to clean up its act (if not on in the studios then at least in the movies that they produced there). Increasingly, therefore, conservative and religious leaders attacked Hollywood's decadence. By 1933, studios found it necessary to cooperate with the National Legion of Decency, rating and censoring movies in connection with the level of debauchery that viewers would see but doing nothing about the infamous casting couch that viewers could not see. Hiding reality, of course, was something that could be left to the dream factories.

The casting couch had never been a sign of professional morality. Professionalism had never had anything to do with Hollywood (although it should have with the passage of time and the rise of unions, film schools and so on). The casting couch was not only a cynical sign of power (for those with power), however, but also an opportunistic sign of ambition (for those who wanted power). The Hollywood moguls (and many of their equivalents in other industries) were not “professionals” at all. They were not refined gentlemen. They did not learn their trade at film school or take Professional Ethics 101. To put it bluntly, they were ruthless and even brutal businessmen in an industry that rewarded physical beauty, whether female or male, more highly than anything else—even more than acting ability (although the most successful moguls understood that some acting talent and the ability to dance or carry a tune could be helpful). The actresses, too, were not professionals (except, perhaps, for a few stars from the Broadway stage or even the London stage). They did not go to film school or take Feminist Ethics 101. They were not, for the most part, refined ladies who fainted at the sight of someone's genitals or the sound of a lewd joke (although they sometimes played characters that did). They were talented, by and large, but also tough and ambitious businesswomen. And, as I say, the same applied to young actors. All of these people, both female and male, learned very quickly what the price of a breakout part in a new movie could be and saw that price in the context of opportunity. On the whole, they paid it willingly. Some rose almost overnight from the lower ranks.

Much of that world is no more. Today, people expect a much closer match between the ideal and the real. But some things have obviously not changed. Business remains what it was in the 1920s. And sexuality remains what it has been since the dawn of human history. First, consider what has continued to occur in front of the camera. In *Swimming with Sharks* (George Huang, 1985), Kevin Spacey plays Buddy, the studio boss from hell. He brutally harasses his *male* employees in every way except the specifically sexual one. In *Hollywoodland* (Allen Coulter, 2006), Ben Affleck plays George, an ambitious young actor. Soon after arriving in Hollywood, he has an affair with Toni, the wife of a movie mogul. She claims that her marriage is “open,” so George becomes a “kept man.” Toni does use her influence to get jobs for George but not ones that are good enough to reward his talent.

Most recently, the scope of these movies has come to include gay perpetrators—and male victims. “Women,” writes Adams, “aren't the exclusive victims of the casting couch. The notorious agent Henry Willson, the subject of Robert Hofler's book ‘The Man Who Invented Rock Hudson: The Pretty Boys and Dirty Deals of Henry Willson,’ played the same power game with generations of boys and young men seeking Hollywood recognition. Counting Hudson, Tab Hunter and Troy Donahue among his clients as well as Lana Turner and Natalie Wood, the predatory Willson had a reputation as a “casting couch agent,” trading liaisons for opportunity in the '40s, '50s and '60s” (Adams, “Casting-Couch Tactics”). Until very recently, gay victims were even more desperate to avoid “coming forward” than female victims were, because being gay was in itself enough to destroy their careers.

²⁸ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New York: Vintage, 1990). That book quickly became both famous for recognizing the power of female sexuality and notorious for refusing to romanticize it. This point of view set the tone for most of her later books, articles and

interviews.

- ²⁹ Janice Fiamengo, “#Me Too,” transcript of panel discussion, Canadian Association for Equality (Ottawa, 8 December 2017). “When I was trying to think how to begin this talk,” said the author, “it occurred to me that the safe way to begin would be to affirm that I’m opposed to sexual assault and sexual harassment—get that out of the way. But I really can’t say it because I don’t know what the terms mean anymore. They have been stretched to such an extent by the plethora of self-proclaimed victims who have been coming forward of late. I don’t want to lend even momentary lip service to a truly bizarre social trend that doesn’t distinguish between the innocuous and the criminal. And I especially don’t want to lend support to a movement, symbolized in the #Me Too hashtag but going on for years now, that operates on the assumption that a man is probably guilty if a woman says he is. We’re at a remarkable moment in our history, in which the contradictions of feminist ideology, rather than causing the movement to lose public momentum, actually seem to be causing it to pick up steam, and in which contempt for men has become so normalized that sweeping condemnations of all men are now perfectly acceptable. The contradiction in feminist ideology that is most striking is the assertion that women are fully as capable as men to exercise their talents in the public sphere—that anyone who says otherwise is exhibiting the rankest bigotry and the most vile misogyny—coupled with displays by women of the exact opposite—of a Victorian-era fragility of epic proportions.”

At another point in her talk, Fiamengo remarked that “every day seems to bring fresh denunciations, more women coming forward, more men publicly called out, more affirmations of outrage, more abject apologies by men and promises to do better, and ever more determined declarations that something will be done. This is surely a phenomenon of mass hysteria, in which thousands of women claim to have been sexually terrorized by a range of behaviors that include lewd remarks, jokes, compliments, requests for dates, expressions of sexual interest, or fully clothed physical contact in public spaces.”

- ³⁰ Berlinski, “Warlock Hunt.” Even Berlinski finds it necessary to begin with a disclaimer. Her problem is not with the campaign against sexual harassment, which is a serious problem, but with the turn that it has taken. “Recently I saw a friend—a man—pilloried on Facebook for asking if #Me Too is going too far. ‘No,’ said his female interlocutors. ‘Women have endured far too many years of harassment, humiliation, and injustice. *We’ll tell you when it’s gone too far.*’ But I’m part of that ‘we,’ and I say it is going too far. Mass hysteria has set in. It has become a classic moral panic, one that is ultimately as dangerous to women as to men. It now takes only one accusation to destroy a man’s life. Just one for him to be tried and sentenced in the court of public opinion, overnight costing him his livelihood and social respectability. We are on a frenzied extrajudicial warlock hunt that does not pause to parse the difference between rape and stupidity. The punishment for sexual harassment is so grave that clearly this crime—like any other serious crime—requires an unambiguous definition. We have nothing of the sort.”
- ³¹ Andrew Buncombe, “Charlie Rose Sacked by CBS after Being Accused of Groping, Lewd Phone Calls and Indecent Exposure,” *Independent*, 21 November 2017.
- ³² Yamiche Alcindor and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “Conyers Scandal Highlights Divisions, Generational and Gender,” *New York Times*, 28 November 2017.
- ³³ Sarah Maslin Nir, “New York Assemblyman Is Disciplined for Sexual Harassment,” *New York Times*, 29 November 2017.
- ³⁴ “I put my hand on a woman’s bare back I meant to pat her back after she told me about her unhappiness and her shirt was open and my hand went up it about six inches. She recoiled. I apologized. I sent her an email of apology later and she replied that she had forgiven me and not to think about it. If I had a dollar for every woman who asked to take a selfie with me and who slipped an arm around me and let it drift down below the beltline, I’d have at least a hundred dollars” (Garrison Keillor; quoted in Maya Salam, “Minnesota Public Radio Drops Garrison Keillor over Allegations of Improper Conduct,” *New York Times*, 29 November 2017). According to Keillor, the two remained friends “right up until her lawyer called.”
- ³⁵ I rely here not on statistical studies, if there are any, but on anecdotal evidence. This makes no difference for my purpose here, though, because I am not arguing that men and women have identical sexual responses—only observing what should be obvious to everyone: that there is a great deal of variation both between the sexes and within each sex. The fact remains that some women are terrified by sexual situations that other women (and men) do not find at all terrifying. Of importance here is not the reason for this variation but the mere fact of its existence. This is what makes finding common ground or even mutual understanding so very difficult. In *this* sense, the primary problem is *not* sexual intimidation in the workplace but the much deeper one of sexuality itself. Attitudes, perceptions and responses are deeply embedded in every person. Communities are not merely bureaucracies. Any significant shift in sexual

attitudes would probably take more than one generation and require changes much more fundamental than new policies and procedures in the workplace (although these will always be necessary).

- ³⁶ Bret Stephens, “When @MeToo Goes Too Far”, *New York Times*, 29 December 2017.
- ³⁷ Bartley Kives, “Premier under Fire for Thanking Chamber Chair for Wearing High Heels, Says Comment Was Joke about Height. *CBC News*, 7 December 2017, cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/pallister-hurme-heels-speech-comments-1.4438745.
- ³⁸ How many parents would even now refuse to comment on the physical beauty of their young daughters for fear of sending the currently inappropriate (but nonetheless correct) message that this physical attribute could be advantageous later on? Some would but not many. It is true that men have been preoccupied with the physical appearance of women (partly because that is how male sexuality works and partly because of gendered stereotypes), but women are by no means alone in having to face gendered stereotypes that focus attention on superficial qualities. How many parents would now refuse to comment on the physical prowess of their young sons for fear of sending the currently inappropriate (but nonetheless correct) message that these physical attributes could be advantageous later on? Not many. In both cases, remarks of this kind can build confidence—although there is no reason to reinforce gendered stereotypes by failing to comment on a daughter’s physical strength, say, or on a son’s beauty.
- ³⁹ James Bezan, quoted in “‘This Isn’t My Idea of a Threesome’: Tory MP Apologizes for ‘Flippan’t Comment to Liberal,” *Toronto Star*, 4 December 2017.
- ⁴⁰ Christie Blatchford, “Tearful Liberal MP Should Accept James Bezan’s Fifth Apology and Move On,” *National Post*, 6 December 2017.
- ⁴¹ There was a time, within living memory, when sophisticated people, men and women alike, actually enjoyed “risqué” jokes and “double entendre.” They enjoyed cleverness and wittiness. Mae West became famous precisely for her risqué jokes, which she wrote for herself. And consider the famous scene in *To Have and Have Not* (Howard Hawks, 1944), when cheerfully and effortlessly seductive Lauren Bacall says to Humphrey Bogart: “You know how to whistle, don’t you, Steve? You just put your lips together and blow.” I have never read about female viewers walking out of theaters or complaining that the screenwriter had “humiliated” them. Even relatively innocent movies in those days of censorship, such as those of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, relied heavily on this kind of humor. The Great Depression notwithstanding, viewers smiled at their balletic scenes as graceful metaphors of the process that begins with attraction (first his and then hers), continues with rejection (her rejection of his perseverance, due most often to mistaken identity) and concludes with reunion. These movies presented life as a beautiful and joyful dance between men and women as equals. (And, contrary to popular opinion, Rogers did not do everything that Astaire did only backwards and in high heels. She danced side by side with Astaire, not following his “lead.” And he alone did the choreography. I make this minor point only to indicate that Astaire and Rogers represented a paradigm of sexual equality, not “patriarchy.”). This was an ideal, of course, and not everyone attained it. But every society must have an ideal of personal behavior in daily life. Do we have a better one?
- ⁴² Fiamengo, “#Me Too.” The speaker put it this way: “I find it concerning that someone with governmental responsibility for a file as serious as veterans affairs would allow herself even for an hour—not to mention seven months—to be distracted by such a trivial matter. Are women really such delicate reeds, such psychologically fragile entities that a few words uttered in jest in a public place, and then repeatedly apologized for could wreak such emotional havoc. It seems they are.”
- ⁴³ Both the original novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, by female author E.L. James (London, Vintage, 2011), and its filmed version (Sam Taylor-Johnson, 2015) have been massively popular among women. Here is the author’s own description of the story: “When literature student Anastasia Steele goes to interview young entrepreneur Christian Grey, she encounters a man who is beautiful, brilliant, and intimidating. The unworldly, innocent Ana is startled to realize she wants this man and, despite his enigmatic reserve, finds she is desperate to get close to him. Unable to resist Ana’s quiet beauty, wit, and independent spirit, Grey admits he wants her, too—but on his own terms. Shocked yet thrilled by Grey’s singular erotic tastes, Ana hesitates. For all the trappings of success—his multinational businesses, his vast wealth, his loving family—Grey is a man tormented by demons and consumed by the need to control. When the couple embarks on a daring, passionately physical affair, Ana discovers Christian Grey’s secrets and explores her own dark desires. Erotic, amusing, and deeply moving, the *Fifty Shades Trilogy* is a tale that will obsess you, possess you, and stay with you forever” (eljamesauthor.com/books/fifty-shades-of-grey/). Clearly, not all women are prissy enough to fit the current stereotype (or that of the Victorian period). Feminists would

have to work very diligently indeed at any attempt to explain away all those women as hapless dupes of “the patriarchy.”

- ⁴⁴ Not everyone agrees that sexual behavior can be subtle, let alone that the rules keep changing and double messages keep intruding. Listen to one blogger: “The recent discussion regarding sexual harassment has taken an even darker turn for women, it seems. I cringed when I read that Owen Cunningham, a director at a design firm, suggested that it ‘cancel the holiday party’ until it has been figured out how men and women should interact. Really? Do your male employees truly need explicit instructions on how to not inappropriately touch, leer at or utter sexist statements to their female co-workers? Most reasonable human beings implicitly realize what is inappropriate and what is not, even if they do happen to be standing, spiked eggnog in hand, under the mistletoe. I was also deeply unsettled by the article’s statement that some men ‘said they planned to be a lot more careful in interacting with women because they felt that the line between friendliness and sexual harassment was too easy to cross.’ It is not. There is a very deep chasm, not a thin line, between appropriate social interactions and sexual harassment” (Carolyn Martin, “Letters,” *New York Times*, 21 November 2017). One problem is that this blogger refers to “reasonable human beings,” and sex is not a reasonable phenomenon.
- ⁴⁵ In this case, it is worthwhile to examine the blatantly ideological (surely not scientific) argument of a male feminist: Stephen March, “The Unexamined Brutality of the Male Libido,” *New York Times*, 28 November 2017. Worth noting are the comments; among those who challenge the author’s assumptions are not only male readers (some of whom are dismissed for defensiveness) but also female readers (who clearly still hold the moral high ground no matter which point of view they espouse).
- ⁴⁶ See, for example, Marilyn French, *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals* (New York: Summit Books, 1985).
- ⁴⁷ See Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen R. Catanese and Kathleen D. Vohs, “Is There a Gender Difference in Strength of Sex Drive? Theoretical Views, Conceptual Distinctions, and a Review of Relevant Evidence,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 136.1 (2010): 21–38. The authors argue that men have a stronger sex drive than women. See also Jennifer L. Petersen and Janet Shibley Hyde, “A Meta-Analytic Review of Research on Gender Differences in Sexuality, 1993–2007,” *Psychological Bulletin* 136.1 (2010): 21–38. They argue that the differences are negligible. For my purposes here, though, difference in sex drive would make no moral difference. Even if men do have “raging hormones,” after all, that still would not excuse coercion, intimidation or violence.
- ⁴⁸ Michael Gurian, “What Will We Teach Our children about Sexual Boundaries?” Blog, Gurian Institute, 7 December 2017, gurianinstitute.com/blog--newsletter/what-will-we-teach-our-children-about-sexual-boundaries. “In the past two decades of doing this work,” writes Gurian, “I noticed both the possibility and impossibility of legislating sexual dynamics. First, the impossibility: more than ½ of dating, romantic partnership, and marriage grows from workplace relationships. Most people in a workplace over a period of decades will likely feel some kind of sexual confusion at some point. Research has indicated for decades that men feel more sexual confusion than women; men tend to be more awkward in their sexual dance. But most women, too, at some point, will feel feelings for someone that surprise them, and in many cases, they will act on those feelings.” Gurian writes in this blog from the perspective of “corporate sexual harassment training,” but he writes also from that of someone who experiences sexual abuse in childhood. He clearly takes the flood of sexual-harassment allegations very seriously and raises some thoughtful questions about the current attitude of corporate America in general and about “zero tolerance” policies in particular. “A social debate about sexual boundaries should be a primal debate. It should be and is one about which I feel qualified to speak. While there are ways that women can’t understand men, and men can’t understand women, if we let “men can’t understand” be the “new” thought of the #MeToo movement, we will fail ourselves and our children. We’ve heard that idea before, and it creates a gender war that helps fuel the situation we are all in now ... [One] business leader I talked with told me, ‘No one today wants to look like they are not on the side of this momentum. Zero tolerance for any female discomfort may be coming back.’ While this kind of policy may have seemed to work in small pockets—workplace bubbles—workplaces understood over the years that “hostility” and “hostile work environment” were more realistic than “I felt uncomfortable” because “uncomfortable” was, in its own way, too amorphous, and too unfair.” Gurian’s suggestions are about clear definitions of sexual harassment in the workplace and effective but fair policies for coping with complaints. But he worries also about the highly sexualized tone of popular culture and its effects on children.

For someone with an abiding personal and professional interest in the specific psychological needs of boys, though, he confines himself to marginal comments. Yes, he realizes that parents, including the

parents of sons, should worry about the rising tide of a puritan and punitive mentality; both women and men are likely to suffer as a result. Yes, he realizes the probability that sexual harassment of men by women will increase with the rise of women to power in the corporate world. He says nothing, however, about the *particular kind* of harassment that boys and men face in this increasingly gynocentric world. Of course, no one can say everything in one entry of a blog.

- ⁴⁹ Leon F. Seltzer, "The Triggers of Sexual Desire: Men vs. Women: Are Male Brains Hard-Wired to See Females as Sex Objects?" *Psychology Today*, 11 May 2012; see also his main source: Ogi Ogas and Sai Gaddam, *A Billion Wicked Thoughts: What the World's Largest Experiment Reveals about Human Desire* (New York: Dutton, 2011). By "experiment," they refer to the internet and how the brain uses it. These authors rely on evolutionary psychology, which can easily succumb to biological determinism. They do not argue that male brains are hard-wired to see women only or always as sex objects, nonetheless, merely that they do so in the run-up to copulation.
- ⁵⁰ If male physiology depended exclusively on visual stimulation, of course, then it would be impossible for visually impaired men to have sex—and yet they do.
- ⁵¹ Krish, "My Father," in *Sons of Feminism: Men Have Their Say*, ed. Janice Fiamengo (Ottawa: Little Nightingale Press, 2017).
- ⁵² Sheryl Sandberg, quoted in Nicholas Kristof, "Steinem, Sandberg and Judd on How to End Sex Harassment," *New York Times*, 25 October 2017. Sandberg refers to both "men and women who are complicit," an expression of fairness that eludes many commentators.
- ⁵³ Max Fisher and Amanda Taub, "The Interpreter: Sexual Harassment Takes a Village," *New York Times*, 22 November 2017; my emphasis.
- ⁵⁴ Fiamengo, "#Me Too." The speaker reminded her audience that "There are many countries in the world where community justice is still a primary mode of dealing with a range of perceived offences or social problems—where accused persons are surrounded in the street, denounced, heckled, even beaten and killed. No one is seriously recommending physical violence in cases of male sexual predation of women—yet. But we are talking, quite openly and without reservation, about the character assassination of accused men, about making it impossible for accused individuals to pursue their livelihoods or maintain their reputation—all while the pillars of the community stand by and applaud the angry mob. We can pretend it's a higher form of justice, but it's the same old brutal scapegoating mechanism our ancestors sought to abolish.
- ⁵⁵ Goldberg, "Franken Should Go."
- ⁵⁶ One obvious example in the West is anti-Judaism, which originated with the belief that all Jews of all times bear the guilt of those who actually conspired with the Romans to kill Jesus.
- ⁵⁷ Amber Tamblyn, "I'm Not Ready for the Redemption of Men," *New York Times*, 30 November 2017.
- ⁵⁸ Dana Nessel; quoted in Amanda Terkel, "Michigan Candidate Has an Idea How To End Harassment: Vote For Someone Without a Penis," *Huffington Post*, 29 November 2017.
- ⁵⁹ Christie Blatchford, "What Happened to Brown Is Fundamentally Wrong. Every Man in the World Is Now Vulnerable," *National Post*, 26 January 2018. Blatchford refers to the dumping of Patrick Brown, leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, after two *anonymous* allegations that amounted to flirting (which he stopped when asked to do so). No one in his own party, let alone the nation's "feminist" prime minister, asked for an investigation, in or out of court; they threw him under the bus because of nothing more than hearsay.
- ⁶⁰ One allegation against Roy Moore really was false. Jaime T. Phillips, who claimed to have borne his child when she was 15, was acting in concert with a scheme to discredit the senatorial candidate with his Republican colleagues (Matthew Haag, "Woman Tried to Dupe Washington Post with False Claim about Roy Moore, Paper Says," *New York Times*, 27 November 2017). Phillips could not be charged with perjury, of course, because she had not lied in court. But even those who do lie in court seldom face charges for doing so, which is what failed to happen when a Canadian court showed clearly that two women had relied on "outright deception" and "collusion" in falsely accusing Jian Ghomeshi of rape. This case galvanized the Canadian movement to "believe women." Even the leader of a political party denounced the court's decision and thus undermined the country's legal system.

Other infamous examples include the false allegations of rape against Duke University's lacrosse team (Justin Block, "10 Years Later, The Duke Lacrosse Rape Case Still Stings," *Huffington Post*, 12 December 2016, huffingtonpost.ca/entry/duke-lacrosse-rape-espn-30-for-30_us_56e07e33e4b065e2e3d486f7) and the

false allegation of rape by Columbia University's "mattress girl" (Mona Charen, "It's High Time Columbia's Mattress Girl Was Discredited," *National Review*, 3 August 2017). The latter dragged around the mattress on which a male student had allegedly raped her; this functioned also as a work of performance art for one of her classes. "It has become a feminist catechism," writes Charen, "that women must be 'believed' when they make accusations of rape. As the University of Montana tells incoming freshmen, 'almost no one lies.' But of course they do. The woman who spun the lurid tale to *Rolling Stone* about being gang-raped at the University of Virginia invented every detail. The Duke lacrosse players were falsely accused. So were the Scottsboro boys. Again, this doesn't mean all accusations are false or malicious, nor is every case of alleged sexual misconduct merely a matter of "regretted sex." But [Emma] Sulkowicz has dined out on dubious victimhood for years, and it's high time she was discredited."

⁶¹ James Higdon and Marwa Eltagour, "A Lawmaker Accused of Molesting a Teen Killed Himself," *Washington Post*, 14 December 2017.

⁶² One fascinating but terrifying article in the *New York Times* points out the declining ability of legal or governmental structures to maintain order and the rise of commercial or popular ones. It was not really NBC that fired Matt Lauer; it was public pressure that forced the giant corporation to do so. Within one day of the allegation against him, NBC did what older democratic institutions would have taken much longer to do. To describe this phenomenon charitably, NBC heeded the will of the people. To describe it less charitably, NBC bowed to mob rule and functioned as the guarantor of vigilante justice. "The modern American capitalist system is far from perfect. But for all its flaws, our system—and the digital communication channels it enabled—has delivered social justice more swiftly and effectively than supposedly more enlightened public bodies tend to. As we observe and adjust to the socio-sexual storm we're all in, let's appreciate the powers and paradigms making it possible: feminism, but also free markets" (Elizabeth Nolan Brown, "NBC Didn't Fire Matt Lauer. We Did," *New York Times*, 29 November 2017).

⁶³ Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 3-26.

⁶⁴ For some reason, not many psychologists got on the bandwagon of belief to support claims of alien abduction.

⁶⁵ Lindy West, "Donald Trump Did It," *New York Times*, 13 December 2017. "Yes," she says, "President Donald Trump has sexually harassed women. This concludes my ethics investigation." Infuriating West is the idea the idea of business as usual pending thorough investigations. Without actually denying the need for those, she trivializes them as legal niceties that merely delay public recognition of what she considers truth. "I am so tired of participating in the collective national farce that things happening right in front of our eyes might not really be happening. That we do not already know the truth about what our president and the nation he rules think about women. We know. Anyone who says he doesn't know is lying." This is the very populism that gives Trump a bad name.

⁶⁶ Berlinski, "Warlock Hunt." In this feverish political atmosphere, it is worth quoting the author at some length:

The things men and women naturally do—flirt, play, lewdly joke, desire, seduce, tease—now become harassment only by virtue of the words that follow the description of the act, one of the generic form: 'I froze. I was terrified.' It doesn't matter how the man felt about it. The onus to understand the interaction and its emotional subtleties falls entirely on him. But why? Perhaps *she* should have understood his behavior to be harmless—clumsy, sweet but misdirected, maladroit, or tacky—but lacking in malice sufficient to cost him such arduous punishment?

In recent weeks, I've acquired new powers. I have cast my mind over the ways I could use them. I could now, on a whim, destroy the career of an Oxford don who at a drunken Christmas party danced with me, grabbed a handful of my bum, and slurred, 'I've been dying to do this to Berlinski all term!' That is precisely what happened. I am telling the truth. I will be believed—as I should be.

But here is the thing. I did not freeze, nor was I terrified. I was amused and flattered and thought little of it. I knew full well he'd been dying to do that. Our tutorials—which took place one-on-one, with no chaperones—were livelier intellectually for that sublimated undercurrent. He was an Oxford don and so had power over me, *sensu stricto*. I was a 20-year-old undergraduate. But I also had power over him—power sufficient to cause a venerable don to make a perfect fool of himself at a Christmas party. Unsurprisingly, I loved having that power. But now I have too much power. I have the power to destroy someone whose tutorials were invaluable to me and shaped my entire intellectual life much for the better. This is a power I do not want and should not have ...

Over the course of my academic and professional career, many men who in some way held a position of power over me have made lewd jokes in my presence, or reminisced drunkenly of past lovers, or confessed

sexual fantasies. They have hugged me, flirted with me, on occasion propositioned me. For the most part, this male attention has amused me and given me reason to look forward to otherwise dreary days at work. I dread the day I lose my power over men, which I have used to coax them to confide to me on the record secrets they would never have vouchsafed to a male journalist. I did not feel 'demeaned' by the realization that some men esteemed my cleavage more than my talent; I felt damned lucky to have enough talent to exploit my cleavage ...

Revolutions against real injustice have a tendency, however, to descend into paroxysms of vengeance that descend upon guilty and innocent alike. We're getting too close. Hysteria is in the air. The over-broad definition of 'sexual harassment' is a well-known warning sign. The over-broad language of the Law of Suspects portended the descent of the French Revolution into the Terror. This revolution risks going the way revolutions so often do, and the consequences will not just be awful for men. They will be awful for women.

Harvey Weinstein must burn, we all agree. But there is a universe of difference between the charges against Weinstein and those that cost Michael Oreskes his career at NPR. It is hard to tell from the press accounts, but initial reports suggested he was fired because his accusers—both anonymous—say he kissed them. Twenty years ago. In another place of business. Since then, other reports have surfaced of what NPR calls 'subtler transgressions.' They are subtle to the point of near-invisibility." In the parlance of college campuses, these are "micro-aggressions."

- ⁶⁷ Rachel Donadio, "France, Where #MeToo Becomes #PasMois," *Atlantic*, 9 January 2018.
- ⁶⁸ Christina Hoff Sommers, "A Panic Is Not an Answer: We're at Imminent Risk of Turning This #MeToo Moment into a Frenzied Rush to Blame All Men," *New York Daily News*, 26 November 2017.
- ⁶⁹ Margaret Atwood, "Am I a Bad Feminist," *Globe and Mail*, 15 January 2018.
- ⁷⁰ Alison Flood, "Germaine Greer Criticizes 'Whingeing' #MeToo Movement," *Guardian*, 23 January 2018.
- ⁷¹ Sarah Vine, "Madness of This War against Men: Yes, Dirty Old Men Who Grope Women Are Vile, But the Hysteria over the Presidents Club Reflects a Growing Hatred of Men and Betrays Feminism, Common Sense and the REAL Victims of Sexual Abuse," *Daily Mail*, 26 January 2018.
- ⁷² Lindy West, "Aziz, We Tried to Warn You," *New York Times*, 17 January 2018. She wonders why men failed to see the writing on the wall about "rape culture," Actually, she is correct about that much. Most men (and women) were so appalled by what they considered dangerously crazy but safely confined to college campuses that they chose to ignore what was happening. But what was once radical and remote is now mainstream. This is the price of complacency.
- ⁷³ Heather Wilhelm, "The Feminist War on Common Sense," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 January 2018. See also Emily Jashinsky, "After Aziz: Is Casual Sex a Feminist Achievement or a Setback?" *Washington Examiner*, 27 January 2018; Bari Weiss, "Aziz Ansari Is Guilty. Of Not Being a Mind Reader." *New York Times*, 15 January 2018; Caitlin Flanagan, "The Humiliation of Aziz Ansari: Allegations against the Comedian Are Proof That Women Are Angry, Temporarily Powerful—and Very, Very Dangerous," *Atlantic*, 14 January 2018; Faith Moore, "The Lie of Modern Feminism Is Beginning to Bite Feminists in the Butt," *PJ Media*, 18 January 2018. <https://pjmedia.com/lifestyle/lie-modern-feminism-beginning-bite-feminists-butt/>.
- ⁷⁴ Bari Weiss, "The Limits of 'Believe All Women,'" *New York Times*, 28 November 2017.
- ⁷⁵ Zephyr Teachout, "I'm Not Convinced Franken Should Quit," *New York Times*, 11 December 2017.
- ⁷⁶ Editorial Board, "Mitch McConnell Believes the Women: Good for Him," *New York Times*, 13 November 2017.
- ⁷⁷ Because my field is religious studies, I recognize the close connection between belief and religion (although the two are not synonymous), especially in what were once Christian countries. In this context, belief amounts to established doctrinal orthodoxy. To challenge or even question that is to indulge in dangerous heresy. Western countries (even those, such as Britain, that maintain state churches) have moved far away from the notion that doctrines of any kind, religious or secular, should govern legislation.
- ⁷⁸ Stephen Baskerville, *The New Politics of Sex: The Sexual Revolution, Civil Liberties, and the Growth of Governmental Power* (Kettering, Ohio: Angelico, 2017).
- ⁷⁹ Moral panics occur in periods of unusual communal stress or anxiety. Without an obvious way to relieve the stress or anxiety, communities identify and target scapegoats. Eventually, moral panics go out of control and communal leaders end them but only after great damage. They need not involve "mass hysteria" in the popular sense of that expression. The infamous Salem witch trials took place in courts that magistrates led and according to established legal procedures, though not ones that would be acceptable now (partly as a result of the witch trials). Six of the twenty people hanged as witches were men.
- ⁸⁰ Do the many allegations of sexual abuse amount to a contemporary witch hunt? You could argue that there

is one big difference between these allegations and, say, the allegations in seventeenth-century Salem: those accused of witchcraft were innocent, because we now know that witchcraft was really an illusion and therefore harmless. The analogy holds, though, because the witch hunters were still wrong by our moral and legal standards, whether their victims were guilty or not. But consider another and much more recent analogy: the infamous Red Scare. In that case, many of the accused were indeed guilty of being Communists and therefore not necessarily harmless. We now look back in horror at McCarthy, the instigator of those infamous hearings, not because of his stupidity—the existence of Communists in Hollywood was not a mendacious fantasy or illusion—but because he was a manipulative demagogue who fostered something like public hysteria, disregarded the constitutional right to freedom of speech, insisted on vindictive punishments for those who refused to cooperate with him (according to their constitutional rights) and encouraging the vice of betrayal (naming names). The Red Scare was not quite, however, a moral panic. It was orchestrated by government officials, not by the public. Moreover, those who had aroused suspicion of having Communist sympathy or of having had Communist affiliation seldom confessed or repented. The explanation, I suspect, is that much of the population gradually came to sympathize with the accused, not the accusers, seeing more to fear in the House Un-American Activities Committee than in the Communist Party.

- ⁸¹ Both the Nazis and the Communists encouraged people to spy on each other; no one could feel safe from informers—that is, their neighbors, religious leaders, work mates, friends, relatives or even parents. Children, their loyalty redirected in schools and youth organizations, sometimes did turn their parents in to the authorities for demonstrating lukewarm loyalty to the regime. In both cases, though, the state preferred to leave families and private life alone. Not so here and now. No institution is more hated in the world of sexual politics than the family, for instance, its traditional form (headed by one father and one mother) being the supposed origin of gender and therefore also of patriarchal oppression. Also, the moral panic over “repressed memory syndrome” focused primarily on alleged cases of incest (although some of the most notorious cases targeted teachers at day-care centres).
- ⁸² Janice Fiamengo, ed., *Sons of Feminism: Men Have Their Say* (Ottawa: Little Nightingale Press, 2017).
- ⁸³ Pat Kambhampati, “A Son of Feminism,” in Fiamengo, *Sons*, 31
- ⁸⁴ See Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will; Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975).
- ⁸⁵ The definition of misandry as a *collective mentality*, not merely a personal vice, does not quite correspond to the definition of misogyny in Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). For Manne, “sexism” (the ideas that promote toward women) is the ruling collective mentality of our society and “misogyny” the cultural mechanisms that enforce it. But I think that sexism has not one but two sides: not only hatred toward women (misogyny) but also hatred toward men (misandry). Moreover, I see a larger context for both misogyny and misandry in hatred toward outsiders. And there are always many of them. Our society is surely not hostile to either women or men but compassionate to all other people. Rather, it fosters hatred for either women or men and many additional groups. This is precisely what accounts for the many fault-lines—these include ethnicity or race, sex or sexual orientation, language, religion and so on—along with sharply increasing polarization on all fronts at the same time. But I do agree about the need to assign a label to the enforcing cultural mechanism in each case. This is why I have focused attention in this essay on both sexual harassment (the cultural enforcement of misogyny) and identity harassment (the cultural enforcement of misandry).
- ⁸⁶ Some feminist activists oppose centres for men, often successfully, and not merely because of competition for scarce government dollars. They suspect, without evidence, that these would be centres for the promotion of “hegemonic masculinity.” I seriously doubt that the kind of men who feel a need to discuss their problems as men, thus revealing their vulnerability, would be likely to use these centres for that purpose. They are, however, likely to discuss the misandry that pervades college campuses and emanates directly from ideological feminism.
- ⁸⁷ These codes depend on the notion of “affirmative consent,” which refers to *explicit and even enthusiastic consent* to “sexual” moves all the way from endearing words, hand holding and kissing to intercourse. “I cannot believe that men in workplaces are turning to private group chats, consulting expensive lawyers and considering cancelling holiday parties before considering a very simple solution to many of their questions about sexual harassment: simply asking women, or anyone for that matter, if something is O.K. with them before doing it” (Amanda Wessel, “Letters,” *New York Times*, 21 November 2017). That is common sense. The trouble is that seduction might not be compatible with common sense. And rape, of course, is compatible with neither common sense nor seduction.
- ⁸⁸ Occasionally, even college students pay a price for explicitly misandric statements. Sarah Semrad, for

instance, “resigned” as vice-chair of the Wisconsin College Democrats after tweeting, “I hate f-----g white men.” (Nikita Vladimirov, “Wisconsin College Dems Leader: ‘I Hate F** White Men’” and “College Dems Leader Resigns after Declaring Hatred of White Men, *Campus Reform*, 13 and 14 November 2017).

- ⁸⁹ See *Legalizing Misandry*, 53-78. Lépine was “typical,” it was said, not because all or even most men murder women, but because all or most men would *like* to murder women but are afraid to do so.
- ⁹⁰ The play, by Eve Ensler, made its Off-Broadway debut in 1996 and quickly became popular among student activists due to its intense exploration of female sexuality as a form of female empowerment. The text, sometimes performed as written and sometimes improvised, has provoked opposition from both conservatives and feminists, though for different reasons. Some conservatives disapprove of its vulgarity, for instance, and some feminists disapprove of its focus on the vagina instead of the clitoris. Productions feature both “consensual and non-consensual sexual experiences, body image, genital mutilation, direct and indirect encounters with reproduction, sex work, and several other topics through the eyes of women with various ages, races, sexualities, and other differences ... A recurring theme throughout the piece is the vagina as a tool of female empowerment, and the ultimate embodiment of individuality ... Every V-Day [Vagina-Day] thousands of local benefit productions are staged to raise funds for local groups, shelters, and crisis centres working to end violence against women” (“Vagina Monologues,” *Wikipedia*, 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Vagina_Monologues).
- ⁹¹ This phenomenon is by no means confined to college campuses. Erin McCann, “A Mansplaining Hotline? Yes, Actually, Sweden Has One,” *New York Times*, 16 November 2016. Callers may report incidents to their union.
- ⁹² This scandalous behavior, too, is evidently widespread way beyond college campuses. It became the target of a crackdown by the New York City (Emma Fitzsimmons, “A Scourge Is Spreading: MTA’s Cure: Dude, Close Your Legs; ‘Manspreading’ on New York Subways Is Target of New M.T.A. Campaign,” *New York Times*, 20 December 2014). See also George Gene Gustines, “The New Yorker Said No, But These Cartoons May Just Make Your Day,” *New Yorker*, 21 September 2017. Although the magazine does not publish all submitted cartoons, at least not immediately, it does publish some of them anyway in small samples of second-raters; for a magazine that has earned fame since the 1930s for its cartoons, even this status sets a high standard. In one cartoon by Maggie Larson, for instance, a group of women are at their exercise class. The leader directs their movements as follows, “Feel you sense of entitlement, gently rise, your regard for those around you and common courtesy fall away as you sink downward facing manspread.”
- ⁹³ Title IX of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was supposed to foster gender equality in higher education. Its main use, at first, was to ensure that the same amount of money be available to athletic programs for women and for men. This meant that if not enough women wanted to participate in this or that athletic activity (such as a women’s football team), the college would have to spend no money on it but also that it would have to spend no money on the same athletic activity for men (which meant no money for, say, the men’s football team). For many years, however, its main use has been to coerce colleges into setting up parallel courts on campus for sexual-assault or sexual-harassment cases. These courts, unlike real ones, could use the *lowest possible standard of proof* (unlike actual courts and therefore get *more convictions* than real courts).
- ⁹⁴ Civil law requires only the “preponderance” of evidence to support a guilty verdict, unlike criminal law, which requires evidence of guilt “beyond a reasonable doubt.” But trials for criminal offenses should be held in courts of law, which must respect due process, not in the board rooms of colleges. Title IX does not empower colleges to jail anyone, of course, which is why it requires only the lowest standard of evidence. This makes it relatively easy to convict students (or teachers) and thus favour the accuser instead of the accused. This, in turn, undermines the general legal principle that allowing the guilty to go unpunished (by making it hard to convict them) is better than allowing the innocent to be punished (by making it easy to convict). Advocates of the Obama guidelines argue that expulsion is a minor inconvenience compared to incarceration and therefore that this bias toward the accuser instead of the accused is justifiable. But expulsion is *not* a trivial matter. Anyone who is expelled for a sexual offense is most unlikely to be accepted by another college, which would have disastrous results over a working lifetime.
- ⁹⁵ Anne McClintock, “Who’s Afraid of Title IX?” *Jacobin Magazine*, 24 October 2017. For another point of view, see Laura Kipnis, *Unwanted Advances: Sexual Paranoia Comes to Campus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017).
- ⁹⁶ As of this writing, the Senate of Massachusetts, for instance, has unanimously passed a bill that would go even further than the old Title IX guidelines (Jorin Burkhart, “Massachusetts Lawmakers Approve Bill to Impose Campus Rape Training Derided as ‘Junk Science,’” *College Fix*, 17 November 2017,

thecollegefix.com/post/39099/). The “scientific” trend, “trauma-informed response,” requires officials to take into account the irrational or incoherent testimonies and behaviours of alleged victims such as continuing to date their alleged rapists, sending them enthusiastic letters of appreciation, asking for more of the same and so on. Advocates of these women argue that hearings or trials should assume that *confusion is in itself evidence of veracity*. See Emily Yoffe, “The Bad Science behind Campus Response to Sexual Assault,” *Atlantic*, 8 September 2017).

⁹⁷ Tonda MacCharles, “Bill to Clean up Criminal Code Clarifies Sex Assault Laws,” *Toronto Star*, 6 June 2017.

⁹⁸ Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

⁹⁹ Sheila Jeffreys, *The Industrial Vagina: The Political Economy of the Global Sex Trade* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁰⁰ For some dismal statistics, see Margaret Wentz, “Here’s the Gender Gap That Matters,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 December 2017. “Here’s the picture, according to economist Mark Perry writing for the American Enterprise Institute. For every 100 men enrolled in U.S. graduate schools, there are now more than 135 women. In 2016, women earned 57.4 per cent of the masters’ degrees and 52.1 per cent of the doctoral degrees. Women earned more doctoral degrees in seven of the 11 graduate fields tracked by the Council of Graduate Schools, including education, arts and humanities, public administration and biology. Men earned most of the doctoral degrees in only four fields: business, engineering, math and computer science, and physical and earth sciences ...”

The same statistics describe men in Canadian universities. “Today,” reports Wentz, “56 per cent of all UBC [University of British Columbia] graduate students are female. Women dominate in five of the eight fields tracked by UBC, sometimes by overwhelming margins: they make up 75 per cent of graduate students in education, 65 per cent in health sciences, 58 per cent in humanities, 67 per cent in non-health professional areas, and 56 per cent in social sciences. Women make up 44 per cent of the sciences. They lag significantly in only two areas: business and management (38 per cent) and engineering (26 per cent). ‘Men have increasingly become the second sex in higher education,’ writes Mr. Perry.

“What’s clear from these trends is that educational inequality has worked its way up from elementary school, and is now solidly entrenched at all levels of attainment. This, in an age when higher education and cognitive skills are more important than ever. Why? Surely one reason is the temperamental differences between males and females. Females aim to please; males tend not to give a darn. Females don’t mind sitting still and colouring inside the lines; a lot of men go crazy. The modern world demands the type of social skills that women are very good at. Most young men simply aren’t wired to sit in classrooms until their mid-to-late 20s.

“And that basically explains the feminization of veterinary schools. They’re hard to get into. They require many years of extra schooling. The vast majority of the applicants are female because the guys don’t even bother trying. They’ve gone missing in action.

“Higher education has become so feminized that it’s hard to see how it can be re-engineered to appeal to men. Meanwhile we’ve hit another watershed. A record number of men are marrying women who are more educated than they are. That’s because, as the Institute for Family Studies reports, wives now have more education than husbands do. Among newlyweds, the trend is even more pronounced. In 2015, it says, nearly a third of newlywed women married down, educationally speaking.”

¹⁰¹ These preferences remain covert, because laws forbid *overt* preferences on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, race, religion and so on. That technicality is most unlikely to deter hiring committees that need to satisfy administrative or governmental policies by demonstrating their “diversity.” For one example of this double standard (advertising for “staff of diverse voices and life experiences,” which could apply to straight men no less than to straight women, but actually intending to hire only a candidate with two x-chromosomes), see an article on the Democratic Party by Christine Rousselle, “DNC Email: Straight White Men Need Not Apply,” *Townhall*, 30 October 2017, townhall.com/tipsheet/christinerousselle/2017/10/30/dnc-email-straight-white-men-need-not-apply-n2402482.

¹⁰² See Nathanson and Young, *Legalizing Misandry*, 125-158, 415-438.

¹⁰³ Women experience the indifference of society in ways of their own. But many women, notably feminists and especially ideological feminists, assume that society cannot be indifferent to both their own needs and those of men. That assumption is either naïve or cynical but is false in any case.

¹⁰⁴ See Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Replacing Misandry: A Revolutionary History of Men*

(Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁵ I do not argue that feminists caused this identity problem, although I do argue that ideological feminists have greatly *exacerbated* it. Rather, that identity has become more and more problematic since the Neolithic period with the advent of horticulture and then agriculture, which began a series of technological and cultural revolutions that has profoundly affected men's (and women's) perception of the male body in connection with its value to society.

¹⁰⁶ Women are still less likely to use specifically sexual forms of aggression when harassing men, but that is changing. To the surprise of many, sexual harassment is indeed a problem for both women and men. According to one British survey, 60% of female employees—but *also 40% of male* employees—claimed to have been sexually harassed at work (Laura Bates, "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace is Endemic," *Guardian*, 23 October 2013). This information appeared in the *Guardian's* "Women's Blog," which reports on the Everyday Sexism Project. Given the relatively few gay men in any population, it is unlikely that most of these allegations from men were about sexual harassment by other men; most were probably about sexual harassment by women. Allegations from men have been increasing in the United States, too, from roughly 10% of all cases in 1985 to 16% in 2010. Either this phenomenon was occurring more often than in the past or more men were reporting it. It is no longer astounding for the men to allege that even female colleagues or superiors have sexually harassed them (Alice Gomstyn, "Sexual Harassment of Men is Growing But Not Equal," *ABC News*, 26 March 2010). This is partly because there are more women working alongside men than ever before, which means more women who wield power from positions of authority. And Canada is no exception to this trend of men alleging sexual harassment. One case made the evening news, mainly because the alleged victim happened to be a well-known journalist and his alleged victimizers were two former (male) members of Parliament (Marianne Dimain, "Male Victim of Sexual Assault Says Stigma Kept Him from Coming Forward," *Global News*, 6 November 2014).

Reports from male employees are at least as under-reported as those of female employees and will probably be more under-reported for some time to come due to the fact that society now expects women to go public and rewards them for doing so. Like women, male victims of sexual harassment are afraid of both retaliation and shame. The latter, for men, is due to specifically masculine conditioning that has remained strong despite other cultural changes. Men characteristically fear the shameful stigma of victimization, in particular, because the very essence of masculinity in our culture (and many others) has been precisely the ability of men both to defend themselves and protect others. A "real man" wouldn't complain; he would "take it like a man." Moreover, male victims face retaliation not only from those who harass them but also from women both at work and elsewhere. This is because women have invested very heavily in their collective status as a class of victims, and men as a class of victimizers; they resent men, not surprisingly, for undermining the political and ideological status quo. Not surprisingly, many male victims expect no one takes their allegations seriously. Ironically, this is precisely what female victims once found, albeit for different reasons.

¹⁰⁷ At first, I used "sexual harassment" to include *both* kinds of harassment, but some readers found that confusing. Double meanings always do confuse people at first. Nonetheless, people really do need to think carefully about a phenomenon that few of them have ever thought about, or ever would, and how it relates to one that they think they know a great deal about.

¹⁰⁸ Rape or murder is another matter. Jack the Ripper, for instance, truly wanted to humiliate his female victims *per se* and indirectly to undermine the identity of all women *per se*. Even so, I doubt that he caused many women who read about him in the newspapers to recoil from their own identity as women. Their bodies were in danger, not their identities as women.

¹⁰⁹ A more telling but also more provocative word for any biologically defined group would be "race."

¹¹⁰ Hanna Rosin, "The End of Men," *Atlantic* (July-August 2010). Lest it be thought that Rosin's point of view was sympathetic, I must add here that it was not. On the contrary, her tone throughout was snide and triumphalistic. For a very different take on this topic, see David Millar Haskell, "The Future Is Female, Not Male—and It's Not Fair," *Ottawa Citizen*, 20 October 2017.

¹¹¹ Mark J. Perry, "Table of the Day: Bachelor's Degrees by Field and Gender for the Class of 2015," *American Enterprise Institute*, 7 August 2017; [.aei.org/publication/table-of-the-day-bachelors-degrees-by-field-and-gender-for-the-class-of-2015/](http://aei.org/publication/table-of-the-day-bachelors-degrees-by-field-and-gender-for-the-class-of-2015/). American women took home 56.4% of all bachelor degrees, for instance, in 2015.

¹¹² The most obvious reason is shame. Many men are ashamed or afraid to admit, even to themselves, that they are vulnerable in any way. That undermines their notion of masculinity. Another reason is personal

advantage. They believe that ignoring the problems of men will please their girlfriends or wives.

- ¹¹³ The struggle against restraint in all forms came to have mythic significance for young people ever since. Not surprisingly, Hollywood created cinematic myths to celebrate the victory, over and over again, of sexual freedom over sexual “repression.” More famous than any other was *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1966). Ben graduates from college and wonders what to do with his life. Apart from anything else, he wants to marry Elaine. But her mother seduces him, which makes him realize that conventional morality is stifling. Fifteen years later, movies were still exploring sexual freedom. In *Pump up the Volume* (Allan Moyle, 1990), for instance, Christian Slater plays a charismatic young man whose family moves from sophisticated Chicago to a small town that has actually banned all dancing. Neither the respectable town nor its staid high school would ever be the same.
- ¹¹⁴ Mona Charen, “Is Feminism the Answer to Sexual Harassment?” *National Review*, 1 December 2018. Charen begins with a reference to the partisan politics that led feminists such as Hillary Clinton to acknowledge the allegations against Harvey Weinstein belatedly (let alone those against her own husband) and Nancy Pelosi to acknowledge the allegations against John Conyers grudgingly.
- ¹¹⁵ Tom Wolfe, “The ‘Me’ Decade and the Third Great Awakening,” *New York Magazine*, 23 August 1976.
- ¹¹⁶ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Warner, 1979).
- ¹¹⁷ Michelle Goldberg, “Franken Should Go,” *New York Times*, 16 November 2017 (my emphasis).
- ¹¹⁸ Nathanson and Young, *Legalizing Misandry*, 3-78.
- ¹¹⁹ Paul Nathanson and Katherine K Young, *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001).
- ¹²⁰ Emily Yoffe, “Harvey Weinstein Is Also a Jerk: That Alone Should Have Gotten Him Fired,” *Washington Post*, 22 October 2017. See also Maureen Dowd, “Harvey Weinstein: Hollywood’s Oldest Horror Story,” *New York Times*, 14 October 2017.
- ¹²¹ Ironically, men of this kind recognize a kind of *equality* between men and women. They treat women brutally, just as they treat other men. They exploit women and then dispose of them, just as they use other men. They use coarse language and make lewd jokes with women, just as they do with other men. They physically assault women, just as they assault men (except that straight male bullies don’t rape other men).
- ¹²² Ronan Farrow, “Harvey Weinstein’s Army of Spies,” *New Yorker*, 6 November 2017.
- ¹²³ The word “misogyny” has come to function, like “fascist,” as an all-purpose denunciation. It has no intellectual content, only emotional content. It has come to mean *anything at all that women dislike* no matter what its cause. Those who use the word in this way—and this is probably its most common use—can therefore dismiss as a hater of women any man who challenges any feminist doctrine.
- ¹²⁴ Actually, many feminists do want to re-educate women but not necessarily in ways that will enable them to live happily with men. What we need is a new way of educating both young boys and young girls, one that generates mutual respect.
- ¹²⁵ Debate is probably the prelude to dialogue, because dialogue makes no sense without the acceptance of truth on both sides. And debate is the best way of finding truth, which is why it prevails in both legislatures and universities.
- ¹²⁶ Jeremiah 6: 14.

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IF NOT FOR BOTH, WHAT IS JUSTICE?

Katherine Young¹



ABSTRACT

This reply to “If Not Now, When? Acknowledging Sexual Harassment and Identity Harassment” by Paul Nathanson (in this volume) argues that it is important not to trivialize several types of sexual harassment if we want both women and men to address the pervasive misogyny on this topic and improve sexual harassment policies.

Keywords: sexual harassment, gender studies, misogyny, male studies

¹ **Editor’s Note:** Katherine Young has collaborated with Paul Nathanson on four volumes on misogyny, with two additional volumes forthcoming. This article is Dr. Young’s response to an essay by Dr. Nathanson also published in this issue of the *Journal*.

Paul Nathanson's article *If Not Now, When?*, in this issue of the *Journal*, draws from our joint research and analysis that can be found in our four co-authored works,² which include discussions of misandry, ideological feminism, problems men face, silencing of men in the public square, lack of professional help for men, distortion of statistics, witch hunts, dualism (victims and victimizers), generalizations about a pervasive "rape culture," patriarchal privilege, conspiracy theories of history, social constructionism and so forth. As a result, I am in agreement with much of what is being said in this article and appreciate this new case study focused on Weinstein and the general discussion of sexual harassment. I have commented on the draft several times and some of my concerns have been addressed. But others – serious ones in my estimation – remain. For the record, since our names are so closely connected on these matters, I would like to point out several differences based on my "reading" of this article.

My major concern is the fact that the article takes only rape and violence seriously: "I do not argue," Nathanson says, "that anyone should ignore the discomfort of course behaviors, which would be aberrations in any legitimate code of sexual etiquette. I do argue, however, that we must distinguish between violent crimes such as rape and non-violent ones such as lewdness, joking, sexting, groping, or flashing" (Nathanson, p. 43). Elsewhere, he comments that sight of someone fondling genitals may be unpleasant but hardly life shattering. Even if someone physically fondles another person's genitals, this too is but unpleasant. Trivialization of such sexual actions occurs throughout the article. Victims of people like Weinstein, we are told, "inhabit a world that assumes the enforcement of rules in the form of excessively elaborate and punitive codes of sexual or political 'correctness'" (Nathanson, p. 35), although Nathanson does concede that men who grope are not nice men.

I suspect that not just many women but most parents – mothers and fathers – and other men too would say that fondling genitals, groping, flashing and sexting do not belong in the same category as a lewd remark or a joke. Such actions should not be dismissed as merely unpleasant or a difference in the nature of male sexuality or explained away as adolescent

² *Spreading Misandry* (2006), *Legalizing Misandry* (2006), *Sanctifying Misandry* (2011) and *Replacing Misandry* (2015) all published by McGill-Queens University Press.

behavior. They also should not be dismissed because some women have no problem with this kind of behavior, because some women enjoy reading about these behaviors in *Fifty Shades of Grey* or because these behaviors can be exploited to support the idea of women as victims.

Unusual sexual behavior, especially when it involves unwanted physical contact by another person, sends a signal that the person's sexuality is out of bounds. I suspect that most women experience this as a warning that the behavior may escalate to other forms of intimidation and even rape, which is why some experience fear or trauma. Even if the behavior does not escalate, should it be dismissed as just *unpleasant*? What about sexual acts with minors or being locked in a car or room as unwanted fondling of genitals or groping other body parts occurs? And what about drugging a person as prelude to these sexual acts (a topic not addressed in this article but one that has been in the news this year)? Are words such as shocked, horrified, traumatic and sickening appropriate only to describe rape as the article supposes?

We are then told that adult victims, like all adults, are responsible for their own behavior. The article suggests that if a woman wears provocative clothing, she cannot be a victim, because she has invited a sexual response in men whose sexuality is just different (visual stimulation) in kind or degree. "Clothing, or lack of it, is not only a matter of self-expression," we are told. "It is also a symbolic language that reaches beyond any individual to the community and therefore imposes the need to dress in ways that respect other people. This is definitely not to say that the clothing of women can justify rape (which would make no sense in any case, of a phenomenon that is by definition coercive). It is to say that women are responsible for their own behavior, including the double messages that they sometimes send through clothing." (Nathanson, p. 34)

The implication is that women who wear provocative or minimal clothing – which is not defined aside from topless bathing suits on the beach – are themselves responsible if they are fondled or molested. Men's "indecent exposure" is then equated with women's breast feeding in public: "But if we are going to ban men from 'indecent exposure,' for instance, then we should ban women from doing the same thing; they got on well enough for centuries without breast-feeding on the streets or going topless on public beaches" (Nathanson, p. 41). There are several problems here. First, laws do ban people – both men and women – from indecent exposure of genitals. Second, mothers rarely, if at all, flaunt their breasts while breast feeding to sexually

attract a man. Third, the comparison of breast-feeding in public with the provocative act of exposure of genitals seems to me far-fetched. “In short, his examples of bare breasts on the beach, breast feeding in public and provocative clothing are red herrings and hardly negotiating points for a new sexual code to deal with workplace harassment.”

I am also concerned about double-talk. In endnote 3, we are told: “virtually nothing applies to all men or all women – not even the configuration of sex chromosomes.” But later in the article we are told: “Straight men will *always* try to seduce physically attractive women ... This does not mean raping them, although it can sometimes amount to harassing them” (emphasis added) (Nathanson, p. 44). The statement “men and women, especially those who work together every day, will *always* flirt with each other ...” (emphasis added) (Nathanson, p. 12) is an even more general statement. It implies that people don’t have other relationships that are primary in their lives or that office etiquette isn’t observed by most. Surely, arguing that seduction and flirtation are universal in the workplace is a case of stacking the cards. Moreover, Nathanson’s general statements that straight men will *always* try to seduce beautiful women and *always* *flirt* in the workplace suggest that the problem is more than provocative clothing; it is the very nature of being an attractive woman or working together with men. But surely, Nathanson is not advocating a return to veils and segregation.

Another example of double-talk is this. After suggesting that discussion of sexual behaviors such as groping is best left to a new code of sexual etiquette, we are also told that “We can hardly have men (including gay men) ‘taking liberties’ with abandon, for instance, and consequently agree that we can hardly afford to dismantle the laws on sexual relations.” (Nathanson, p. 40) But if these acts are indeed trivial and should be addressed only by etiquette, as we have been led to believe, why now this support for laws? And why the acknowledgment that quid pro quo should be addressed: “The primary message that women have been sending with these sexual-harassment allegations is, of course, about far more than repeated episodes that they find unpleasant. It is about intimidation in the workplace. I see nothing trivial about that. The ‘quid pro quo’ system amounts to an implicit or explicit bargain.” (Nathanson, p. 11) Because many of these “scandals” have taken place in the workplace and women have reported that they did not “come forward” for fear of reprisal, then surely quid pro quo should have been an important topic in this article. In any case, there is an underlying problem; if acts such as

groping of genitals are really trivial, why is there a problem with a bargain? Why would one bother to report trivial matters? Are the acts trivial or are they serious? If serious, should they not be addressed by good sexual harassment procedures?

This takes me to the next topic: how best to address the “believe me” comments found in the media reports about alleged sexual harassment in Fall 2017. When reporting on the accusations against Charlie Rose, Nathanson points out that “The allegations were hardly the stuff of horror movies; among his worst alleged offenses were unwanted caressing and lewd jokes” (Nathanson, p. 13). Moreover, “both women [Norah O-Donnell and Gayle King], made the moral (and political) decision to believe the women instead of the man ... She [King] and O’Donnell protected themselves (and CBS) by saying what viewers clearly wanted to hear” (Nathanson, p. 13).

I don’t think the matter is so simple. True, these were comments from Rose’s co-hosts on *This Morning*, but they relied on the reports of investigative journalists as did other cases in the media eye. Investigative journalism is one profession that knows the importance of accountability to the facts – multiple sources, no collaboration, plausible details, ideally but not necessarily disclosure of identity if there are collaborating reports and so forth. This profession also knows the individual and organizational dangers of false reporting. To undermine the accountability of journalists, the integrity of women who reported their experience and the intelligence of those who came to the conclusion that they “believed” the women by characterizing all this as ideology appears to me misguided.

There is the danger of dismissing the stories of all these women as “fake news.” Like law itself, investigative journalism does not always lead to justice. There are false accusations, which is why there must be important checks and balances in a democratic system. And this is why one can always sue false accusers and why there needs to be good sexual harassment procedures to gather evidence and adjudicate accusations, which may be lodged by either men or women and must be fair to both. For these reasons, I would rather not characterize acceptance of claims of sexual harassment in the news as a simple case of belief replacing due process. (And in the case of an impending election I think it important that citizens have all the facts about the behavior of a candidate at their disposal to make a decision).

At the same time, we need to take a stand against the immediate and severe “sentencing” (firing) by the companies involved. Well-designed sexual harassment procedures (admittedly, some are unfair and need improvement) often lead to nuanced analyses, negotiated settlements and correction of behaviors, not immediate, arbitrary and extreme penalties. Why, then, should such procedures be ignored by a company’s executives unless they are more worried about their image and branding than justice to all their employees? And why should political parties use pressure to force resignations in order to have the moral high road, even though that means unfairly sacrificing one of their own? Surely expediency is not a moral high road.

Because there is a wider movement called “believe the woman”/ “#me too,” which is being used to mobilize women against men, we must be vigilant to hold investigative journalists and their companies accountable to professional standards. We must also be wary of double standards and exploitation of cases on social media or political marches with people brandishing misandric (or misogynistic) slogans for political ends. But because these acts are protected by free speech, there has to be another way forward.

I think we should take the problems of both women and men seriously and avoid extreme positions that mobilize resentment and increase polarization. The case to improve the situation for men is beginning to be grounded in good facts, moral arguments, political lobbying, legal clout and social services. The progress may seem too slow for many, but my wager is that it will grow. To grow means, however, that both men and women who are willing to think about these difficult matters must sense that the way forward includes both of them not in a treaty — a new social contract — after the “war” but as ethical and policy adjustments each step of the way.

AUTHOR PROFILE



Katherine Young is Katherine Young is Professor Emeritus in the School of Religious Studies at McGill University (Montreal, Canada). After doing her Ph.D. thesis on South Indian Hinduism, she developed an interest in women and religion, contributing introductions or chapters to sixteen books and publishing thirty encyclopedia articles from comparative and historical perspectives. Concerned about the increasingly negative portrayal of men in feminist literature, popular culture, the media and law, she has collaborated over several decades with Dr. Paul Nathanson to document this social change, analyze why it has occurred and think of ways to address it. Through their four books, they have brought the word “misandry” from extremely rare use to common vocabulary. Drawing together insights from research on both women and men, Young has written the overview article “Gender and Sex” for the three volume *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion* (Brill 2015). Today she lives in Victoria, British Columbia, with husband Tom and Charlie, the doodle-dog. At the computer most days, she is finishing several books.

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MISSION COMPLETION, TROOP WELFARE AND DESTRUCTIVE IDEALISM: A CASE STUDY ON THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF A COMBAT VETERAN'S SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

Gary Senecal and MaryCatherine McDonald



ABSTRACT

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among combat veterans remains an urgent and intractable problem for those who have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this paper, we argue that one of the reasons that combat related PTSD remains so difficult to treat is because psychologists - and American culture at large - do not fully understand it yet. It is our contention that there are two contributing factors that currently hinder our ability to successfully treat combat related PTSD. The first is a failure to look critically at the theoretical underpinnings that ground our current understanding of the disorder. The second related issue is our tendency to look to reductionist explanations and treatments. We use the theoretical framework of phenomenology alongside a case study of a man we call James in order to present this argument.

Keywords: Trauma, PTSD, Combat Trauma, Phenomenology, Social Reintegration, Idealism, Goal Orientation

INTRODUCTION

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was officially designated as a mental disorder in 1980. Though this classification has existed for over thirty years, it has gained significant media attention and press over the past ten years. This is due, at least in part, to the staggering numbers of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan being diagnosed with PTSD (The National Center for PTSD). Regarding American military veterans, it is not just the increase in diagnoses that is of concern, but the refractory nature of the disorder. Since 2007, Congress has appropriated upwards of 1.5 billion dollars to help improve the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD. Despite these efforts, veteran rates of suicide remain alarmingly high. Current reports on suicide data estimate that 22 veterans commit suicide every day, a statistic that is cited often. What many people do not know is that these current reports do not include veterans who have been dishonourably discharged, nor those who are active service members, nor those who die by overdose, nor the deaths that occur in Texas and California as these states have not provided data.¹ There is significant reason then, to think that the actual number of suicides due to military related PTSD is much higher than 22 people a day.

Despite these alarming statistics, research reveals divergent findings from the psychological community at large. When researching the current state of the APA relative to veterans, one is likely to find a resounding level of certainty when it comes to understanding and treating this population. There is much talk about “evidence-based” interventions, as well as a general feeling of optimism regarding the efficacy of treatment options for combat veterans who suffer from PTSD. Part of this optimism is due to the much-heralded usage of a particular theoretical understanding of combat trauma and a corresponding form of treatment.

¹ See Janet Kemp and Robert Bossarte, “Suicide Data Report, 2012,” Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services Suicide Prevention Program (2013), <http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Suicide-Data-Report-2012-final.pdf>. See also Janet Kemp, “Suicide Rates in VHA Patients through 2011 with Comparisons with Other Americans and Other Veterans through 2010,” Veterans Health Administration (2014). http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/Suicide_Data_Report_Update_January_2014.pdf.

BACKGROUND

The common theoretical conceptualization of combat trauma can be found in the latest edition of the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders published in 2013 (DSM-V), while the singular most lauded treatment for this disorder at the moment is Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PET), a type of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). In the DSM-V, PTSD is classified as an anxiety disorder that occurs when a person is a victim of or spectator to a traumatic event (i.e., unexpected death, violence, brutality, aggression, sexual assault, natural disaster, car accident, etc.). In order to be diagnosed with PTSD, a patient has to presently manifest a series of symptoms from each of the four clusters specified in the DSM, including intrusion, avoidance, negative alterations in cognitions and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity. These symptoms also must be measured relative to the duration of these symptoms in arousal and reactivity (DSM-V, 2013). Ultimately, when an individual is diagnosed with PTSD, they are presumed to be the witness of an unexpected, tragic, life-threatening, or shocking event. The experience of such an event, as well as the unexpected nature of it, is what gives rise to some range of these physiological, psychological, and somatic symptoms that occur over an extended period of time.

One widely accepted form of therapy for the treatment of combat related PTSD is PET, which – as mentioned above – falls under the umbrella of CBT. CBT is itself a complicated technique, marrying both theory and practice from cognitive and behavioral theories of psychology. In short, CBT can employ both cognitive (i.e., thought reappraisal) and behavioral (i.e., problem-solving action, reinforcement and deterrent techniques) interventions **or** it can rely more heavily on just one of these approaches. Some commonly applied uses of CBT include mental reframing techniques, de-catastrophizing techniques, goal setting, behavioral self-experiments, keeping thought records and journaling, and – in the case of PET - prolonged exposure to aspects of the initial stressor that caused the trauma (Craske, 2010). In short, the theoretical foundation of CBT when applied to a patient diagnosed with PTSD is that the impact of the trauma has taken effect on the thought-processes, perceptual heuristic, and behavioral tendencies of the victim. Consequently, the cure must involve a reappraisal of these thought processes and, possibly, a reconditioning of the patients' behavioral tendencies.

The theory upon which PET rests is a long-standing concept regarding what is especially disruptive about trauma. Put simply, the idea is that traumatic events result in symptoms because they are not adequately lived-through and categorized when they occur. Psychiatrist Dori Laub, who works primarily with holocaust survivors, holds that traumatic events by nature cannot be registered correctly. He explains, “Massive trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction” (Laub, 1992, p. 57). Quotidian events can easily be understood, thought through, categorized, and rendered coherent. Thus, traumatic events are disruptive precisely because they stand so far outside the norm. Since they cannot be easily thought through, categorized, or rendered coherent, traumatic events cannot be appropriately placed in the past. Laub argues that traumatic disruption - this temporary shutting down of the recording mechanism of the subject - is alleviated (if it can be alleviated), when the victim is able to narrate the event to an empathic listener(s) (Laub, 1992).

Edna Foa, the founder of PET, argues further that once a fear response is set up in an individual, there is no way of extinguishing the fear response. The result is that each time the memory is triggered, the patient relives the event and the corresponding fear response (e.g. dissociation, hyperarousal, etc.) (Foa, 2011). The only way to get this cycle of trauma to halt is to relive the original event in a therapeutic setting in order to process and intervene in ways that were impossible at the time.

In some circles of the psychological community, praise for PET is resounding. Foa herself cites evidence-based research that proves the efficacy of PET in treating PTSD over other therapeutic methods (Foa, 2011). This evidence-based research has been used to disseminate this therapeutic method widely and PET is often touted as the gold standard for the treatment of PTSD. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs recommends PET to veterans struggling with PTSD, citing its efficacy for veterans in particular. They have even created a mobile app called PE Coach designed to provide further support for veterans undergoing the therapy. Both Foa and the VA minimize possible negative effects of this method. The VA admits that risks are involved with PET, but claims that they are minimal and that, “most people who complete PE find that the benefits outweigh any initial discomfort” (US Department of Veterans Affairs). However, Foa herself is less forthcoming, stating simply “PE is well tolerated by patients

and does not cause long-term exacerbation of symptoms” (Foa, 2011).

Ultimately, it is our contention that this current espousal of PE and CBT by the APA and the VA is problematic for three reasons. First, empirical data does **not** give as favorable an assessment of PET as Foa and the VA lead one to believe. In fact, there is an alarming amount of data showing the dangers inherent to this method, including high dropout rates up to 40%. Second, we argue that the claims made about this therapy rely on a therapeutic conceptualization of combat experience that is devastatingly incomplete. To presume that soldiers simply think incorrectly about their combat experiences and/or need to be reconditioned cognitively or behaviourally after combat is too simple a response for such a complicated experience. Finally, upon examining the lived experience of serving as a combat soldier, it is quite possible that the struggles and symptoms soldiers experience upon social reintegration have little or nothing at all to do with what we traditionally imagine as traumatic. In other words, the presumption that the death, violence, or hostility faced in combat are the main causes of struggles and symptoms for soldiers upon reintegrating is an overstatement and, quite possibly in many cases, a red herring.

We will be using phenomenological theory and a case study to illustrate some of the ways in which the lived experience of combat can be misunderstood, as well as how this misunderstanding stands to damage the lives of veterans rather than to help them. To do this, we split the paper into two sections. In the first section, we look at the history of combat trauma and problematic interventions in order to show how easy it is to misunderstand failure for success when methods are housed within limited theoretical frameworks that clinicians are committed to. Next, we examine theoretical conceptualizations of combat that portray the soldier as more than simply a victim of trauma. In the second section of the paper, we analyze a case study conducted with a former combat veteran to give voice to a more complex and nuanced conceptualization of the combat experience. This case study will highlight a range of experiences found in soldiers who have been diagnosed with PTSD upon reintegration but are not experiencing themselves as anxious victims of violent trauma.

It is important to emphasize that we are not denying that the classical understanding of trauma is false or incorrect. Likewise, we are not denying that CBT in general (and PET specifically) can be useful to treat combat related trauma. Rather, we are emphasizing the

importance of looking critically at the theoretical foundations of treatment, the potential misdiagnosis that is being placed on veterans, and highlighting the danger of reducing such a complex sphere of experiences to one singular theoretical explanation and one singular treatment method.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mistakes from the Past & Bringing Phenomenology Into the Future

In our current situation, we do not have the benefit of hindsight. Sometimes, looking at a parallel from history can throw our current mistakes into relief. In this section, we will briefly look at an example from post-World War I psychology in order to highlight just how distant a therapeutic method can be from its assumed results. After the First World War, soldiers curiously started exhibiting symptoms of hysteria (Van der Hart, Brown, & Graafiand, 1999).² Since hysteria was typically reserved for women who had experienced sexual assault in childhood, these soldiers' symptoms posed a classification problem. Rather than find similarities in these psychological states that seemed to result from both combat and sexual assault, theorists instead looked for causal differences. It was thought that the symptoms in soldiers were physiologically based, a result of physical rather than psychological trauma. One such theory gave way to the popular term "shell-shock," i.e., the theory that repetitive exposure to exploding shells caused minor concussions resulting in these hysteria-like symptoms. The theory was tested, and quickly abandoned due to the presence of soldiers who exhibited the symptoms but were not exposed to concussive blasts (Myers, 1915).³

In 1922, the British Medical Journal summarized recent findings relating to shellshock. Their research found that:

"A large number of shell-shock cases in a battalion was a sign of poor morale... a poor morale and a defective training are one of the most important, if not the most important etiological factors: also that shell-shock was a "catching" complaint." (The British Medical

² Van der Hart, Brown, and Graafiand, "Trauma-Induced Dissociative Amnesia," 392-398.

³ This term is largely credited to Charles Myers, who wrote about the phenomenon of shell-shock in "A Contribution to the Study of Shell-Shock" in 1915 (The Lancet, February 13, 1915). Myers recants his work in 1919 with another essay in the Lancet called "The Study of Shell-shock" (The Lancet, January 11, 1919).

Journal, 1922)⁴

In other words, shell-shock was not physiologically based, nor was it the result of war so much as it was thought to be simply a result of human failure. Many who suffered were assumed to be lazy, exaggerating their symptoms for sympathy. This belief led to treatments that used humiliation and violence to snap soldiers out of their altered states and to turn them back into heroic men.

Lewis Yealland, a Canadian psychiatrist, was a proponent of such treatment. He believed that patients could be brought out of their symptoms through aggressive counter-suggestion. The clinician would either utter provocative statements to the patient, which would elicit an angry response, or surprise him with loud noises, which would shock him out of his silence. If neither of these methods worked, a spatula would be pushed into the back of the throat. The most severe cases were treated by the application of strong electric shocks directly to the throat (Yealland, 1918).

In a case study published in Yealland's "Hysterical Disorders of Warfare," Yealland describes patient A₁ as someone whose mutism did not succumb to several types of treatment (Yealland, 1918).⁵ After nine months of treatment that included electric shocks applied to his throat, cigarettes extinguished on his tongue, and hot plates placed at the back of his throat, patient A₁ remained mute. Yealland reports that, in his determination to heal, he told the patient, "You will not leave this room until you are talking as well as you ever did; no, not before... you must behave as the hero I expect you to be" (Yealland, 1918, p. 9). Yealland then applied an electric shock to the throat so strong that it sent the patient reeling backwards, unhooking the battery from the machine. Yealland strapped the patient down and continued to apply shock for an hour, at which point patient A₁ finally whispered "Ah." After another hour, the patient began to cry and whispered, "I want a drink of water" (Yealland, 1918, pp. 7-15). Yealland reports this encounter triumphantly. He interpreted this breakthrough to mean that his theory was correct and that his method worked. Further, the success of the theory proved that

⁴ "Shell-shock," *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 3216 (1922): 322-323.

⁵ 57 *Ibid.*, 1-30.

shell-shock was a disease of manhood rather than an illness that came from witnessing, being subjected to, and partaking in incredible violence.⁶

In detailing a particularly productive morning, Yealland claims that he treated six mute patients in the space of a half an hour. The first patient responded to loud coughing in his ear, the next to the forcing of a tongue depressor to the back of his throat, the next three to strong electric shocks to their throats; and, “the sixth, on hearing the others fell from a chair, striking his head on the floor, and began to talk” (Yealland, 1918/2009). Yealland thought that he had returned the soldiers to their real state of being when they began to speak in response to his treatment. He believed that brutality was not only justifiable, but a necessary means of reaching the puppet master behind the pathological symptoms. What is perhaps more likely is that the brutal treatment created new and vivid meaning for the soldier: speak now or continue to submit yourself to bodily harm. It is indeed possible that the sixth soldier fell out of his chair, not because the method was so effective, but out of *fear*. What we can see with the benefit of hindsight (but what was perhaps invisible then) is the tight feedback loop that the therapist can get in when his own theory bears out. The hypothesis leads to a method. If the method yields a result, this result is assumed to be causally related to the hypothesis. There is no room here for variance among patients. Those for whom the method did not work were labeled malingers.

Ultimately, though the methods were much more severe than those applied in PET, the conceptualization behind and goal of this therapy shares deep kinship with those applied in PET. Both methods intend to alter the perceptual processes, as well as reshape the thought-processes and behavioral tendencies of the soldier in an effort to make them more resilient in the face of combat trauma. Both also assume a kind of failure on the part of the patient. We should also notice that when the technology fails – because it is seen as *the thing that cures* – the blame

⁶ These treatments of trauma, though thought to be acceptable and effective, were unsurprisingly controversial. For example, in the opening scene of Stanley Kubrick’s anti-war film “*Paths of Glory*,” a General approaches a dazed soldier and asks him, “Are you ready to kill more Germans?” When the soldier stumbles over his answer, another soldier tries to explain that he’s a bit shell-shocked. The General responds, “I beg your pardon, Sergeant, there is no such thing as shell-shock!” He then turns to the first soldier, “Get a grip on yourself, you’re acting like a coward. Snap out of it coward! Sergeant, I want you to arrange for the immediate transfer of this baby out of my regiment. I won’t have our brave men contaminated by him!” (Stanley Kubrick, Calder Willingham, and Jim Thompson. *Paths of Glory*, directed by Stanley Kubrick [1957; Beverly Hills, CA: Universal Artists, 1999], DVD).

shifts back to the patient. The major shortcoming of this theoretical model lies in the idea that the complex human phenomena of combat trauma can be reduced to a singular explanation, and a singular treatment. Too often in the process of diagnosis for combat veterans who are struggling with an array of symptoms, psychologists and physicians become hungry for a singular diagnostic tool and a correspondingly univocal treatment. Any improvement is seen as *proof* that the method is effective. This perspective is not just myopic, but can expose the patient to unintended consequences just as dangerous as Yealland's violent methods.

Phenomenology throws into question the viability of this kind of reductionism, and gives us another possible explanation through embodiment theory. In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty reconsiders cases like this and argues that these patients are not consciously performing and "acting out" as one might think, rather their consciousness extends through their bodily interaction with the world.

As he explains:

"...the body does not constantly express the modalities of existence in the way that stripes indicate rank, or a house-number a house: the sign here does not only convey its significance, it is filled with it; it is, in a way, what it signifies..."⁷

Under this paradigm, the body is not a puppet responding to orders from the brain, and the real meaning of our actions are not magically revealed when we understand what is going on neurologically. Rather, consciousness and the body coexist in the human being and inform one another. The body does not stand for consciousness; it is a vital *part* of consciousness. When we do not take this into account, we can gravely misunderstand what is going on and misuse the technology. Yealland, and many others, came into treatment carrying the belief that traumatized soldiers were "acting out" – that their bodily symptoms told a story about what was going on internally.

This highlights precisely why we need to be careful when we look for singular explanations of behavior and singular cures for disorders. First, to separate the mind from the body as if they

⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 186.

are two distinct entities is to risk missing something important about what it means to exist in the world as an embodied being. Second, when we reduce human phenomena to the necessarily reductive perspective of a scientific explanation, we risk a detrimental oversimplification that can come to bear on treatment. In the best-case scenario, it can result in the reliance on a technological cure that doesn't work, and at worst, it can perpetuate harm.

Re-Conceptualizing the Combat Experience

Though simple confirmation bias can explain how a clinician or group of clinicians can come to rely on treatment methods to the peril of their patients, it does not explain from where these theories arise or how they come to take hold. In order to understand this tendency, one must look more closely at the conceptualizations of combat upon which these theories and treatments are based. As mentioned above, the current conception of veterans is limited and this can impact treatment in significant ways. This section will focus on theory derived from the lived experience of combat, relying on concepts that more fully portray what it is like to be in combat. We focus on two subdivisions of combat experience, first violence and combat arousal and second devotion to troop warfare. We will return to these themes in our case study.

Violence & Combat Arousal

The archetype of the veteran in popular culture leads one to imagine a stoic character that participates in violence unwillingly or unknowingly, with aversion, and then is scarred by the experience of it. He is tortured by the loss of his fellow soldiers, some of whom have died in his arms. To be sure, this is one possible form of experience for the soldier in combat. However, this dramatic and traumatic brush with death is only one of many different experiences a soldier may have with violence and combat. Furthermore, stoic witnessing is not the only way in which the soldier may seek to engage in the behavior of combat. The soldiers' lived experience of violence can even be arousing, fulfilling, and very difficult to replicate upon returning from deployment.

Sebastian Junger provides an illustration that reveals just how the rush of adrenaline, focus, flow, and psychosomatic energy experienced when engaged in combat is unprecedented and difficult to recreate. In his book *War* (2010), Junger references a moment when the lieutenant of a platoon, after five days without a firefight, expresses how he wishes that the platoon would be attacked so that at least there would be *something* to do (Junger, 2010). It seems curious – if not bizarre – that the individual at the helm or protecting a platoon would be

wishing for a firefight. It is worth noting that this only seems curious because it differs from what we expect from the soldier-as-stoic archetype. Nevertheless, this highlights the notion that there was at least an element of combat that was satisfying and sought out among the soldiers. The rush of adrenaline in the combat experience can be satisfying and many soldiers miss the ability to recreate the intensity of this experience when returning to a peaceful, orderly, sage, and civilized world. When platoon member Brendan O’Byrne is asked what he misses most about being in the army and being deployed in a combat zone, he answers politely, “I miss almost everything about it” (Junger, 2014). Ultimately, this answer is only strange in a world in which we hope to label everything that is violent as traumatizing.

Chris Hedges uses psychoanalytic concepts to argue even further that the experience of combat is one in which our innate attraction to death is recognized and activated. For Hedges, the individual instinct to return to violence and face one’s own mortality must be acknowledged in order to properly conceptualize human behavior and the readiness so many conjure when they are called into violence. After paraphrasing and quoting from Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, Hedges candidly articulates his own experience with the death drive (*Thanatos*). He writes:

“We believe in the nobility and self-sacrifice demanded by war, especially when we are blinded by the narcotic of war. We discover in the communal struggle, the shared sense of meaning and purpose, a cause. War fills our spiritual void. I do not miss war, but I miss what it brought. I can never say I was happy in the midst of fighting in El Salvador, or Bosnia, or Kosovo, but I had a sense of purpose, of calling. And this is a quality war shares with love, for we are, in love, also able to choose fealty and self-sacrifice over security.” (Hedges, 2002)

For Hedges, the unique manifestation of *Thanatos* in the combat experience is expressed here. The phrase “blinded by the narcotic of war” speaks lucidly to the overwhelming effect on our emotions that this drive can have in the midst of combat. This is a *drive*, and thus our actions are naturally driven. *Thanatos* moves us, beckons us, and directs our behavior in very specific ways toward very specific ends.

Both thinkers alert us to the complexity inherent in the experience of combat violence. After the experience of combat, it can be wildly difficult for a veteran returning to a civilian society to replicate the emotional catharsis, sense of meaning and identity, and interpersonal

connection. This leads to an especially complicated kind of double loss because once the soldier returns home there may be naïve culturally-situated expectations as to what his experience of combat was. The veteran is not allowed to admit that there are variances in the experience of war, that there were different kinds of violence and death, that they participated in them in ways that they could not have expected, that combat was exciting, or that they may find themselves wanting to go back.

Devotion to Troop Welfare

The experience of killing and violence is not the only experience that supplies arousal and richness to the combat experience. Likewise, a feeling of solidarity, camaraderie, and sacrifice may be experienced for one's fellow soldiers. It is possible that the strength of such bonds may be unmatched in civilian life. For Junger, the most unique aspect of the life of a soldier was this close bond of solidarity formed. As a result, a genuine willingness to sacrifice for one another and the displays of affection among soldiers were offered regularly and without deliberation. Articulating the uniqueness of this experience, Junger writes,

“The willingness to die for another person is a form of love that even religions fail to inspire, and the experience of it changes a person profoundly. What Army sociologists... slowly came to understand was that courage was love” (Junger, 2010, p. 239).

This connection is so strong and intense that it may even be responsible for drawing soldiers back to deployment. Junger writes:

Perfectly sane, good men have been drawn back to combat over and over again, and anyone interested in the idea of world peace would do well to know what they're looking for. Not killing, necessarily... but the other side of the equation: protecting. The defense of the tribe is an insanely compelling idea, and once you've been exposed to it, there's almost nothing else you'd rather do. (Junger, 2010, p. 214)

In our stoic and heteronormative society, there is simply no match for this otherworldly connection in civilian life. One's civilian co-workers are much more often people who happen to surround you but they are not deeply connected people for whom you would sacrifice your life. There are very few jobs that require a demand of continuous and unanimous sacrifice for the livelihood and well-being of our peers. While we may all long for deeper connections, the difference between civilians and veterans is that civilians have not had the opportunity to truly

experience interpersonal solidarity. Combat veterans know what could be and long for the connection of solidarity once they leave their deployed platoon. Again, this may lead to an intense loss for the soldier, and one that cannot be fully accounted for in the reintegration experience because it is not one that is recognized by society.

METHODS

A series of open-ended and semi-structured interviews were conducted over the course of a one-year period with a former combat Marine in his mid-thirties. The participant had recently completed 14 years of active duty including multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan during the course of both wars. He had received multiple honours for valour and combat exposure during his tenure and had risen to a significant leadership position in his company before retirement. In many ways, his career embodied the standard of ideal for a young Marine enlisting shortly after September 11th. He served as a rifleman, team leader, squad leader, platoon sergeant, and command sergeant. He was able to identify with the lived experience of a young Marine first joining a fire team, as well as holding the duties and responsibilities of a soldier in charge of the life, health, and wellbeing of approximately one hundred and twenty other soldiers.

During the period of time that the interviews were conducted, the participant was holding an intermediary career as a self-employed auto mechanic restoring classical vehicles.⁸ Upon immediately leaving the Marine Corps, the participant held several jobs in several fields of work. He also was a full-time student at several points during this time. In his most recent career, he held a prestigious and monetarily successful job in a corporate setting for several years before leaving abruptly. This work was in the field of corporate security and despite struggles and symptoms he was facing after leaving the Marines, his performance at the job was by all accounts a resounding success. Nonetheless, the career was short-lived for a series of reasons laid out in the analysis.

The interviews revealed that, though the participant was living with symptoms associated with PTSD, the etiology of these symptoms were far from the typical conceptualization offered in

⁸ We say intermediary because he was currently looking for a new and more stable career after leaving one a few years earlier.

a standard diagnosis of PTSD. Instead of being most effected by the violence that he saw and participated in, the individual was most negatively impacted by two aspects of his experience as a soldier. First, James experiences an unshakable feeling of shortcoming and failure regarding what he was unable to accomplish in theatre of war. Second, the solidarity, camaraderie and meaning he experienced in his relationships with members of his platoon were impossible to replicate in his civilian relationships. As a result of several failed attempts at therapy, James spent considerable time re-examining the root of these symptoms in his own life. The lived experience and etiology of these difficulties is accounted for in the results section below.

ANALYSIS

Analysis of the interview protocols followed Giorgi's (2009) descriptive phenomenological method in psychology. The method of phenomenology stems from a school of philosophical thought of the same name. Phenomenologists—which includes notable figures such as Edmund Husserl (1931/2002, 1970), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962), and Martin Heidegger (1927/1962)—argue against the reductionism that had become standard practice in the sciences in the early twentieth century. In brief, reductionism is the assumption that any event or experience could be reduced to its simplest parts.

For the study in question, a reductionist might be tempted to call post-traumatic stress disorder an epiphenomenon of the experience of violence as a victim of violence. Such a reduction fails to recognize the complexity of such an experience. To avoid such blanket explanations, phenomenologists must resist the assumption that any event or experience can, in principle, be reduced to a single explanation. This is called avoiding the natural attitude; in phenomenological methodology it is called the phenomenological reduction. Performing a phenomenological reduction, means that you allow the phenomenon to stand for itself, and not some underlying process or cause. For the present study, this means that we will avoid listening to a subject's description and attempting to account for it as merely the victim's unexpected experience of tragedy in war. With the shift in mind-set that is afforded by the phenomenological researcher, analysis may begin.

The descriptive phenomenological method begins, Giorgi explains, "by obtaining concrete descriptions of experiences from others who have lived through situations in which the phenomenon that the researcher is interested have taken place" (p. 96). These descriptions are

the raw data of an empirical phenomenological analysis.

Phenomenological analysis follows three distinct steps: 1) Reading each protocol (that is, the raw data) for a sense of its whole. This means familiarizing oneself with the event as it has been described by each subject. 2) A determination of meaning units within the protocol. In this step of the analysis, the investigator tries to note any affective, experiential, or other shifts that occur within the protocol. 3) Transforming the natural attitude expressions into phenomenologically psychologically sensitive expressions. That is, the *psychological insights regarding the phenomenon* can be discussed without *reducing* the phenomenon to its psychological description.

RESULTS

PTSD & PET – A Misdiagnosis & Insufficient Treatment

This section will provide qualitative analysis after performing extensive interviews with a former combat veteran (James) who was diagnosed with PTSD and underwent PET. The perspective of this former soldier will aid in forming our previous critique of the both the theoretical foundations and effectiveness of PTSD as a diagnosis, as well as and PET as a form of intervention with many combat soldiers.

To begin with, James had misgivings about the way that he was diagnosed. He was diagnosed with PTSD, but felt that the therapeutic environment that he was in was not equipped to understand his experience with violence, or the real etiology of his symptoms:

“When they try to treat the root problem, they focus on entirely the wrong thing, presuming that exposure to violence is what is causing the symptoms. I can tell you right now that the times that I pulled the trigger with my sights on a person, I have absolutely no issue with those experiences in any way shape, or form. I was accomplishing a mission; I was protecting me and my own and they were an evil person and the world is a better place without them. I really have no issues or qualms (with the violence). The things that bother me the most are the shots that I did not take; not the ones I did.”

Again, according to James’ experience and contrary to a classical theoretical understanding of exposure to combat violence, he and the majority of soldiers he fought with through multiple tours of combat deployment were *not* averse to the combat, enemy engagement, or the violence of war.

According to James' experience and contrary to a diagnosis of classical PTSD, the majority of soldiers he fought with through multiple tours of combat deployment were not averse to the combat, enemy engagement, or the violence of war. He mentions that he and his former soldiers. He mentions that he and his former soldiers:

“(We all) *wanted* to do those things. You wanted to put yourself in harm's way. It was never an issue to get volunteers or to get someone to kick in the door of a house where there's guys with AKs in the house. It was always too many volunteers, too many hands up. You wanted to be the one man through the door. A lot of people can't wrap their head around it, how everyone wanted to be that guy. If you ended up getting clipped, that was fine because you were getting clipped instead of one of your guys.”

Again, the classical analysis of PTSD would begin from the presumption that soldiers are shocked or averse to the violent circumstances in combat. Repetitive exposure to these fearful and anxiety-provoking experiences is what contributes to the symptoms of PTSD upon returning home. They are what comprise the “stressor” that must be present in order to be diagnosed with PTSD. However, what James reveals here is that though hyperarousal is certainly present, it is *not* due to anxiety or fear, but to combat excitement and the impulse to protect. At the *very* least, we might say that anxiety is *present*, but to reduce the experience to this one emotion certainly misses key aspects of that experience as James explains.

James addresses how many soldiers are diagnosed with PTSD when they did not ever face combat. He discusses the complexity and hypocrisy around this diagnosis:

“You have so many people seeking treatment and receiving a diagnosis and they didn't even deploy. But they have symptoms of (PTSD) and the doctor will try and find some trauma to attribute to it. Hey – were you ever hazed? Of course they were! Everyone was! But (the doctor) will go back to the hazing and attribute PTSD to that but that is not the root cause. The root cause is just a sense of self-shame and self-guilt. I am not saying that PTSD in the military doesn't exist because of trauma. It does – I still flinch like crazy when a loud noise comes off next to me and that is a symptom of being blown up as many times as I have. But that is not what is causing my substance abuse or causing me to feel like a failure...So many soldiers went and spent 9 months in a country and they got nothing accomplished, which is the vast majority.”

Further, when he first described these tendencies to a therapist, James was given a diagnosis on PTSD and he was told that these tendencies were suicidal. James did not feel that he was behaving in a reckless or self-destructive manner, nor did he ever feel that he was

suicidal. He reported frustration that his statement of this did not seem to matter. He was also continually frustrated by his therapist's inability to accept his reality – the fact that he was not averse to the violence of war. Instead, it was what James was *not* able to do in war that haunted his conscience upon leaving the theatre of war.

Ultimately, James describes the way that he discovered what was really causing his symptoms associated with PTSD:

“I did three months of therapy (at a VA sponsored center). The head therapist started doing prolonged exposure stuff with me and I was talking about the most violent, horrific things that I had gone through. The doctor kept saying, 'Why aren't you showing any emotion? "You're not crying. You're not getting choked up.' I said (to the doctor) because this is not what is screwing me up. That was the light bulb. I realized that this (therapy) is focused on the wrong thing. This entire treatment process is focused on the wrong thing. So if it isn't violence, what is it? Then I started thinking about what really causes me the most internal strife, anxiety, and problems. What causes me to drink? What causes me to seek out crazy behavior or anything else? It wasn't the memories of violence or anything like that. It was a need to prove myself and to accomplish a mission that I never fully could.”

In an unintended way, PET was what enabled James to heal. Not because it enabled him to process traumatic and violent episodes from deployment that he had yet to process, but because in its failure – in his therapist's refusal to think that it might be the therapeutic *method* that was wrong, that there must be something wrong with *James* – James was able to realize what was causing him pain. Namely, the military had instilled in him an impossible mission of becoming a war hero and finishing a never-ending war.

Conditioned Ideals & the Inevitable Failure of the Soldier

James offers a keen and unique insight into the social conditioning process that soldiers – in particular, combat MOS soldiers – undergo pertaining to idealism in both training and execution. According to James, the possibility of the perfect execution of a soldier is offered almost ubiquitously to soldiers during training and throughout their careers. Pointed examples of courage, valour, and flawless performance are constantly upheld to soldiers in the midst of enemy engagement:

“The implosion stems from these overwhelming feelings of guilt and failure from my time overseas. I felt worthless. I felt like a failure and would dwell on, over and over and over,

like a film real in my head. I would project it into the future – if this situation presents itself again, how would I have been able to deal with it differently.... I would have anxiety over (my mistakes) for days and the only way to get rid of that was through more medication, more substance...it was a self-feeding cycle. It all goes back to those feelings of guilt and failure.”

Beyond this, the death of one's platoon members and the failure to accomplish a mission can never be chalked up to merely the failure of a specific military task. Ultimately, it was James holding himself up to these impossible tasks, coupled with the loss of camaraderie, solidarity, and meaning that was causing so much pain and trauma.

James articulates what he terms as hero worship in this indoctrination and conditioning process:

“You get into boot camp there is absolute hero worship. You learn to memorize Carlos Hafcock and Dan Dailey and Smedly Butler and the two-time Medal of Honor winners. You memorize that and you worship these people. You are conditioned to worship these people because these people went out and in the process of completing those two things in very extraordinary circumstances and you worship those people. Trying to become those guys is like being a football player and saying you are going to be Tom Brady. It is never going to happen. The chances of you being in that situation where you could prove yourself in that manner are so infinitesimal it is mind blowing. But until you have been pinned with that medal, until you’ve pulled that shit off, you feel like a failure.”

This hero worship in boot camp serves a purpose – it is motivating. Soldiers that hear these stories and hold onto them in combat situations are more likely to act heroically in order to live up to those expectations that are set for them by the military, and that they in turn set for themselves. The problem is that there is no way to meet those expectations, and there is no method for helping veterans cope with that failure, since, again, this is a problem that is not societally (or clinically) recognized.

James goes on to express the real psychosocial complication that arises from this idealism. He mentions how there is a pervasive level of guilt and shame tied to simply being trained to perform in combat, causing a tendency to embellish war stories which only exacerbates the shame in a vicious cycle:

“When you start talking about the embellishments, like why guys lie, good or bad, nobody wants to admit it but everyone does it. You embellish the story so you can convey some

extreme level of emotion that you felt in that moment and the only way you can ensure somebody else reacts that same way is to make the story so outlandish. That is why so many guys exaggerate about other people's exploits or their own. They say that they were under fire for hours even though it was fifteen minutes because during those fifteen minutes your level of horror and anxiety was so high that the only way that you can ensure that someone who cannot relate to it will relate to it..."

He continues, discussing how idealism became a sickness and turned into a vicious cycle of shame, self-loathing, self-injurious and high-risk behavior. He describes the cycle:

"I got a second OUI and I finally had to say enough was enough. I was looking to get caught. I was searching out that discomfort or pain to justify what I felt inside because I always felt wrong. I always felt like a failure. I always felt screwed up and there is no real reason for it so you create one. You end up creating that strife, that problem, and that struggle... I went in to do a briefing with homeland security. I was hammered drunk during the briefing. I was absolutely shitfaced from the night before. At the end of the briefing I was getting 30 pats on the back, shaking everyone's hand telling me that I did a great job and it was amazing. I am standing there drunk. Mission accomplished. Not only that, but it made the mission even harder. The self-sabotaging mentality that so many guys have, why they pick fights with their family, they are looking for a struggle and they are looking for a fight."

Inevitably, the soldier is left without a war but finds himself still looking for a fight in order to justify the deep shame he feels from his perceived failures in combat.

Mission Completion and Troop Welfare

Related to the issue of ideology and hero worship is the idea of mission completion. We tend to think that missions are simply to-do lists that can be checked off, and that once one returns home from deployment that this means that the mission is definitively *over*. James expressed over and over again that there are two basic principles that are conditioned into the conscience of combat soldiers: mission completion and troop welfare. In every instance of their training, soldiers are reinforced to uphold these principles in every instance and, like hero worship, training emphasizes that these principles can be perfectly obtained in all instances:

"It is the indoctrination that is performed, and a very necessary indoctrination in order to do what you need to do in the context that you are doing it. There are two principles – mission accomplishment and troop welfare. Those are the two biggest things drilled into any service member...When you transition away from (a military setting) – when you get into a civilian setting whether it be family, friends, occupation – you are missing that."

He goes on to mention how after a veteran has left the military and reintegrated into a civilian career, the loss of these two principles contributed to lack a meaning and sense of purposelessness in their lives. James discusses the nuances of this transition:

In a lot of cases it is great to hire from the military because you see that drive. There is a mission and we go complete it. That is why I was successful, at least initially, coming out and getting into corporate America and doing very well until I basically imploded. That transition is difficult for a lot of guys. They lack a sense of purpose. That is why you see so many wandering around, or their mission becomes their existing condition.

As we find in this passage, the drive to complete a mission that has been indoctrinated in James is, at least initially, a real boon to his employers. His employers trust him, are in awe of his work ethic, and reinforce this tendency with promotion and praise. However, the mission completion drive in a military career is never fully replicated in a civilian career. In short, there just isn't enough at risk to satisfy the drive. For James - and as he alludes to, perhaps many former combat soldiers - the vacuum existing around the drive for mission completion is at best disorienting and at worst traumatizing. As he says, the soldier without a mission is stripped of purpose; there is no one to save, defend, kill, or protect. There becomes a tendency to transfer the drive to mission completion onto one's very existence and, as we will see, toward self-injurious behaviours.

As eluded to previously, for several years post-deployment, James had a corporate career in security. He talked about the way that he brought these ideas of mission accomplishment and troop welfare into his civilian career in ways that were largely successful. The commitment to these ideas eventually became problematic, however. In one of the most striking stories that James told us, he talks about responding to a crisis at work the way he would have during deployment:

“We got a call one day that there was a guy with a gun in the parking lot. Nobody at (job) was armed. I told them to call 911 and I start running out the door. Everyone was wondering what I was going to do. I told them I was going to run him over with my truck. I got in my truck and screamed down the street 125 miles per hour, came into the parking lot sideways and was going to hit the guy with my truck. I was just going to run him over. If he started shooting at me I was just going to duck behind the dash. That was my mentality at the time. It ended up being a federal marshal who had pulled over a drunk

lady on the street...I didn't think anything of that but they thought I was insane for being willing to do that."

There are two senses in which missions are not over. First, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did not have clear-cut goals or timelines. Since the war is not against a country but an ideal, it is impossible to ever be finished. One can't come home and say, "Well, I'm done fighting the war on terror! Mission accomplished!"

Further, since James was having trouble reintegrating, as so many veterans do, the experience remained alive for him. In many ways, James hadn't come home yet at all:

"Every time I would walk up a staircase, I am checking corners like I had a rifle, squaring off corners and buildings and I wouldn't even realize I was doing it. You get into this mode where you don't have a mission and you don't have troop welfare. You are failing yourself because you are self-destructive. I was failing my wife, failing my friends because I was missing dates. It is a self-feeding cycle, especially when substance abuse gets thrown in. From the outside looking in, everyone thinks, "Oh, Clay drank too much last night." But to me, it's an abject failure of both mission accomplishment and troop welfare. "

Years after he had come home, James was still fighting, and still failing. Mission accomplishment and troop warfare had remained his targets and since these aspects of his integration were being missed in therapy because therapy was focused only on the traumatic experience of violence, James was lost.

Finally, Mission accomplishment tendencies also lead to a desire to seek out high-adrenaline and high-risk behaviours. Similar to a troop movement into enemy territory, these behaviours are challenging and bring a level of risk that provides a rush:

"We went out to dinner one night and I wasn't the DD, but the DD ended up drinking so I ended up driving. No big deal – I've got a mission. I am going to take care of these guys. I am going to get these guys home. That is my mission and it doesn't matter if I have had a few drinks. After that, I was in three really bad snow mobile crashes and I just kept doing it. Breaking bones. I really don't know how many bones I have broken and I am not talking about deployment. I am talking about doing other behaviours, searching out for that adrenaline rush, pain, and mission. And it is the same thing across the board with so many other veterans. Once, I was out on a sled and I high sided it at 90 miles per hour and went into the trees. I actually split my helmet in half. I tore SI joints, my hips, broke a bunch of ribs, really mangled my face and I was riding again the next weekend. I mean, it was insane."

James goes even further, explaining that there is indeed a fine line between what look like suicidal tendencies and what are actually sacrificial tendencies in the honor of upholding troop welfare. Following on the story of his turret gunner who was shot when he – James – was exposing himself intentionally to fire, he discusses what actually plagued him from the experience:

“Why did the enemy shoot him and not me? That is what screwed me up from that event. Not holding my homeboy’s skull together. I am not bragging about what I was willing to do. What I am talking about is the internal strife in relation to that situation...The first person I told about that story told me I was suicidal, which was not the case at all. If I am dead, how do I protect my guys? Is there a chance I am going to die? Yes. But I’ve got all of my armor on. I volunteered to kick every door in. It’s not because I was a badass, because I and everyone else were scared shitless. I just didn’t want to see anyone else hurt. It’s not because you are brave or because you are suicidal; it’s because you fear seeing someone else get hurt. That fear drives you to be willing to do things that you normally would not.”

What James describes here ties back to Junger’s analysis of what the soldiers in the Korengal Valley experienced when they found themselves attracted to war. As Junger writes, it was not the killing of the enemy that was alluring to the young men as much as it was the protection of their comrades. The feeling of taking responsibility for the protection of the lives of one’s peers was and is a deeply compelling emotional lure. James was attracted to this experience both in combat and back at home in his civilian life. Unfortunately, symptoms and psychosocial struggles began to arise not purely as a result of this drive, but out of the fact that there was no longer a proper context with which to activate these desires. In Iraq, James was a hero who protected his tribe; in America, he was a mission-less mercenary fighting a war against no enemy and with no innocents to protect.

The Useful Alien

One of the more intriguing and, yet, socially disturbing aspects of James’ reintegration into a civilian career was how he was viewed by his employer, managers, and coworkers. Put simply, James’ superiors and co-workers simply did not know what to do with him. In some ways, they found his commitment to troop welfare and mission accomplishment an incredibly potent and effective tool for getting difficult tasks done, holding his subordinates accountable,

and producing solid outcomes in the complex world of corporate security. On the other hand, James' behavior and social tendencies were confounding, bizarre, and even disturbing. For the years he was working in corporate security, for the most part, his superiors and peers allowed for these tendencies to continue in order to reap the benefits of James' effectiveness on the job. Ultimately, the continued decisions to allow James to behave in antisocial and self-destructive ways in order to use his tendencies for effectiveness in his job led to an enabling of James' worst instincts and caused an exacerbation of his symptoms, two separate arrests, and a profound feeling of social isolation in the world the very country he fought to defend for 15 years.

Reflecting back on the brief he gave to the FBI and homeland security while heavily inebriated, James expresses why his managers and superiors were willing to tolerate such high-risk, antisocial, and potentially self-injurious behavior:

“I had a serious drinking problem at that point. I was in a unique situation. The problem was that my problems kept getting worse and worse and worse because it was the exact same mind-set...They were willing to look it over because of the results that I was giving them. (When I took over the job) it went from them turning over the position every nine months into (my turning it into) a global security program from step one. It was a very positive time for everyone involved. Everyone was making more money from the bottom up. Everyone was happier. The turnover of employees was cut in half...They were just willing to ignore it...But I was H.R.s worst nightmare.”

James was a ticking time bomb socially. He had no respect for his peers and was slowly edging closer to self-injurious tendencies in the workplace. In his estimation, he was a soldier and, thus, he was never uncomfortable with the discomfort in his life even if he himself was the source of that discomfort. Moreover, James was effective in the workplace and, though misunderstood by his managers and intimidating to his peers, he could put people in place, hold his peers to severe expectations, drive a hard sleigh, and complete an onerous mission. He went on to describe how, on a day-to-day basis, he was stark and borderline abusive to his subordinates in order to push them to accomplish the mission. He describes an encounter with one of his subordinates where the worker had a heart attack while he was in a meeting being scolded by James. Human resources stepped in and looked to terminate but his bosses and managers always inevitably protected James and even, in this case, laughed off his behavior. Ultimately, he was an effective hard-ass; a soldier who was willing to get his hands dirty, communicate what no one had the gall to say, and confront problems in the workplace head-on.

James continues, describing why, in his purview, he was allowed to behave in such an antisocial way toward his peers and subordinates. Beyond the effectiveness of his style, James mentions how his managers, peers, and subordinates were simply afraid of him. He mentions how he had openness to conflict that was deeply unsettling and intimidating to his peers and managers:

“Nobody wanted conflict with me; nobody wanted to confront me. My attitude, mentality, personality, whatever you want to call it...when it came down to the push and shove of things, one of the better things that you get with the former military is that conflict does not bother me in any way, shape, or form. I am more comfortable when dealing with conflict than I am with smooth sailing. So for somebody to try and confront me with issues or problems or anything on a personal level, I don't think anybody wanted to do it.”

Returning again to a recurrent motif in the analysis, life for James was understood as a series of conflicts - complicated, difficult, and messy missions that he was charged with accomplishing. These missions could easily be perceived as discomfoting to the faint of heart, but James was energized and excited by the idea of conflict resolution. If there was a perceived limit to a specific task, James was going to find the boundary walls and tear them down. In short, this is incessant idealism turned into a boundary-pushing process was discomfoting and demanded that all individuals involved come to a new baseline level of comfort with suffering and struggle. James found quickly that his peers and subordinates feared him and simply complied with his style as a way of avoiding him. His bosses – perhaps intimidated by him as well – were just pleased that the bottom line was being met in ways they had not heretofore imagined.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER DISCUSSION

James case study demonstrates in vivid nuance that we need to be open-minded and aware that there are many different ways for a soldier to experience the combat setting. Though we do not contend that his story show us that PET is a failure as a method to treat PTSD, quite clearly a more nuanced conceptualization of the combat experience is imperative. This study reveals that what is disturbing and traumatic about combat is not always the experience of violence. James exposes the dangerous idea that the struggle soldiers face upon reintegrating into a civilian life may have little to do with the anxiety produced from trauma, but the idealism and guilt complexes built into the psyche of the soldier incessantly longing for a more perfect form of

execution. As we continue to resist this temptation, we will continue to perpetuate a limited narrative and concept around these struggles. However, if we want to help veterans who are reintegrating into civilian society, we must open our minds to a larger conceptualization of these struggles.

Though it is more convenient, and would certainly benefit everyone if there were a single treatment that worked for everyone, that is simply unrealistic. Operating from a singular theoretical understanding of combat is detrimental, as is operating from a singular treatment perspective. This has been problematic and dangerous in the past, and it continues to be problematic and dangerous in the present. The phenomenological perspective reminds us that we must return to the lived experience of the individual in order to successfully treat them. Until we do this on a wider scale, reintegration will remain an urgent problem.

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HIDDEN PERSPECTIVES IN THE DISCOURSE OF DIVORCE

Gerhard Amendt



ABSTRACT

The political discourse about the consequences of divorce is dominated to a large extent by clichés about fathers and mothers. Further research into this area is often not objective being ideologically driven and favouring the concept of ‘the enemy’. Such research cannot contribute to finding a solution to conflicts and is therefore unsuitable for divorcing couples or the development of health-political strategies. We urgently need solution-oriented research about consequences of divorce and its legal framework that is based on a detailed analysis of the underlying relationships.

Keywords: divorce, fathers, mothers, public health policy, legal proceedings

INTRODUCTION

I advance the claim that almost no one will take a divorce-related reduction of his or her standard of living as a reason for refraining from divorce. A decline in the incidence of divorce is therefore hardly to be expected from that quarter. Likewise, complaints about broken homes and the suffering of children will not decrease. Yet that will also do nothing to change divorce statistics.¹

Nevertheless, a matter that involves a personal decision is emerging also as a social conflict with far-reaching ramifications. For children at all age levels, the high probability of divorce represents an ever-present uncertainty that makes them feel threatened.

It is against this backdrop that the idea has taken hold that father and mother should continue to provide care for the children jointly after separation. Both of them are then legally mandated to devote themselves to the children after the divorce. Regardless of any unresolved conflicts and emotional tension between the divorced parties, they are expected to cooperate for the well-being of their children. This does not infringe on the freedom that divorce brings, although it does restrict the customary liberty to ride roughshod over a child's desire to have both parents.

BACKGROUND

According to all experience, the expectation that parents will cooperate remains an illusion in many cases. Our research also showed that unresolved relationship problems always have a negative effect on the children. In particular, visitation negotiations are highly emotionally charged when they occur in close temporal proximity to the divorce. Something similar can be observed in the payment behavior of divorced fathers, and of divorced mothers. It has been documented that the reliability of support payments is determined by whether the ex-partner recognizes, promotes or obstructs the father's wish for contact with his children. The more an

¹ Shortened and edited version of the final chapter from Amendt, G. (2008). *I Didn't Divorce my Kids! How Fathers Deal With Family Break-ups*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

ex-wife restricts a man's father role, the greater the likelihood that the divorced father will react by cutting off her money supply. This strikes a painful blow to his ex-partner, because this creates an atmosphere of existential danger. In any event, legally mandated joint custody represents a change that requires the parties to have greater motivation before embarking on a dispute.

In light of the suffering children endure because of their parents' inability to deal with conflict, society must become active on the social policy level to protect the interests of children. This involves a large-scale social project that has yet to be set in motion. The available institutions and sources of assistance must be examined for suitability.

As our survey showed, divorced fathers often find only a limited measure of understanding and empathy at youth welfare offices, which hampers solution-oriented action. This appears to be particularly pronounced among female youth welfare office workers, especially in urban areas where divorced fathers are more likely to encounter bias and rejection than a receptive ear.

Official family policy tends to restrict the multitude of divorce-related problems to the question of support payments, thereby confusing the symptom of a conflict with its complex core. Such policies represent a denial of reality. Above all, it is the government-funded research on the economic consequences of divorce that not only fails to recognize the problem, but is actually misleading because it takes no interest in the detrimental effects on the interests of fathers and children.² For divorce problems are not financial problems. At best, the financial problems ensue as a consequence. And even then they are always a symptom of narcissistic injuries and the power struggles in relationships that have disintegrated.

In addition to the interests of the children, there is still the demographic perspective on how divorce is perceived, which has been neglected until now. It applies primarily to men.³ We

² A typical example of a psychodynamically uninformed view of payment behavior can be seen in a study conducted by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth by Andreß, H.-J. & Lohmann, H. (2000). *Die wirtschaftlichen Folgen von Trennung und Scheidung [Schriftenreihe des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, vol. 180]*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

³ Along these lines, see Schirmacher, F. (2006). *Minimum: Vom Vergehen und Neuentstehen unserer Gemeinschaft*. Munich: Karl Blessing Verlag.

live in a social environment where there is a tendency to question men's ideas about their roles as fathers. The father is desirable as a functioning provider. In the meantime, this no longer reflects the ideas of a growing segment of young men. Since a father's role is increasingly viewed in passionate terms, husbands are often experienced as annoying intruders in the mother's sovereign domain. Fatherliness that has been structured autonomously, and no longer coincides with what the mother envisions, is therefore viewed with scepticism. It is perceived as a curtailment of the mother's competencies.

It is a high priority challenge for society to support and at the same time promote fatherliness. The fact that this desire is not honoured represents contempt of the right of men to a fatherly role that encompasses more than earning money. It cannot remain without consequences, if fatherliness is devalued even more and is permissible only as an adaptation of benevolent motherliness. This causes fatherliness to lose its autonomy, and children lose a representation of fatherliness in their lives.⁴ Many factors determine whether men and women decide to have children. One of them is the willingness to become a father and to be able to shape one's own specific fatherly role after a child is born.

Men and women have differing reasons for wanting to have children, which cannot be portrayed here. It is inarguable, however, that the desire to become a father, due to its weaker biological and anatomical foundation, represents a personal decision that hinges upon recognition of fatherhood by society to a much greater degree. A man's desire to have children is not as vital and pronounced and therefore requires stronger cultural encouragement. Conception, pregnancy, birth, and an infant's direct dependence on its mother put women on a different biological-anatomical footing with their children. It has the effect of a "voluntary coercion" to stay with the child after it is born, and not to release it offhandedly into life even later. Children need parental opposites for the development of their gender identity.

⁴ According to this, men are merely supposed to mimic standardized motherliness. See Rabe-Kleberg, U. (2005). *Feminisierung der Erziehung: Chancen oder Gefahren für die Bildungsprozesse von Mädchen und Jungen?* In P. Pasternack, A. Schildberg, U. Rabe-Kleberg, K. Bock-Famulla & F. Larra (Eds.), *Entwicklungspotenziale institutioneller Angebote im Elementarbereich [Materialien zum Zwölften Kinder- und Jugendbericht, vol. 2]* (pp. 135–171). Munich: DJI Verlag. (2nd volume with additional material for the Twelfth Report on Children and Youth, published by the German Federal Government.)

SOCIAL DECLINE OR THE ROAD TO POVERTY

People who divorce liberate themselves from an unhappy relationship in the hope of finding a better relationship. But the price of their new happiness, can be discouragingly high. People who speak of happiness and newly won freedom cannot overlook the effects of their separation on their children. Thus, new happiness cannot be obtained without burdening the children. Where there is light, there is simply also shadow.

We would therefore like to outline several changes that divorce always entails for the separated couple, as well as for the children with their need for parenting.

The entire body of research indicates that divorce lowers the standard of living for the majority of *all* the people involved. Those who assume custody of the children frequently find themselves in smaller quarters. They are able to take less vacation and must cut back their own lifestyle as well as the lifestyle of their children. Particularly in the lower income groups, divorce ends in social degradation. In many cases, the future can only be mastered with government assistance, which creates dependence on welfare. This often leads to an entitlement mindset that demands wish fulfilment without prior performance. It is not so much the poverty that harms children, but rather the experience that there is a stream of money that cannot be attributed to the labor of a beloved individual and therefore be seen as an expression of his or her care. This creates shame in the children, and, in addition, is accompanied by a noticeable loss of sensitivity for future interpersonal relationships.

THE STEREOTYPE OF THE UNWILLING FATHER

After a divorce, social degradation causes impoverishment, but there is also a subjectively determined impoverishment that can be traced to the hostilities between the separated parties. We therefore made an attempt to examine in greater detail the dubious stereotype of the father who is unwilling to pay. On the one hand, it is undeniable that among divorced fathers there are such who refuse to pay as a matter of principle. On the other hand, it also cannot be overlooked that, as a rule, refusal of payment marks the endpoint of unpleasant disputes, generally over visitation rights. The future of separated individuals is determined to a great extent by the dynamics of the fighting between them and by poverty.

For this reason we focused our attention on the dynamics of emotional injury and their copious negative effects. Most divorced fathers miss their payments because the divorce has pushed them either to the brink of poverty or over the edge.⁵ Thus, when their ex-wives head for the welfare office or seek out charities, it is generally not due to their ex-husbands' arbitrariness, but rather to the men's impoverishment.

What evokes sympathy for women usually results in accusations against men. As long as the myth of men as unwilling payees still holds sway in public opinion, most people will continue to hope that the impoverishment of "single mothers" can be brought to an end through external disciplinary action against undependable men. Or, by having the FBI issue "Wanted" posters for deadbeat dads under president Bill Clinton as a means of raising their payment morale. The object was to pillory the men and use shame to induce them to pay.

For many men, divorce is the road to poverty and entails a social decline which most of them did not foresee. As a consequence, the remarriage rate for divorced men has been steadily declining for years. In 1965, 79 out of 100 divorced men remarried. By 1994, the number had dropped to 58 out of 100.⁶

Research has been conducted on the factors that contribute to arbitrary as opposed to disciplined payment practices.⁷ But we know virtually nothing about the causes of the destructive behavior of many divorced mothers, who do not balk at harshly enlisting their children in the service of hostility toward their former partners.

⁵ Andreß, H.-J. & Güllner, M. (2001). Scheidung als Armutsrisiko. In E. Barlösius & W. Ludwig-Mayerhofer (Eds.), *Die Armut der Gesellschaft* (pp. 169–197). Opladen: Leske + Budrich Verlag.

⁶ In Germany's eastern states, i.e. the former GDR, the number declined during a comparable period from 78 to 51. See Engstler, H. & Menning, S. (1997). *Die Familie im Spiegel der amtlichen Statistik: Lebensformen, Familienstrukturen, wirtschaftliche Situation der Familien und familiendemographische Entwicklung in Deutschland*. Bonn: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth).

⁷ See Weitzman, L. J. (1985). *The Divorce Revolution: The Unexpected Social and Economic Consequences for Women and Children in America*. New York: Free Press. For a critical analysis of Weitzman, see Braver, S. F. & O'Connell, D. (1996). Divorced Dads: Shattering the Myths. New York: Putnam and Peterson, R.R. (1996). A Re-Evaluation of the Economic Consequences of Divorce. *American Sociological Review*, 61, 528–36. In a replication of the study, Peterson could not validate Weitzman's hypothesis that women are impoverished and men enriched after divorce.

THE STEROTYPE OF THE MALICIOUS MOTHER

The *Divorce-Related Malicious Mother Syndrome*⁸ and the *Parental Alienation Syndrome* (PAS)⁹ describe this phenomenon, which is increasingly attracting public attention.

A description of the syndrome should allow us to analyze the malicious conflict resolution strategies of female ex-partners and thereby gain an understanding of the strategies' effects, primarily on their children. While the destructiveness seen in *Divorce-Related Malicious Mother Syndrome* makes men's anger and disappointment over their ex-wives appear understandable, it does not explain why these women behave in this manner. Even though most divorces are filed by women, on the psychodynamic level that apparently does not exclude the formation of unconscious reactions, which are governed by emotions that strike one as archaic, such as envy and resentment.¹⁰

If a divorce is based on a woman's own desire, then her envy and resentment should actually be contained. Neither benevolence nor malevolence is nature-given in men or women. Rather, they represent successful or unsuccessful attempts at coping with life's conflicts. We therefore see in *Divorce-Related Malicious Mother Syndrome* an attempt to structure their everyday lives. Serious consequences notwithstanding, they strive to preserve their customary areas of responsibility, thereby simultaneously staking out their dominion over their children, at all costs. These strategies are detrimental to all of the players. Because of the serious consequences this creates for the children, they will someday accuse their mother of having taken their father away and thereby casting a pall over their childhood in an autocratic style.

⁸ Turka, I. D. (1995). Divorce-Related Malicious Mother Syndrome. *Journal of Family Violence*, 10(3), 253-264; Turka, I. D. (1999). Divorce-Related Malicious Parent Syndrome. *Journal of Family Violence*, 14(1), 95-97.

⁹ A different approach, namely, to describe the alienation that arises between divorced parties and their children and to render it diagnosable, was first formulated from a psychiatric perspective. See Gardener, R. A. (1987). *The Parental Alienation Syndrome and the Differentiation Between Fabricated and Genuine Child Sex Abuse*, Cresskill, NJ: Creative Therapeutics. In the meantime, this diagnostic procedure has gained acceptance.

¹⁰ See Donner, M. B. (2006). Tearing the Child Apart: The Contribution of Narcissism, Envy, and Perverse Modes of Thought to Child Custody Wars. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 23(3), 542-553.

DIVORCE – WHAT IT MEANS FOR CHILDREN

The most far-reaching consequences of any divorce are its effects on the children. Paradoxically, this topic is discussed rather cautiously. It could plunge parents and society alike into conflict. For the experiences of children are depressing, if not to say quite often traumatic. Regardless of the physical or emotional symptoms they develop, they suffer under their parents' separation. Most parents are aware of this, or, at a minimum, they are intuitively apprehensive about it, which creates ambivalence about their decision.

It is not at all surprising that most parents try to find solutions for their children's stress. They seek consolation for "what the divorce has done to their children". This is not an indication of detailed knowledge about what lies in store for the children, although it does point to a widespread uneasiness associated with it. Yet to a considerable degree it remains unclear to them (or they avoid realizing with disturbing certainty) what the essential issues of their separation consist of, beyond living arrangements, conflict-laden visitation schedules, skin rashes, one-sided expectations of loyalty, and other symptoms of illness. In addition, one should not forget that many parents are themselves the children of divorced marriages. As a result, when they divorce they draw on previous emotional experiences which could resonate with the feelings of their children. These parents have first-hand knowledge of the horrors that they, in turn, are now causing for their own children.

I would therefore like to suggest an approach that at least brings us a step closer to fulfilling the demand for truthfulness. It involves not only those who are divorced, but adults in general. In their own imagination, people should expose themselves to the horror that children experience when their parents break up. If this were a simple task, it would be common practice. But since it is difficult, that is not the case. I believe that people whose minds are set on divorce are incapable of realizing what their separation unleashes for their children, regardless of whether they are married or merely partners. In many cases, they already begin to observe the effects of the separation on their children while the process is still under way. The children experience problems such as bedwetting, nail biting, skin rashes, and nervous twitching around the eyes, or psychosomatic symptoms such as sleep disturbances, attention deficit disorders, endless daydreaming, depression, and many other atypical behaviors. Or, the parents notice that their children simply aren't as happy overall as they were before. They realize that the children

lack the common parenthood that was only possible as long as Mother and Father were a couple.

They realize that the separation has removed the important continuity of the children's daily lives. And continuity is what imparts security, especially in children. Daily life has crumbled; something new and extremely uncertain looms ahead. By the same token, after the separation something new begins for the father and mother in their relationship to their children. Generally, they cannot imagine what this might be. Nor is there an existing body of knowledge on the subject. After all, nobody discusses these particular aspects of a separation. Yet parents realize that their children experience the separation as serious interference with their lives, and that they don't want it because it disturbs them and takes away something they find indispensable.

What further aggravates the position of the children is the unmistakable silence with which society responds to their experiences. For the children, it is probably not so much a sign of disinterest as a clear signal not to discuss the matter, because they will otherwise annoy their parents and, in addition, raise disapproving eyebrows among adults.

THE DESTRUCTION OF PARENTHOOD

How can we describe a child's core experience in a fundamentally changed world? They experience the separation in terms of Father and Mother ending their relationship as a couple and therefore parents. This represents the essence of divorce for adults as well. But for children it involves much more. In the future, they will no longer experience Mother and Father as a parental unit as they have until now, and they will no longer be able to alternate seamlessly between the two. In the past, particularly when there was friction with one parent, the children were able to seek safe haven with the other, with whom they were still "on good terms." The parents confirm the children's loss inasmuch as they themselves no longer feel like the parents they were before. They don't act the way they once did, either. They no longer operate in tandem, and when they do, they still remain separate individuals, noticeably no longer a couple. It is not lost on the children that their parents have stopped functioning as a parental unit connected by a sexual-erotic dynamic. Parents can only act jointly as father and mother as long as they remain bound to one another as a couple through erotic-libidinal ties and a shared love of their children. Children are quick to realize that they must make do without common parenthood after the separation, because it simply no longer exists. What remains are Father and

Mother as individual entities. Consequently, in the future the separated partners will only be able to present themselves to the children as singles, as Father and as Mother, each one of them his or her own person. But they will no longer be united as a richly ambivalent couple that is nevertheless bound together through erotic and sexual energy. Above all, the loss of parenthood becomes obvious through the fact that the father and mother no longer want to raise children together, or watch them grow up, as a couple. This may or may not be clear to the children, but they perceive it as an irretrievable loss and a sign that their parents have turned away from them. There is an unfamiliar aggressive quality about this that the children haven't previously experienced with their parents.

AGGRESSIVE PARENTAL INDIVIDUALIZATION

Since divorces frequently involve an effort to subject children to as little stress as possible, the hope often arises that conducting the divorce as peacefully as possible will prevent the fundamental change in the children's world from ever occurring in the first place. While the parents may intensely long for this kind of consolation, for the children it is irrelevant whether Father and Mother separate in anger and rage, with mutual respect and recognition of the positive aspects of the past, or without any ado whatsoever. It is irrelevant for the children that Father and Mother would like to sweeten the change which is about to befall their world. For the children, the fact remains that they are losing the parental qualities they have become accustomed to from Father and Mother as a unit. A profound change has taken place in their lives. As a result, in the future they will only be able to encounter Mother and Father in two distinct forms. First, as a memory from the good old days, when their parents anchored the family history and conflicts were ultimately still solvable. Second, as the free-floating Father or Mother of the present and their uncertain future.

There is an ever-recurring situation where children experience that the fundamental change in their relationship to their parents has life-long aftereffects; it is not some unpleasant episode that can be offset through post-divorce kindnesses and avoided through good will on all sides. The situation I refer to consists of leaving their permanent residence and going to see the parent who has been granted visitation rights. Generally, that means their father.

It doesn't matter whether the children's visit with the "other" parent is consensual or court-ordered, whether the father is still permitted to enter his former dwelling or, as a sign of

smouldering animosity, is only allowed as far as the corridor where the children are handed over to him as they put on their shoes, or whether he is timid and reluctant to enter the former residence. All of these factors have no effect on the children's painful observation, namely, that their two parents no longer form a parental unit. If the children nevertheless try to turn them back into a "bonded" couple, they risk shaming or even annoying both of them. In their childish way, they want to reverse the calamity that has struck. This gives rise to guilt feelings in sensitive parents, who are at the same time saddened that their children suffer from an unfulfillable longing.

Parents who are especially insightful and sense the abyss that has opened for their children hope that they will occasionally be able to offer them the old kind of parenthood. But such arrangements have a contrived quality about them. They serve to comfort and soothe the parents' own unease. For the children, they represent a perished world in masquerade, a loss they are not allowed to complain about openly. We do not know whether children prefer such shams over the subtle or crass animosities that they, as powerless children, must endure when they go to see the "visitation parent." But in any case, it is painful when Father and Mother are grim and cold when they deliver the children to one another, as if the children weren't visual evidence that the parents once felt love and sexual-erotic desire for each other, as if the very individuals who are being delivered hadn't issued from that relationship, and as if the parents hadn't enjoyed their mutual affection for the children primarily as a *couple*. In such situations at the latest, the children of divorce no longer understand how they are supposed to experience the past and the present as components of a continuing story. They are internally torn and desperately seek a conciliatory solution, with no hope of assistance forthcoming from their parents as in the past.

The divorce of one's own parents is not only a depressing experience. The high divorce rate has also shaken belief in the viability of partner relationships. Surveys reflect that young people in particular desire such relationships. Thus, the socio-political consequences of divorce emerge.

PAST AND FUTURE OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

Research has yet to address these consequences. Isolated studies already indicate that even when post-relationship modes of interaction are civilized and not by any means bleak, a special problem always remains for the children.¹¹ How are they to reconcile the new, separated worlds of their parents with their own internal reality? Which past experiences with their parents are the children permitted to keep sufficiently alive that their personal life history and the one they shared with their parents can be recalled without anxiety ("back then I . . ." or, "that day, it was Dad and not you . . ." and, "wasn't it that Mom wanted to but you didn't . . .?") Each childhood memory is burdened by an ever-present sense of uncertainty that it might collide with the devalued history of their parents as a couple, and that their parents simply aren't interested in hearing about it any more.

Which forms of behavior can (or must) children adopt toward Father and Mother so that they don't hurt or criticize their parents through their hopes and memories? A child of divorce lives in constant fear that one small misstep will suffice to make its mother or father, or even both, abandon it with the same finality that characterizes their separation from one another. The smaller the children, the less they are able to understand the reasons that led their parents to separate. Depending on their psychosexual development, the children fantasize reasons that place the guilt for the separation upon themselves, because of their "naughty thoughts." "What did I do wrong that my parents got divorced?" In many cases, children are not permitted to remember parenthood as it once was, or they are afraid to do so, because they might connect with memories that their parents have already dismissed. Yet the past surrounds the children in a particularly intense way because they were trustingly embedded in their parents' relationship. As a result, in these cases the past that the parents have repressed encounters the children's passionate insistence on memories, that is, their desire to preserve the past in memory, particularly since they no longer experience common parenthood in the present. Many parents, therefore, can no longer relate to their children with the same intimacy and sensitive understanding that the children had grown accustomed to, and they are even less in a position

¹¹ Cf. Marquardt (2006). *The Revolution in Parenthood: The Emerging Global Clash Between Adult Rights and Children's Needs*. New York: Institute for American Values.

to continue sharing unreserved joy with them.

What children find particularly paralyzing in this constellation is the impossibility of changing their circumstances. The loss is final. Many parents exhaust themselves in the hope of making amends for this finality, but to no avail. It stands to reason, therefore, that the dissolution of joint parenthood makes children become aggressive and inexplicably recalcitrant. Parents do not want to attribute such behavior to recent events. That attribution only becomes possible by taking into consideration the fundamental change that has occurred in the children's world. Before parents can grasp these supposedly incomprehensible aspects of their children's behavior, they must recognize this fundamental change. But since this has been generally very burdensome until now, they means easy to cope with their new situation. Expressing the desire that the children be considerate most frequently devolves to mothers, who provide the children's home after the divorce in 85 percent of the cases. In the event that the children cannot be dissuaded from their aggressive nagging, then parents are correct in interpreting it as a bewildered criticism of their separation. If the parents do not set limits to such aggressive nagging, it can quickly consolidate into explicit criticism. At that point, it is only a short step from diffuse aggressiveness to outright accusations. It is difficult for parents to endure, when their children's diffuse irritability erupts in bombshell remarks such as, "I think it's really stupid that you guys got divorced! Why did you even *have* me in the first place, if you don't want to have me together?" Or, "Are you going to leave me, too, if I get on your nerves?" Many parents have come to know comments like that; they recall only with horror the way the remarks unexpectedly surfaced from the emotional depths of their children. It is not without reason that parents are tormented by such fears, especially those who are themselves children of divorce and at one time had comparable experiences, which memories they now suppress.

DENYING THE CHANGES IN CHILDREN'S POST-DIVORCE LIFE

There is a wide spread tendency in society to mystify the fundamental change in the world of children and keep it from becoming public. This can cause a depressive mood or even lead to outright depression in children. For many of them, life after divorce entails emotional ambivalence that is difficult to resolve. They are no longer permitted to simply consolidate the emotional past and present of their lives into the one cohesive experiential world that once existed under their parents' protection. Just as little are they able to reconcile their negative

feelings for their parents with the positive ones.

Most parents do not knowingly intend to hurt their children through the plans they make for their own lives. Thus, when the children search for a new orientation, it triggers efforts on the part of the parents to alleviate the gravity of the situation. As a direct result, they lovingly ignore any comments from their children that are tinged with blame, or they interpret them in a manner they themselves can endure. Parents utilize a psychological mechanism that offers protection for themselves. For the children, however, the upshot is that they are not allowed to expose the truth to the light of day, which is important to them as well as being a prerequisite for their emotional balance. Through empathetic listening, the children learn what their parents could not endure if it were to come from the children themselves.

The children's search for truth in a fundamentally changed world is hampered by the fact that not only the public, but also relatives, colleagues and friends of the family likewise turn a benevolently deaf ear when children attempt to voice an opinion on divorce. This also explains why not only divorced individuals, but also politicians, researchers, child protection authorities and churches have difficulty recognizing the fundamental change that divorce signifies in a child's world. And as long as there is no awareness of the fundamental changes, no one will draw a connection between children's emotional suffering and their parents' divorce.

It is indeed surprising that the changes parents force upon the world of their children have not become the subject of passionate debate, even though research has already drawn attention to numerous impairments and downsides in children's daily lives. In coming generations, these negative aspects will have a cumulative impact as risk factors for society.

INSTRUMENTAL VIOLENCE: A CLICHÉ TO COVER UP SUBTLETIES OF CHILD-NEGLECT

To a large extent, the neglect of these societal risks has to do with the way the debate on the interests of children has been conducted since the 1960s. Initially, the problems of parents and children, no less than those of men and women, were viewed from a relational perspective. At the end of the 20th century, however, an approach took hold that simplified all of the problematic aspects by reducing them to "violence." Ultimately, it became only a question of who perpetrated the violence and who was the victim, and, naturally, no one wanted to side with anyone but the victims. But neither the public nor the so-called field of "violence research,"

inquired into the causes and effects of conflict. Sensitive attempts at understanding conflict in human relationships were impossible, at least in this scientific environment. Every aspect of conflict – which must first be understood before it can be resolved – was immediately categorized as "instrumental violence."¹² A hysterically charged atmosphere arose; not only was everything oppressive characterized as violence,¹³ even differentiated questions were dismissed as such. As a consequence of this discussion, inquiry into the effect of the fundamental change that divorce produces in the world of children also fell by the wayside. As a rule, this fundamental change appears to come about without violence, and there are no context-independent studies that might point to the opposite. Consequently, the everyday reactions of children to the dissolution of the parental unit, received no attention whatsoever. That explains why divorce was never studied from the vantage point of children. Children's experience did not conform to the cliché of instrumental violence, to which battering, kicking, knives, bleeding wounds, broken legs and the like were attributed. Divorce, on the other hand, irrevocably robs children of common parenthood, but it is classified under the limited aspect of "the good right" of adults to shape their lives without constraint.

THE IDEALIZATION OF MOTHERS: SELF-SACRIFICE AGAIN AS FEMALE VIRTUE

In a century of deepened understanding for the needs of children, where was a modified discussion to take its start?

We would like to outline one response in particular here because it is directed primarily at women who would either like to or are compelled to assume custody of their children after a divorce. We observe that under the difficult circumstances following a divorce, many mothers dedicate themselves to their children in an unceasing, more or less frantic spiral. From a socio-political perspective, this meets with thorough approval and goes hand-in-hand with the

¹² See the exemplary work of Hagemann-White, C. (2001). European Research on the Prevalence of Violence Against Women. *Violence Against Women*, 7(7), 732–759. This text quietly overturns much that was previously passed off as scientifically established and played a prominent role in family policy discussions within the German government.

¹³ The structural concepts that underlay work in women's shelters and self-help groups were generally characterized by an absence of the relational aspect of violence. For critical commentary see: Hamel, J. (2007). Gender-Inclusive Family Intervention in Domestic Violence: An Overview. In J. Hamel & T. L. Nicholls (Eds.), *Family Intervention in Domestic Violence* (pp. 247–273). New York: Springer.

mothers' demands that society extend pity to them, demands that almost seem guaranteed by law. It stands to reason that the spiralling dedication of these women is kept on a steady upward trajectory through the media. Society is only too happy when it can point to a person who is pursuing a path that is beneficial to children and appears to help them escape from a field of conflict that is kept in semi-darkness. As a result, when a peculiar mixture of admiration, pity and compulsion drives mothers into a vortex of self-sacrifice, no one interferes with the spiral. Most people are genuinely pleased about it. Ultimately, this is one of the reasons why divorced mothers who are parenting alone are virtually romanced with pity, and many of them have apparently decided to compete on the basis of providing moving accounts of their tribulations.

Yet there are entirely undiscovered aspects to this pity. One of them relates to the sadism that is directed toward mothers who are parenting alone. The sadism consists of expecting that the women demonstrate how motherly devotion can almost miraculously heal the suffering of children, thereby ridding society of the problem entirely as if divorce could be transformed into an episode that ends on a refreshing note for children. This is sadistic because the pious desire that women will be able to fix matters is unattainable, and yet there is an injunction against even recognizing the fact. The fundamental change in a child's world cannot be remedied through a mother's miracle. It can only be addressed by sensitizing society to the suffering of children after common parenthood comes to an end. This perspective destroys the illusion held by many people who recoil in fear of making a depressing discovery, and therefore have not yet grasped the world of children.

CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO BE ANGRY AT DIVORCING PARENTS

From a socio-political standpoint the two-edged sympathy directed toward mothers who are parenting alone is the simplest way to remove the suffering of children from public awareness. Mothers are idealized and thereby overwhelmed. Thus, the simultaneity of sympathy and unmercifully excessive demands observed here contributes to keeping the responsibility for the children of divorce out of the public eye to begin with.

But how could we describe at least one of the many approaches that would enable society to embrace in sensitive manner the fundamental change in children's lives, so that the loss of common parenthood associated with divorce is not additionally aggravated through anxious avoidance of children's experiences?

Let's assume that parents will always strive to conduct their separation in a way that their children will not be adversely affected. This activates many different kinds of efforts. Numerous parents believe that the proper approach is to exclude their children from the impending decisions, thereby creating a safe haven for them during the labor pains of divorce.

Yet a decision of such gravity cannot be kept secret. It is an illusion to believe that children remain completely clueless. We will leave aside the question of whether the parents are truly motivated by consideration alone, or whether their own insecurity is involved, that is, their fear of everything that might ensue from such disconcerting news. For their children will not react with enthusiasm. As spontaneous reactions, dejection, anger and even sheer horror appear much more likely. It is extremely difficult for parents to expose themselves to the emotions that their divorce has unleashed. They are under sufficient stress from other factors. While candour toward one's children requires great courage, the children urgently rely on such courage, and they ought to have the certainty that their parents will also tell them the truth when it is horrible. This entails not so much the question of forthrightness, but rather of allowing children to react to the fundamental change in their world with emotions that are appropriate for the impending upheavals: feelings of desolation and abandonment; anger; disappointment; and an objective sense of having lost their footing. But which father or mother would want to subject him- or herself to such emotions during a period that is already depressing enough? While their fear is understandable, people who want to divorce have to muster this well-nigh heroic ability. For those who are unable to do so, there is no alternative other than allowing their own failure to act to force their children to step protectively in front of their parents so that the parents themselves don't have to experience the horror they have just inflicted on their children. This has far-reaching consequences for the children. For if the parents reveal themselves as the cause of the children's horrible experiences, the children have good reason to experience their suffering as injuries inflicted from without. This enables the children to experience their sense of being rejected, overlooked and neglected, in a manner appropriate to their injuries and the forfeiture of their happiness, that is, they can direct their negative feelings toward their parents. The other, more customary route is simple and offers almost no alternatives. It consists of the children directing the consequences of their horror against themselves. They develop a wide array of physical, psychological, or behavioral symptoms, some to a lesser and others to a greater degree, some immediately and others only after a delay.

THE CLICHÉ OF MALEVOLENT DIVORCED FATHERS: A HELPLESS WAY TO DEAL WITH SOCIETAL GUILT

Children expect courage and openness from their parents. This allows them to express their anger and disappointment over the impending change in their world without exposing themselves to the danger of invoking their parents' displeasure or, even worse, experiencing them as powerless. As a rule, we discuss other catastrophes and fateful phenomena with our children, such as world hunger, global warming, the effects of Katrina and the extinction of certain species. Children absorb these catastrophes with careful attention, even though they only half understand the consequences. We must also talk with them when they are losing their common parenthood. Providing information about something horrible empowers them more than keeping them ignorant, although our intentions are to protect them. Children tend to experience this more as a sign of untruthfulness and a lack of courage.

A particularly pronounced indication that the horror children experience is being denied can be seen in the myth of the malevolent, divorced father. Although both father *and* mother bear equal responsibility as individuals, this myth shifts the blame solely onto the father.¹⁴

In dealing with the widespread denial of conflict and trauma in divorced families, the American psychotherapist Anne C. Bernstein¹⁵ goes even one step further. She argues that children's symptoms and acting out are neither the result of unconscious psychological conflicts, nor the unavoidable result of their parents' divorce. The suffering of children is based on motives of hatred and intentional revenge that they harbour against their parents. In Bernstein's view, these children are simply refusing to adapt to the new situation and should have nothing to complain about or suffer from.

Such argumentation is a striking indication of the guilt that society senses as a whole. This line of argumentation attests to hostility against children.

¹⁴ Cf. Amendt, G. (1998). Men's Reactions to Some Assumptions of the Modern Women's Movement. A lecture presented at American Men's Studies Association, Youngstown, Ohio.

¹⁵ Bernstein, A. C. (2007). Restructuring, and Reconciliation: Clinical Practice With Complex Postdivorce Families. *Family Process*, 46(1), 67–78.

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¹⁶ *Handling Conflicts without violence. Effective Means of Prevention* at Goethe Universität in Frankfurt, Germany, from 13- 15 April 2018 <https://familyconflict.eu/en/>



MALE CIRCUMCISION GRIEF: EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES

Lindsay Watson and Tom Golden



ABSTRACT

Cultural circumcision has been an under recognized cause of male body-loss grief. Male circumcision grief is now being more commonly expressed. We evaluated the experiences of 22 men who sought therapy for circumcision grief. We found that therapists were reluctant to accept that the grief was real, were unaware of foreskin functions, denied circumcision had physical or psychological sequelae and minimized patient grief using humor, cultural aesthetics, controversial health benefits, sexism and an erroneous understanding of penile anatomy and sexual function. Male therapists were more likely to deny that circumcision is harmful and to be less empathetic than female therapists. We discuss methods to help make circumcision grief therapy more effective for men.

Keywords: male circumcision, therapy, body-loss, grief, cultural bias

INTRODUCTION

“Don’t try to minimize or understate the significance of the impacts of circumcision. It takes a lot for someone to come to a stranger, even a professional, and admit to this sort of vulnerability, to admit that their "manhood" is less than it should be, and to admit that it has a serious impact on a daily basis. Even if you can't understand how, it is a big deal to anyone motivated to come to you for help” . (Patient R).

A woman patient presents with grief arising from when she was genitally mutilated as a girl. Ideally a therapist would support this woman to work through her grief, rather than joke about circumcision, say she is “nuts,” justify her circumcision using health reasons or tell her she should be grateful for what was done to her. In contrast, in the case of the man, anecdotal reports suggest that a therapist is likely to joke about circumcision, say he is “nuts,” justify his circumcision using health reasons or tell him he should be grateful, rather than support the man to work through his grief. “The women’s pain is usually seen as a call to action. People want to help out somehow. The man’s pain is something that people want to avoid as if it were a taboo (Golden, 2013, p. 16).”

This sexist bias arises from a western societal construct that female circumcision is more damaging than male pedocircumcision. Some forms of female circumcision are more damaging, but some are quite innocuous in terms of the reduction in erogenous tissue, effect on mechanical and protective functions and damage to the development of protopathic neuronal pathways (Circinfo.org, 2014; Department of Gender and Women's Health and Department of Reproductive Health and Research, 2001; Fitzgerald & Walker, 2003).

For example, pricking, piercing or incision of the clitoris and/or labia is less damaging than the removal of a 1.5” x 5” double layer of muscle and dermal tissue, containing several thousand encapsulated nerve endings that make up the male foreskin (Taylor, Lockwood, & Taylor, 1996). However, to say one type of circumcision is worse than another contravenes human rights principles (Boyle, Svoboda, Price, & Turner, 2000). Since non-therapeutic pedocircumcision involves the deliberate act of removing healthy erogenous tissue from a minor without his consent, some consider non-therapeutic circumcision to be sexual assault, as it would most certainly be if done to a non-consenting adult (Boyle et al., 2000).

The bias in favor of male pedocircumcision arises from the belief that the foreskin is a superfluous structure and is prone to a range of dangerous pathologies. These cultural constructions are promoted by the North American medical profession in sharp contrast to medical organizations in the UK, Europe and Australasia (Darby, 2013). In reality, the foreskin is an integral part of the normal penile circulatory, muscular, sensory and mechanical systems. It provides a major part of the sensory input during sexual activities via the sensory receptors in the ridged band, the frenulum and the frenular delta (Sorrells et al., 2007; Taylor et al., 1996; Winkelmann, 1959). It also preserves the sensitivity of the glans corona by acting as a barrier to abrasion, low air or water temperatures and desiccation, provides enough skin to accommodate the increased penile volume during erection without skin tears or hemorrhage, reduces the force needed to penetrate the vagina—the “shoehorn effect” (Taves, 2002), reduces friction by acting as a linear bearing between the penis and the vaginal walls (Lakshmanan & Parkash, 1980) and retains vaginal fluids during intercourse (Bensley & Boyle, 2003).

BACKGROUND

Some research has investigated the psychological effects of non-therapeutic pedocircumcision (Boyle & Bensley, 2001; Cansever, 1965; Glover, 1929; Goldman, 1999; Leone-Vespa, 2010). Ramos and Boyle (2001) found that of 1577 Filipino boys aged 11 to 16, ‘almost 70% of boys subjected to ritual circumcision and 51% of those subjected to medical circumcision fulfilled the DSM-IV criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD.’ Rhinehart (1999) and Golden (1999) during therapy to resolve early trauma, were as surprised as their adult male patients to discover that in some cases the original event was pedocircumcision. Rhinehart (1999) found “*serious and sometimes disabling lifelong consequences.*” In a non-therapy situation one man spontaneously re-experienced his circumcision (Watson, 2014, pp. 86-88). Such experiences should not be surprising, since analgesics for infant circumcision have only come into common use in recent decades (Chamberlain, 1989). An fMRI investigation concluded that infant pain experience closely resembles that seen in adults (Goksan et al., 2015). Hammond (2013) and Watson (2014) have collected anecdotal evidence to indicate an array of psychological sequelae.

Most circumcised men, including physicians and psychiatrists, live in a state of denial that they have been damaged through a neonatal cosmetic surgery over which they had no control. North American media reinforce the cultural construct by portraying male pedocircumcision as

humorous, beneficial or harmless, and the intact penis as potentially dangerous or obscene. In spite of this, some men discover information on the Internet that shocks them into an awareness that they have lost out sexually. There is every possibility that the rate of this awakening will increase as the percentage of circumcised boys falls below 50% in the US. Some circumcised men remember when they first learned what had been done to their genitals as infants and recall reactions such as anger, shock, sorrow, disbelief, curiosity and profound grief (Hammond, 2013; Watson, 2014).

Circumcision grief (CG) is the psychological and physiological reaction of a man (or a woman) to the physical and functional loss of part of their genitalia, along with the consequential loss of full sexual experience and confidence in intimate situations. CG is intense because the circumcised penis “*is the source of a negative self-image that goes far beyond sexuality*” (Gollaher, 2000, p. 181). For a very small but increasing number of men, the psychological breakthrough of their circumcision denial state can result in deep grief. Such men report feeling dissatisfied, violated or raped, frustrated, angry, mutilated, betrayed by parents, shamed, spiritually traumatized and powerless. Other reactions include violent retributive thoughts towards the circumciser, recurrent nightmares, depression and suicidal thoughts and attempts, self-harm, body eudysmorphia, poor self-image, alexithymia (Bollinger & Van Howe, 2011) and an inability to engage in intimate relationships (Boyle, Goldman, Svoboda, & Fernandez, 2002; Hammond, 2013; Watson, 2014). This parallels the reactions of circumcised women, who feel deep anger, bitterness and betrayal (Denholm, 2004). Such reactions are consistent with those experienced by people coping with the loss of other body parts (Desmond & MacLauchlan, 2002; Maguire & Murray, 1998). As amputees can develop an obsessive preoccupation with their missing body part (Maguire & Murray, 1998), so circumcised men may also become obsessive about their missing foreskin.

On entering CG men feel isolated and alone, and are unable to seek support from peers, parents, partners and medical professionals because within a circumcising culture they fear ridicule (Hammond, 2013; Watson, 2014). As a man learns that “people are uncomfortable talking about it, and he is treated like it’s not important or that he shouldn’t question it, a man becomes cut off from society, and then a deeper circumcision of the soul sets in (Gollaher, 2000, p. 180).” Even sexual partners may not give much support, as men must be seen as strong and in control,

and usually seek to solve problems on their own (Golden, 2000). Commonly anecdotal accounts of visits to professional therapists report a negative outcome. Unsurprisingly, to avoid demeaning reactions, such men seek support in their grief through the anonymity of foreskin restoration websites.

The present study aimed to evaluate the quality of therapeutic support for men undergoing CG to test whether the anecdotal claims are true.

METHOD

Participants

Twenty-two self-selecting men from three websites: A Voice For Men (<http://www.avoiceformen.com>), Foreskin Restoration (<http://www.foreskin-restoration.net>) and Restoring For Men (www.restoringforeskin.org) participated. Men whose ages were known ranged from 18 to 74. The sexual orientation of the men is unknown, but anecdotal reports suggest that the proportion of gay to straight men using foreskin restoration websites is greater than that in the general male population.

Procedure

Originally, we designed a partially quantitative survey, but found the number of respondents too few for such an analysis and that the narrative responses were revealing. We advertised for men's experiences on the three websites. All patient returns were assigned new letter codes (A to V). Both authors analyzed patient responses separately and then compared findings to identify common patient therapy experiences.

RESULTS

Nearly all responses came from North American men. Some had attended several therapists; the most common type reported being psychologists. Beside CG, some men had additional psychological problems. Many men returned lengthy narratives that we have quoted extensively.

Most respondents were "extremely upset" before therapy. Apart from those seeking help for depression, many were unsure of what they would achieve through psychotherapy. Some patients wanted validation of their grief, others wanted coping strategies –

I wanted to be able to sleep without waking up in the middle of the night, screaming over visions of a doctor slicing into my penis. (F).

Another wanted to be able to accept his “mutilated” organ (E) and another wanted to –

...work past the episodes of grief/rage/depression that would come and go, to be able to have sex again. (Q)

Some wanted strategies to cope with suicidal thoughts (B, G aged 22, Q). A minority of patients felt accepted by the therapist. Some therapists, even though CG was completely outside their experience, did make efforts to empathize with the patient (E) –

She said, ‘we don’t just cut women’s boobs off, that’s the same thing.’ Recently she told me that I have opened her eyes, and that if she ever has a boy she won’t circumcise him. (I)

These examples indicate the finding that female therapists often perceived their patient’s grief was real, while male therapists tended to reject the possibility. Patient (B) observed –

“With men [therapists] I’ve sometimes encountered resistance due to their obvious personal circumcisions and related emotional baggage”. (B)

Some therapists initially reacted with a stunned silence, indicating shock (C, D & F). However, a common reaction was active denial and minimizing the patient’s grief through justifications (D, H & I) –

He explained that uncut penises ‘look funny’ and he’s glad he was cut. He joked about how his son had to be cut twice because the first time didn’t ‘turn out’. Not helpful. ... The next guy was ... a Jew and joked about his own son’s circumcision and his own. (C);

She said “I should be ‘grateful’ that I was cut as if it’s the best thing that could have happened for your sexual health and that you’ve been given a great ‘gift’. (M);

...the foreskin isn’t part of the penis. ... some girls prefer it.(L);

...it’s medically proven to be beneficial. (J)

Several therapists said CG indicated deeper problems or was ‘a metaphor for something else,’ rather than simply the grief for a lost body part (B & J) –

I have had several psychiatrists presume that I am basically delusional for thinking that circumcision harmed me in any way. (B);

The look on their faces and their attitude disgusted me, they thought I was crazy! (D)

Some felt that their grief was being dismissed –

Dr. H. kept comparing me to pro-lifers. He wanted to dismiss me anyway he could (P);

The therapists ... tried to attribute my sorrow to something else, made me feel invalidated, infuriated, and sad. (B);

The therapist “told me something else was causing me to feel this way. (Q)

In one case, after the patient revealed he had “had a botched neonatal circumcision,” the topic was never mentioned again.

Opinions differed widely as to whether patients felt understood and respected. Few patients experienced empathetic therapists –

I felt understood and respected eventually. (H);

...she was aware that circumcision could reduce sensitivity. I felt VERY understood (E).

However, these were the exceptions. One patient was “*laughed out of the office*” and was told “*it was ME who was the problem*. (C)”

Anger was a common patient response to ineffective therapy –

Terrible on all accounts. Embarrassed further about my body and emotions. Angry at the medical profession as a whole. (C);

Extremely angry and as if I was dismissed. (D);

This made me angry, because I’ve heard this advice from many people, and simply saying ‘accept it’ hasn’t helped me at all. It’s not much different from telling someone to ‘get over it. (G)

Some felt undervalued as males –

I felt pretty dismissed and it reinforced the idea that people generally don’t care about men. (H);

God it’s not helping. I came home and was tempted to self-harm again. ... Right now, I hate the psychologist. (D);

It made me feel ashamed and embarrassed. Going to see someone about penis issues is difficult enough, but to be dismissed in this way made me feel even lonelier. (Q)

Rather than diagnose grief over a lost body part, the range of diagnoses, when given, included OCD (C), body dysmorphia (D & E), obsessive behavior (I), sexual fetishism (P), paranoia (P), sex

addiction (Q), sexual abuse as a child (Q), autism spectrum disorder (T) and the obsession was “a political issue (P).” The failure to acknowledge the actual cause of the anguish provoked powerful reactions in some patients –

A female rape victim who had been drugged and couldn't remember a thing, and whose body had merely been penetrated would not have received such treatment. Fucking god damn medical profession. (C)

Therapists suggested a range of strategies to their patients: medication (A, C, D, H & T), focusing on the positive (A & K), foreskin restoration (B, I & J), meditation (C & F), accept and “roll with it” (G, K & T), journaling/essay therapy (F), talking (F, K & P), self-reflection (H), avoiding foreskin restoration websites (I), avoiding approaching parents about the issue (K), focusing on the bigger picture (K), realizing that “not enjoying sex as much as my Mrs does” is just in your head because “the brain is the biggest sex organ” (K), somatic experiencing technique (S) and cognitive behavioral therapy (P). In one case three strategies were proposed (H).

We identified the following interventions as unproductive:

- Being told to stop viewing foreskin restoration websites.
- Meditation, because it involved –
...concentrating on the ‘body’ and its ‘wholeness.’ It just made things worse. (C)
- Telling patients to ‘get over it’ –
I often hear, ‘It’s a piece of skin, you need to get over it’. (I)
- Being told that some girls prefer circumcised partners provoked this response:
I would not prefer a girl who did. That says something about her as a person ... I wonder what people would think of me if I said “I prefer girls who’ve had their clit. cut off at birth, it looks better. (L)
- Diminishing circumcision pain and grief.
Therapists should learn about circumcision, and be willing to take an alternative view of it and of the minds of men who have been hurt by it. They must focus on the fact that the man in front of them needs help, he is their patient, and it is their job to help him with his reality, not to keep circling the wagons on behalf of the medical profession that has come up with almost all of what they believe about circumcision and about men

who complain about it. (U)

- Referring patients to therapists based in hospitals:

A hospital or any kind of medical environment is the last place someone who is suffering suicidal thoughts over their circumcision should be sent to. (T)

The degree of success of the therapy process varied widely. One patient recorded real progress –

After several sessions, I ceased to wake up at night, and though the horror of the circumcision sometimes surfaces, even now, I'm able to deal with it ... like we do when remembering the death of a close friend or relative. We mourn the loss, but we learn to put it in perspective. (F)

However, there were unsuccessful encounters –

The therapy left me exactly where I was. It was a waste of my time. (G);

I didn't want to go to a psychiatrist again, because I now regarded psychiatrists as part of the same medical establishment that unapologetically performed circumcisions and prescribed pills to dull rather than explore painful feelings. (A);

I had a very bad experience with therapy and I will not be considering it again. I've become stronger having discovered foreskin restoration and I will not take advice on the matter from medical 'professionals' any further. (C);

Therapists have to know that there are those of us who have symptoms strikingly similar to PTSD and that certain events can trigger these repressed emotions. Therapists shouldn't dismiss these feelings or try to immediately find an alternate cause. (Q)

In summary, we conclude that:

1. Many therapists do not recognize that the foreskin is a functional part of the genitals and its loss can result in grief as profound as the loss of a larger body part or even a loved one;
2. More male than female therapists exhibit denial that pedocircumcision is sexually and psychologically damaging;
3. Therapists demonstrate denial by using diagnoses such as OCD and dysmorphia;
4. Some therapists demean and minimize the patient's CG using humor, local cultural aesthetics, non-universally recognized health benefits, sexism and erroneous conceptions

of penile anatomy and sexual function;

5. Therapists, particularly males, often push their own personal bias and insecurity, favoring circumcision at the expense of establishing patient rapport;
6. Therapists use a variety of strategies and techniques, some less effective than others in supporting the male circumcision grieving process;
7. Therapists seem unaware of masculine modes to support male grief;
8. CG patients are very knowledgeable about the anatomy and the sexual functions of the male genitals, the weaknesses of medical justifications for non-therapeutic pedocircumcision, and the ethical issues involved in cutting the genitals of minors;
9. CG patients easily identify therapists who are in denial of circumcision harm, resulting in the therapist losing credibility and rapport;
10. CG patients are often very angry but suppress their anger;
11. In some cases CG may be only one aspect of a man's psychological profile. The men surveyed had great diversity in their backgrounds and psychological states. In some cases the CG was accompanied by other serious issues;
12. In some cases of CG men can be suicidal;
13. Therapists may erroneously identify body dysmorphia as a characteristic of CG;
14. Some therapists advise men not to approach parents because little advantage is likely to result.

DISCUSSION

It is not surprising that therapists are largely at a loss as to know how to treat men who exhibit CG, as most training in grief focuses on the loss of a person rather than a body part. Oppawsky (2009) discussing the grief associated with the loss of a body part, says "Missing from the literature is [a] ... specific therapy specifically for those clients who are distraught by what has happened to their limbs or body parts after they were severed, removed, or amputated and

who cannot find closure to their grief because of this. The thought of parts of their body being disposed of as “medical-waste solution” has been described as “almost too much to bear.” (p.57).

Insult is added to injury when men enduring CG learn that their circumciser was a woman or that neonatal foreskin fibroblasts are used by SkinMedica to manufacture face cream endorsed by Oprah Winfrey (Morris, 2013). In American culture, therapists need to consciously work against the prevailing pro-circumcision social construct and as well as the natural response to avoid confronting men’s pain. Men soon learn that that their emotional struggles are not valued. Therapists should make clear to their patients that they recognize and accept that CG is real.

Men need to be taught the basics of the grieving process to understand that their experience is normal. They should be told to:

...embrace the anguish and try to feel it as strongly as [they] can, preferably in the company of someone supportive, so that it can begin to fade. I found my girlfriend of five years to be very supportive. I’ve spent a few afternoons crying on her furniture, and this was great to help me move forward (somewhat). I’ve found the copper cyanide I need to die, but I’m thinking I may stick around a bit longer. (G)

One factor that complicates a productive psychotherapeutic approach for many therapists is that men tend to have different ways to process their emotions and work towards healing. Most men will find that connecting their pain with an action of some sort is more harmonious with their nature. This approach varies from the more traditional talking therapy. You can see this difference clearly when men will connect their emotional pain with an action that helps them in both experiencing and processing that emotional pain. This explains why writing an essay, journal, poem or song etc., or actively non-surgically restoring their foreskin are excellent healing modes for men processing CG. Many therapists have never been taught this more masculine mode of healing. It is easily incorporated into talk therapy by simply focusing the therapeutic talk on the man's actions and the resulting emotions and memories.

As more circumcised American males become aware, through the Internet, of what they have lost, it is important that therapists are prepared for this type of grief.

Frankly, I think the therapist probably needs to accept that circumcision really is an act of sexual mutilation and rape—a violation of the most intimate part of one’s body. I don’t

see how a therapist who thinks their patient is delusional can be highly effective. (B);

Some of these [therapists] need to watch and hear an infant as he's being forcibly subjected to the totally unnecessary amputation of his prepuce. Perhaps then they will realize how it affects some adult men, when, finally they consciously realize what happened to them. (F);

A few minutes visiting the grief sections of (non-surgical) foreskin restoration websites, as mentioned above, will demonstrate that CG is real. (Watson, 2014) briefly covers the basic foreskin anatomy and functions, the process of CG, the male grief modes and detailed accounts of men processing CG.

Therapists need to be aware that pedocircumcision is harmful. "Circumcision removes the most sensitive parts of the penis and decreases the fine-touch pressure sensitivity of the glans penis (Sorrells et al., 2007)." A later study concluded the foreskin is important for "penile sensitivity, overall sexual satisfaction, and penile functioning (Bronselaer et al., 2013)." (It is of interest that both these studies were published outside the United States and ignored by US media.)

Foreskin restoration is one of the most powerful methods of working through CG since it empowers the patient.

...Not seeing any [therapist] currently. [I'm] just restoring and trying to live life to the fullest. It's working too, to take shit into my own hands. (C)

Therapists should –

...familiarize themselves with foreskin restoration, and what is involved (methods, outcomes, etc.) to be able to understand how long it takes, and the labor and emotions involved with restoration. They shouldn't badger you about it. (E);

I wanted to try out a year of foreskin restoration, and now I'm thinking I may stick around for the full six. I also think that men should be told of foreskin restoration as a treatment, and that therapists should be supportive in such pursuits. (G)

The term *body eudysmorphia* (meaning *true* dysmorphia) is preferable to the term *body dysmorphia*. Body dysmorphia refers to a distorted mental image of the body, even though the body structure is within the normal range. However, in the case of CG it is the body itself that is distorted—the glans penis is dried out instead of being smooth and shiny, the penis shaft is scarred and the foreskin, and some of the shaft skin, is missing.

Writing an article or keeping a journal seems to work well for some CG patients (e.g. F). One man wrote a paper and presented it to the Tenth International Symposium on Genital Integrity. He was received with great applause, and the paper was later published (Johnson, 2010). He writes:

This experience proved more therapeutic than any of my efforts to get help from therapists, primarily because the individuals [at the symposium] ... all had had experiences similar to mine, confirming the validity of my observations. They knew that circumcision is extremely traumatic and that the trauma endures as a permanent imprint in the unconscious as a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, they knew that the foreskin is an important part of the penis and that its loss seriously damages a man's sexual sensitivity and capability throughout life to the detriment of intimacy and thus to general happiness for himself and his intimate partners. ... After my paper was published, I sent it ... to the man who had been my psychiatrist for twelve years, asking for his honest reaction. He wrote back as follows: "Sorry. I can't deal with this." That was all he said. (A)

CG is real for the patient and should not be minimized.

Don't downplay the patient's grief! I don't care if other men are happy with their circumcisions, and it isn't particularly helpful to hear that at least I can reach orgasm (as if this is the only purpose of sex, or as if a change in sexual function is the only reason I'm upset about having my body violated). Treat the man the same way you would treat a woman who was upset about a gross violation of her body. (H)

Therapists should be there to

...empathize, to validate your feelings and to help you sort out your feelings and help you to solutions". (E);

Understand that it's a horrible thing and offer techniques to overcome it and not just say things like 'you need to move on'. (D)

It is important that circumcised male therapists actively avoid justifying their own circumcision.

One man said:

I specifically saw a woman who had 'Men's Issues' in her professional profile. I wanted a woman, because I didn't want to end up with a cut guy who had the 'fuck you, ain't nothing wrong with my dick' attitude. (E)

Encouraging the man to recognize *real* positives may help. Patient K was helped when his therapist pointed out that:

The most important thing you did in all of this was to spare your son ... so, you need to honor that and know that and be proud of that.' Indeed... I've broken the chain at least in my own blood line. (K)

Therapists should rightly be cautious about encouraging the men to involve parents (Watson, 2014). Many circumcised men want to confront their parents to ask “why?” This can also result in a family rift that is extremely difficult to heal, therefore it cannot be recommended without considerable forethought and planning. It should not be undertaken in the early stages of grief when the patient’s emotions are very raw. Preparation of a well thought out “no blame” document, that seeks information, along with a patient advocate or support person may work. The normal parental reaction is defensiveness, although fathers are more likely to be defensive and less apologetic than mothers (Hammond, 2013). Bigelow believes honesty between both parents and the son “might well heal breaches in the family structure that many parents do not even know exist” (Goldman, 1997, pp. 199-200). He reports that most men have never discussed with their parents how they feel about having been circumcised (Bigelow, 1995). Discussing the matter with parents helps towards at least partial closure and sometimes it is all that is required for the man to be able to process the grief.

Encouraging a patient to visit restoration websites is usually beneficial, but triggers can make the experience distressing. Early in the grief process repeated reminders of what has been lost can be devastating, particularly for young men. However, considering that his partner, friends, families and medical professionals are unlikely to understand and offer support, these moderated websites are probably the only safe place a man can be heard and not ridiculed. Apart from restoration group meetings organized by branches of the National Organization of Restoring Men ([NORM](#)), it is best to regard foreskin restoration websites as the only support groups available; the members of which will help monitor the patient and offer advice from their own experiences. Few men have supportive partners.

This study finds that most psychotherapists do not recognize CG as a subset of body loss grief and tend to minimize this form of grief. By recognizing the authenticity of CG and advising grief strategies that include distinctly masculine activity-centered approaches, such as non-

surgical foreskin restoration, the outcomes for CG patients might be greatly improved. While CG seems to be a minute proportion of patients experiencing body loss grief, the exact magnitude of the phenomenon presents an opportunity for further investigation.

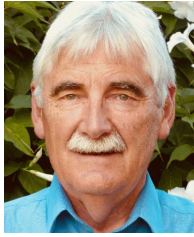
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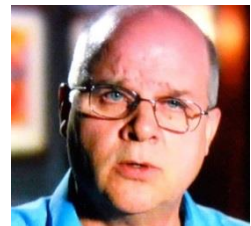
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Massai Tribeswomen

ONLY MALE GENITAL MODIFICATION IS 'CONTROL'; THE FEMALE FORM IS COMPETITION BY WOMEN

Steve Moxon



ABSTRACT

Genital modification functions proximally in both sexes to denude sexual sensitivity, reducing propensity to engage in sex; impacting specifically extra-pair sex. Here distal function diverges: male GMo is controlling (lowering young males' competitiveness with high-status males for young females), whereas female GMo is 'honest signaling' of future fidelity (in contest for high-genetic-quality pair-bond partners). Only FGMo originated as a benefit for 'cut' individuals. FGMo is both performed and advocated overwhelmingly by females, and does not serve alpha males (in that they can have few concerns about partner fidelity), actually dis-benefiting them (because of impaired sexual receptivity of current and potential pair-bond and extra-pair sex partners). With no basis for male imposition ('male control') to explain FGMo, it can only be intra-sexual.

Keywords: genital modification, genital cutting, genital mutilation, MGMo, FGMo, extra-pair sex, male control, sexual sensitivity, honest signalling

As is well understood by evolutionary biologists, a bodily structure directly involved with reproduction (the most crucial function of all) must have evolved to be highly efficient, and continues to be particularly strongly selected. Genital (especially male genital) morphology, being concerned directly with fertilisation efficiency, is subject to keener pressure to adapt than is any other morphology (Eberhard, 1985, 2010; Hosken & Stockley, 2004). In consequence, any such structure that has remained essentially unaltered and very similar across a wide range of species clearly cannot be vestigial and instead must have a honed adaptive value; and any crude surgical modification is bound to produce dysfunction, let alone no improvement. This is very much the case for the foreskin (the male prepuce); its being ubiquitous across not only all hominids but all primate species and all mammals (bar two egg-laying anomalies). This applies likewise to the clitoral hood (the female prepuce), which develops in-embryo along parallel lines to the foreskin in the male, as a most highly innervated sheath for erectile tissue essential for sexual sensitivity; the two structures being homologous (Cold & McGrath, 1999). Other structures involved in more extreme GMO¹ (which occurs for both sexes) likewise are homologous. Yet almost all of the various suggestions for the origin of (male) ‘circumcision’ (and the forms just as extreme or more so than female types) fall foul of this basic logic, especially in respect of putative dysfunction in the case of the male prepuce. Logic, though, is not to be expected, either in the case of ‘traditional’ peoples or those in developed societies adhering to a religious doctrine or ideological line. The strong motivation to provide explanation for what is psychologically needed and to avoid ‘cognitive dissonance’ understandably tends to produce implausible rationalization. This very much applies in respect of the practice introduced in modern times in the UK, USA and other developed nations, but which uniquely is still normative in the USA.

Common to how those within traditional and developed-world nineteenth century (and some within even contemporary societies) view(ed) MGMO – and how some academics view from outside – have been various claims that the foreskin causes hygiene problems: by trapping

¹ The expression *genital modification* is here used in preference to the pejorative *mutilation* or still slightly loaded *cutting*, in accord with an emerging scientific convention to resist what had become usual inappropriate moral / ideological imposition into what should be objective study.

particles of dirt or facilitating infection (whether specifically sexually transmitted or by more general bacteria or viruses). These arguments are not mirrored with respect to the albeit much smaller female prepuce. It is understandable, though, how originally there was perceived a need to surgically intervene in respect of (if not to ablate) the foreskin, in that boys normally are born with the foreskin tight and non-retractable (phimosis) (e.g., Shahid, 2012), and only in the course of development does it become retractable. Usually this occurs between the ages of five and ten (British Association of Urological Surgeons, 2017), and though in some cases much later, the prevalence of adult phimosis is only two percent (e.g., Gairdner, 1949). [Most of these cases are of a tiny remaining piece of tissue causing adhesion at one point of the glans to the foreskin, in which category is the author, whom as an adult was offered the very minor procedure of a simple tiny cut just of the adhesion-causing tissue, but advised that there was no need, given no discomfort of any kind (quite the opposite)]. That the age range for the onset of retractability is wide indicates an adaptation that it is not necessary to be precise; rather for the change simply to be more age-appropriate than neonatal, in preparation for and well ahead of when sexual activity would be anticipated to commence. Staged development extending well beyond that which is in-embryo to delay something until it becomes more age-appropriate is a standard aspect of development, but there is often failure to understand this even today. Failing to understand that phimosis is usually temporary (and often not a problem, and in any case usually easy to rectify) may well lead to pathologising the infant stage of the foreskin as supposedly a permanent problem. This then can lead to notions of entrapment of particles or infective agents, or difficulty in what otherwise would be natural removal of secretions that could remain in situ and, it may be supposed, cause infection.

If infection or abrasion risks ever were salient, then the foreskin would have evolved to counter them, and it is to be expected that the foreskin indeed may in part have evolved to serve such function. And in being an 'outer skin', it hardly could not protect against damage to the skin integrity of what it sheaths. The snug-fitting mucosal membrane of the inner foreskin protects the glans from dirt and abrasion, keeping it bathed in a fluid, smegma, with anti-bacterial and anti-fungal agents (Van Howe, 1998; Fleiss, Hodges & Van Howe, 1998; Prakash et al, 1982). Hygiene claims have long been discounted, as Wilson (2008) reviews and adds further referenced arguments, pointing out that a supposed protective function of MGMO is contradicted by the procedure almost always being delayed until adolescence; that despite the

universal issue of contaminating particles, most societies do not have MGMo ; and that in those species where, through promiscuity, STIs pose the greatest threat, the male prepuce actually is most highly developed. Hygiene claims, then, are highly implausible, and appear to be thinly veiled translation of sexual disgust and/or usual contempt for the male rooted in biological ‘policing’ of male sexual access (see below). [This applies not least to the notion that ‘circumcision’ somehow protects against rather than facilitates HIV transmission, which was a predictable resurrection of the idea a century earlier re syphilis, and is no more worthy of affording space to consider.] There is anyway no conceivable way that much positive difference could be made by crude surgical removal of part of an organ; and the very notion otherwise itself betrays justifications for GMo to be bizarrely hopeful rather than rational.

Some of the beliefs held by those undergoing MGMo in ‘traditional’ cultures are clearly standard magic ideation, and are just as transparently rationalization. Cutting as a form of sacrifice to placate a deity or to ‘ensure’ fertility – echoing female shedding of menstrual blood, or the part(s) of the sexual organ held to be symbolic being used as an item of sympathetic magic – or to render the individual more surely male (or female) in removing parts that oddly are taken somehow to be attributes of the other sex. These appear to be latter-day explanations for a lost origin: secondary in aetiology, in the wake of the practice becoming ubiquitous (maintained in terms of a frequency-dependent advantage), with either no relation to the founding purpose or at most an interesting distortion of it. This is also the case with any notion of the ‘circumcised’ penis being used to signify group identity (as an ‘in-group’ marker) – a particularly strange idea given that in almost all cultures, in the past as today, the penis normally is hidden. Hardly an account of an origin, but nonetheless it may be an indication of an aspect of the origin, providing a useful clue; as might be the usual appreciation of MGMo as a rite of adolescent passage despite, in some societies, the procedure normally is neonatal.

As a scientific hypothesis, it has been suggested that MGMo is an ‘honest signal’ of commitment to male-female co-operation in the willingness of the individual to endure the pain of the procedure (Rowanchilde, 1996), but it is a somewhat bizarre notion in more than one respect. It is difficult to see that ablation of a key part of the anatomy concerning reproduction, the most vital function of all, would be simply to cause pain, rather than that the pain is just a by-product of the operation. Why instead would the pain not be generated by sacrificing non-

functional sensitive visible body parts, such as (for males) the nipples? Then there is a question of why there might be a shortfall in co-operativeness by the male pair-bond partner, when regular sex is the main feature and 'glue' of pair-bonding; and notwithstanding how possibly it would be addressed by reducing his sexual sensitivity, and in turn his interest in sex with his pair-bond partner. Rowanchilde's suggestion might make more sense regarding co-operation within the group as a whole, or intra-sexually within the male hierarchy. The obvious context is warfare, where total co-operation between warriors, whether in defense or attack, is vital to survival.

This was proposed by Sosis, Kress & Boster (2007), as part of a general hypothesis to explain the various forms of body scarification, on the grounds that it would be important to prevent men from defecting to another group. Yet this is another strange notion, when one considers that ancestrally (and in many places even in historic times) males would anticipate that individually encroaching on a rival group's territory would risk injury if not death, such was the hostility between neighbouring groups through the standard pattern of males raiding for females and even to kill all the males so as to take over all of the women – the pattern famously discovered in chimpanzees (Nishida, 1979), thought also to be the basis of human warfare (Chagnon, 1968). [The human species necessarily is patrilocal (that is, males stay for life within their natal community) (Murdock, 1967; Korotayev, 2003), with male sociality being whole-group inclusiveness and at the same time antipathy to other groups (for a review, see Moxon, 2016).]

To test the hypothesis, sixty small-scale 'traditional' societies were examined for correlation between the presence / absence / extent of permanent visible marks – scars, piercings and MGMO – and, on the one hand, mating intensity, and on the other, frequency of warfare. Sosis et al found that frequency of warfare was the better fit. However, in examining their data, Wilson (2008) found a clear association in respect of scars and piercings but not regarding MGMO ; pointing out that MGMO hardly would be a viable identifying mark with its being neither displayed nor specific to just one local group. In running a test of his own data, Wilson again found that the distribution of MGMO is not predicted by the frequency of warfare, even though other forms of male scarification do conform to this model. An explanation of MGMO in terms of 'honestly signalled' group solidarity therefore appears not to be supported and not to be viable.

The premise has been that the supposed minor physical or significant cultural benefit MGMo confers is not outweighed by the implications of removing the foreskin; which, therefore, has to be presumed to be inconsequential. On the contrary, the disbenefit of MGMo (just as with FGMo) is readily apparent in the very procedure itself, especially in ancestral times before any understanding of pathogen transmission, the danger of fatal infection in the tropical / semi-tropical climes where MGMo has been traditionally practised is as it would be for incision anywhere on the body, and cannot but have precluded its arising in the absence of more substantial utility than any to which MGMo usually is ascribed. More particularly, sexual function hardly can be other than compromised in some way by surgical intervention on the normal organ – with an impact on the female partner as well as the male owner (see below). This could not be better asserted by advocates themselves of so-called ‘medical’ ‘circumcision’ in developed nations in the nineteenth century, when an avowed basis of the procedure was to limit or prevent masturbation (Darby, 2003). Indeed, it is transparently from the involvement of the foreskin in masturbatory pleasure that the notion of physical uncleanness in retaining the foreskin arose.

There is now ample research regarding the properties and function of the foreskin in terms of its sexual functioning, to establish that it’s essential to the penis’ normal working and to sexual intercourse. Most importantly, the penilocavernosus reflex, crucial to sexual excitability and orgasm, recently has been found to be rarely experienced by ‘circumcised’ men, confirming previous observations. The author of the paper writes that the reason is “the elimination of the most sensitive part of the penis (ie, the foreskin), and to a lesser extent, desensitization of sensory receptors in the penile glans” (p. 584) (Podnar, 2011). The latter seems to be due to what is routinely attested anecdotally by ‘circumcised’ males to be the ‘drying up’ of the glans known as ‘keratinisation’, as a result of permanent non-sheathing by the musocal inner surface of the foreskin; though the experimental difficulties of longitudinal study appears to have left the phenomenon devoid of formal research. There is no such problem regarding the elimination of the foreskin: it has long been known to be the most highly innervated part of the penis (Winkelmann, 1959; Moldwin & Valderrama, 1989), and more recently this was found to be because the foreskin, unlike the glans, contains fine-touch receptors (Taylor, Lockwood & Taylor, 1996). That these receptors and their confinement to the prepuce is the main basis of penile sexual sensitivity has been confirmed (Sorrels et al, 2007). This results in ‘circumcised’

men having decreased sexual pleasure, lower orgasm intensity, and discomfort, pain, numbness or other unusual, unpleasant sensations of the penile shaft, as well as needing more effort to achieve orgasm (Bronselaer et al, 2013). This effort—the penis being thrust harder, deeper and being pulled out of and back into the vagina—takes out vaginal lubricatory secretions, causing excessive, uncomfortable penile-vaginal friction and dryness; in comparison to sex with an ‘uncut’ male, when what is in effect an outer skin of the penis (the foreskin) stays much more with the vaginal wall whilst the penile shaft slides in and out of what is its own skin, as it were (O’Hara & O’Hara, 1999). This results in ‘circumcised’ males having problems regarding orgasm and their female partners frequently experiencing a range of sexual difficulties: an overall sense of incomplete sexual needs fulfilment, notably through failing to achieve orgasm and dyspareunia (pain during intercourse) (Frisch, Lindholm & Grønbaek, 2011).

That the locus of penile sexual sensitivity is in the foreskin is amply researched sufficient to be conclusive, notwithstanding detracting papers. The controversy over ‘circumcision’ in the USA, given that it remains a normative practice, is so fierce that studies may be predicated on false or poor understanding, that either inadvertently or by design feature major methodological flaws. Specific areas or cell types other than what are the actually sensitive ones may be tested, or what is tested is relevant but inappropriate properties may be measured; non-applicable measures may be taken, or testing is done when the penis is non-erect; etc. The upshot can be that conclusions do not follow logically from the results, and/or abstracts do not fully follow from conclusions. Publications taking issue with MGMO causing sexual dysfunction can now expect direct denunciations within the same journal. No less than four attacking letters from fellow researchers were published in *The Journal of Urology* to greet the publication in the same journal of Bossio, Pukall & Steele’s 2016 paper, ‘Examining Penile Sensitivity in Neonatally Circumcised and Intact Men Using Quantitative Sensory Testing’ (Frisch, 2016; Rotta, 2016; Van Howe et al, 2016; Morris & Krieger, 2016). The fierceness of the controversy stems from the ‘cognitive dissonance’ in the pro-‘circumcision’ mindset needing to be salvaged: the great irony that the contemporary denial that ‘circumcision’ denudes sexual sensitivity is to try to prevent the falling into disrepute of a procedure that was instigated over a century earlier for the express purpose of denuding sexual sensitivity, so as to curtail masturbation.

A theory of MGMO origin based on reduced sexual sensitivity was put forward twenty years

ago by Immerman & Mackey (1997, 1998). In the abstract of their first paper they describe MGMo's function as "lowering excitability and distractibility quotients – sexual arousal – of pubescent males, i.e., biasing young males more toward increased tractability which would enhance group efforts and less toward individual goals of amorous exchanges."

Neurological data presented in the study shows that the neonatal procedure over time leads to atrophy or reorganization of brain circuitry concerned with sexual excitement, thereby greatly compounding the effect of the procedure. The authors alternatively state their position as that 'circumcision' functions to render the male "less sexually excitable and distractible, and, hence, more amenable to his group's authority figures". Further expanding, in their second paper, Immerman & Mackey state (again, in the abstract) that FGMO renders "young men of a social group (a) to be slightly more tractable in executing corporate activities beneficial to the community and (b) to be slightly more restrained sexually and more cooperative in the pair bond". This is an hypothesis of imposition, without individual advantage. There may or may not be problems with such a conceptualization, as will be explored in due course; but the more immediate problem with Immerman & Mackey's position – just as with Rowanchilde and Sosis, Kress & Boster – is that it does not address the reproductive implications, which would be expected to be primary in the case of the involvement of a sexual organ.

Given the strong evidence for the negative impact of MGMo on both male sexual sensitivity and female partner satisfaction during sex, then it follows that there is likely to be not only a diminution in the propensity of both the 'cut' male and a female partner to engage in sex, but in turn that this would tend to reduce the likelihood of impregnation and consequent reproduction. This might be expected to differ according to context; the type of sexual encounter. For pair-bonded partners, where sex may be initiated freely by either partner and be a matter of routine, and given that younger (if not also older) couples have sex far more regularly than is required to ensure conception; then a lower inclination to sex probably will not have much of an impact on conception rate. With anyway the female rather than the male pair-bond partner being the likely limiting factor regarding sex, then a diminution in male (or mainly in male) ardour may have little impact. Extra-pair sex is a very different matter, in that it often takes far more effort to secure, and may well require secrecy, involving real, sometimes major potential risk, thereby considerably raising the threshold of the level of temptation required to

either initiate or accept (in comparison to sex within a pair-bond). A reduced level of general inclination to engage in sex that would be quite enough to prompt responding to or initiating pair-bond sex, may then not be sufficient in respect of extra-pair sex, taking into account the difficulties. The lowering of sexual inclination may be ‘the straw that broke the camel’s back’, as it were. The upshot is that reproduction circumventing pair-bonding is undermined, leaving reproduction through pair-bonding bolstered.

A different hypothesis concerning extra-pair vis-a-vis pair-bond sex is put forward by Wilson (2008) (in the same paper as he dismissed the hypothesis that MGMO serves to honestly signal co-operation). He sees MGMO as producing not a reduction in extra-pair sex, but a lower rate of conception through lessened efficiency of insemination and impaired sperm competition; both as a result of the change in penis morphology that is MGMO. In other words, MGMO increases the ratio of copulations to impregnations (fertilisations). Wilson then argues that this in effect disproportionately reduces extra-pair sex because whereas within marriage men can easily compensate by copulating more frequently, this is not the case with respect to extra-pair sex, given the high marginal cost of finding more extra-pair sex opportunities (as outlined above). Here, it is not that the rate of extra-pair sex decreases; it’s that the rate of sex within marriage *increases*. However, this requires that males would have some implicit mechanism to fine-tune their frequency of copulation to accord with some set level of reproductive output – and this having nothing to do with experiencing a reduced sexual sensitivity (which Wilson does not discuss, cite or even mention). That’s implausible, and there is no scientific evidence for such a mechanism. An outlandish aspect to an hypothesis, such as this is, suggests an attempt to salvage an argument too far. It might be speculated that as Wilson was writing a decade ago, at a time before the impact of MGMO on sexual sensitivity was scientifically conclusive, then he may have chosen not to base hypothesis on what then perhaps was perceived to be a controversial line of argument. If, instead, Wilson had done so, then using the insight that inherent in the different circumstances of pair-bond as against extra-pair sex, a factor serving generically to lessen motivation to have sex will disproportionately reduce the extra-pair manifestation; Wilson presumably would have arrived at the simpler position outlined above. As it was, Wilson was obliged to develop an additional layer of theory, and thought he had a viable hypothesis in terms of insemination efficiency and sperm competition.

Unfortunately, this relies on the assumption that any alteration to penis morphology likely will have this impact, when it is clear only in the case of rarer, extreme forms of MGMo (the only forms re which Wilson cites evidence), not the simple ablation of the foreskin as in ‘circumcision’. Wilson relies on a general conclusion that the shape and evolved accoutrements of the penis must serve sperm competition, and therefore that any damage will impede this. However, specifically the foreskin has clear functions not concerning sperm competition. According to Gallup, Burch & Mitchell (2006): “As a consequence of removing the foreskin the circumference of the shaft posterior to the glans may be slightly reduced, causing the coronal ridge to be more pronounced and creating a larger area for semen to collect where it could be scooped back away from the cervix” (p15). In this way ‘circumcision’ would actually *enhance* sperm competition, the opposite of Wilson’s contention, which would have the effect, in turn, of increasing the likelihood of impregnation specifically through extra-pair sex. Still more, with the absence of the intense sexual sensitivity produced by the glans being sheathed in the prepuce, as cited above, there is much more and longer thrusting in the case of the ‘circumcised’ organ (O’Hara & O’Hara, 1999), removing correspondingly more semen; again furthering sperm competition – and, again, the opposite of Wilson’s contention, having the effect of increasing the chance of conception via extra-pair over pair-bond sex. This is in line with the finding that men (that is, men generically, not excluding the ‘intact’) thrust more vigorously and deeper in sex with a pair-bond partner in reaction to suspicion of her extra-pair sexual activity; the only feasible interpretation of which being that this serves to displace the competitor’s sperm (Pham, DeLecce & Shackelford 2017).

In the light of this contra evidence and a lack of supporting evidence for Wilson to cite, then MGMo – or the most common form of it, at least -- does not produce a significant difference along the lines Wilson suggests. There are no observations within Wilson’s paper (in respect of how MGMo relates to polygyny or geographical distance between co-wives; the public nature of the procedure, and that there is no family involvement) that are not alternatively consistent with MGMo causing reduced sexual sensitivity, which in turn, without any additional mechanism, causes a disproportionate reduction in the likelihood of engaging in extra-pair sex, as outlined above. It would anyway be more parsimonious, then, to leave Wilson’s speculation to one side, though to agree that the upshot is that MGMo reduces extra-pair sex conception rates, but that this is simply through reduced sexual sensitivity necessarily producing a reproductive

skew away from that via extra-pair sex, because of the different conditions pertaining to extra-pair vis-a-vis pair-bond sex. This is more straightforward, mechanistically, and is well evidenced.

The next question is of what putative advantage there may be to individuals to compensate for their loss of sexual impetus and likely consequent reduction in overall reproductive output (fertility). In this regard, Wilson posits in his abstract that “men who display this signal of sexual obedience may gain social benefits if married men are selected to offer social trust and investment preferentially to peers who are less threatening to their paternity”. As possible benefits, Wilson suggests “respect, status and access to weapons, shelter or tribal lore” (p. 158). The scenario Wilson envisages is that of young males albeit with high genetic quality, but as yet not fully assessed and tested in a way that translates into stable high rank (or much in the way of rank at all) in the male status hierarchy. In the absence of rank-passported sexual access, these young males, Wilson presumes, may attempt and perhaps even succeed in subverting hierarchy through extra-pair sex with the pair-bond partners of high-ranking males. The proposition is that married males established high up the hierarchy in some way ‘buy off’ the younger males about to start ascending it, who then bide their time until their access to sex is legitimate, as it were. Yet it is hard to imagine a form of assistance that would not manifest directly or indirectly in the upstart males more quickly gaining rank, thereby feeding the very problem that the attempt supposedly is to starve. Perhaps a compromise would ensue, along the lines of the political argument that it’s preferable to have your half-foe / half-friend on the inside of the tent excreting out, as it were, than vice-versa.

The bigger problem with this rationale is that effectively un-ranked or low-ranked young males, who are only at best potential high-rankers of the future (and, therefore, perceivable merely as potentially of high genetic quality), are unlikely to be of interest as extra-pair sex partners to females who, in being pair-bonded with high-status males, must correspondingly be of very high fertility. [Unlike men, women raise their criteria for sexually selecting an extra-pair sex partner (Szepeswol, Mikulincer & Birnbaum, 2013). This is because it makes no sense, when normally impregnation would be by the pair-bond partner (whom the woman selected expressly for his high genetic quality), for the woman then to be impregnated by another male who does not possess still higher genetic quality. That this is a profound, biologically based phenomenon is indicated by the same phenomenon apparent in females of other species (e.g., Cochran et al,

2006; Kempnaers et al, 1992). The wives of apex males hardly are likely to risk the integrity of their prized pair-bonds for extra-pair sex unless there were very clear benefits of being impregnated by the extra-pair partner, and here it would be very unlikely that there would be a benefit at all, let alone a substantial one].

A compensatory advantage to undergoing MGMO there most certainly is, albeit a 'negative' one, in the avoidance of being sanctioned for non-compliance; but this cannot come into play until MGMO is already well established. It is a frequency-dependent property, and therefore cannot account for the emergence of the practice.

More fundamentally, it may be mistaken to posit the need for a compensatory advantage at the individual level. Recent advances in theoretical consideration have transcended the long stale debate over group versus individual level selection, and quite apart from the reformulation of group selection by Nowak, Tarnita & Wilson (2010) to address the clear objection to its 'naive' version, which Dawkins famously and rightly argued. There is no need to accept even reformulated 'group selection'. Now-standard 'population genetics' models (Keller, 1999), alternatives involving population structure (Powers, Penn & Watson, 2011; Lion, Jansen & Day, 2011) and 'lineage selection' (Nunney, 1999) are all mathematically equivalent, and, therefore, empirically interchangeable with each other and a 'levels of selection' analysis, to straddle the conceptual divide between selection acting on the individual and 'population genetics'. This is an appreciation of 'inclusive fitness': that selection acts in effect at between the 'individual' and 'group' levels (see Okasha, 2008), through the genetic similarity of individuals within the local population in their being (usually) distant (if not closer) relatives. [As to which theoretical line (or combination thereof) is adopted is a matter of philosophy rather than science.] This understanding supersedes the controversy in the wake of the arguments popularised by Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* that served as a significant corrective to wayward thinking about evolution at the time the book was published, almost half a century ago. Furthermore, even the polarisation between the various mutually non-exclusive 'inclusive fitness' models and reformulated group selection (that the publication of the Nowak, Tarnita & Wilson paper sparked) appears to be reconcilable (Birch, 2017).

This aside, a problem is not only that regarding each individual male MGMO seems nothing but a particularly unwelcome imposition, but neither is there any immediately apparent

basis for such imposition, with the phenomenon not being of use – indeed being a distinct disadvantage -- even to the alpha male, never mind lowly men. He wouldn't gain from the other males being further inhibited from obtaining extra-pair sex, because the most fertile females would not have any sexual interest in other males, in that all would be of lower genetic quality than himself. To reiterate: women raise their 'standards' regarding extra-pair sex, given that sex is pointless with men of the same or lower genetic quality than that of their pair-bond partner (see above). Furthermore, this is reinforced in that the very act of extra-pair sex very seriously threatens the integrity of the pair-bond, which is vital to the female. Pair-bonding in effect projects forwards in time the woman's peak attractiveness (fertility), thereby to maximise fertility (reproductive output in terms of maximum genetic quality and number of offspring) (Moxon, 2013). Perhaps higher-ranking though sub-alpha males in coalition might be able to impose MGMo as a universal reduction in the propensity to obtain extra-pair sex? This would counter their vulnerability to their pair-bond partners having extra-pair sex with the alpha male. It would in turn make sense for a whole stratum of sub-apex males vulnerable to their wives having extra-pair sex with a cluster of apex males above them. In time, with the fluidity of ranking, as formerly sub-dominants gain alpha status and the sons of top-rankers not infrequently fail to arrive at the pinnacle themselves, it would not be long before all males in the inter-marrying group were 'circumcised', and the road would then be set for 'cutting' to acquire secondary (frequency-dependent) function (such as an 'in-group' marker) to sustain it as a whole-group practice in perpetuity. The problem remains, however, of how such a development would begin if it were not in – and instead were actually against – the interests of the alpha male. The alpha likely is in place himself through coalitional strength, and it is even more unlikely that a cabal of lowlier individuals could take on a number of apex males.

Alternatively, if the utility of MGMo is more collective, then this would be in line with dominance hierarchy (and the associated differential reproductive suppression); a mechanism all too apparently in collective rather than individual interest. Indeed, MGMo would make sense as an extension of dominance hierarchy – a further 'extended phenotype' of what is itself an 'extended phenotype' (to use Dawkins' conceptualisation). This would entail a return to the mutually complementary modelling just outlined transcending the now stale 'levels of selection' quandary.

Briefly to outline regarding dominance hierarchy: in consideration of the function of the male, as 'genetic filter' (Atmar, 1991) / 'mutational cleanser' (West-Eberhard, 2005), males are ranked in terms of genetic quality in a dominance / prestige hierarchy. Each male correspondingly is both differentially reproductively suppressed and subject to female sexual choice according to his position in the hierarchy (Moxon 2009, after many authors). In this way, most males are in some way(s) prevented from reproducing much or at all, and fail to pass on and instead take with them to the grave accumulated gene replication error, which thereby collectively is purged from the local gene pool. Additionally, there has to be 'policing' so as to reduce the likelihood that males may try to circumvent the social structure in order to try to obtain otherwise unobtainable sex (Cummins, 1996, 1996b, 1996c, 1999a, 2005, 2013). This is achieved by biological mechanism (in-built deep psychology of 'cheater detection' mechanisms directed towards males, to be ultra-sensitive to the slightest anomaly), which also would be available to underpin cultural manifestation in MGMO.

Nevertheless, it might be thought more satisfactory – parsimonious in scientific theory – if MGMO were understandable in terms of an obvious compensatory benefit to all participants individually and not just one to a minority in the context of a whole-group overall utility. Wilson's proffered social benefits may fit the bill (without his sperm competition and insemination inefficiency hypothesis). The still more straightforward likelihood, though, is that MGMO both originated and became established as an imposition by high-status males that low-status males were in no position to resist, and therefore there was never required any benefit accruing to most males to 'buy' their cooperation. With the dynamics of hierarchy naturally rendering MGMO ubiquitous over time, the procedure would then be maintained for all males merely through the costs of non-compliance to a custom.

A picture now emerges in line with both practise in traditional culture and in how 'circumcision' was adopted and became widespread in 'developed' societies in the nineteenth century; the latter when famously there was a profound concern with male sexuality per se – as revealed by an obsession with masturbation, which, in wild imagination, widely disseminated and believed, was falsely held to cause a myriad ills. This was an overt concerted attempt to curtail the sexuality of adolescent and early-adult males generally, to engender pro-sociality, pointing up what is highly likely to be a parallel in the traditional practise. To couch in terms of

hierarchy, it would serve to channel the very high energy of male youth into legitimately gaining rank rather than trying to circumvent the social order in premature sexual activity and inappropriately competing with stable-ranked males for sexual access. On the face of it, this is what Immerman & Mackey (1997) argued, but the problem MGMO addresses needs to be better specified.

It would be a lazy assumption that the issue is of upstart males trying to obtain extra-pair sex with the wives of high-status men. Not only would there be prohibitive sanction, but (as discussed above with respect to Wilson's position) the high-fertility pair-bond partners of high-status men would have little interest in such males. The real problem is instead one of young males attempting to compete with high-status males for *young* females. High-status males can acquire young females as additional, that is, polygynous (or serial-monogamous or clandestine-polygynous) pair-bond partners, or simply for extra-pair sex. Young males, notwithstanding their as yet lack or absence of status, can markedly disrupt this in that they may have multiple attributes denoting genetic quality that will be detected by females, even though this can't show up in the genetic-quality 'ready reckoner' of status for ease of assessment. Being within the social milieu of young females, young males are likely to take many of them out of the marriage market as well as swamping the sexual marketplace generally with attempts also to acquire extra-pair sex; significantly displacing attention and activity by high-ranking older males. Anything which can dampen down young male sexual voraciousness would well serve the socio-sexual order, thereby improving the reproductive efficiency overall of the reproductive group. Hence their hobbling by MGMO, which readily can be seen to make sense from both biological and cultural perspectives.

That hitherto this has not been well understood (or understood at all) is perhaps surprising, but then the origin of MGMO has been a much neglected question, as can be gauged from the paucity of theory papers above cited. Of the very few published, most are dated 1907 or earlier, after which the issue seems to have been regarded as impossible to reconstruct from prehistory, until, almost a century later, the ascendancy of evolutionary perspective prompted fresh approach. Even so, there have been just three theory papers -- Rowanchilde (1996), Immerman & Mackey (1997) and Wilson (2008); four if the paper by Sosis et al (2007) is included, albeit this dealt only in part with MGMO. Of these, Wilson's is the one comprehensive

effort, and it is in answer to points arising in that paper, utilising more recent findings, that the present formulation has been made; and now at last there is a good prospect of the function of MGMo becoming a settled question.

Turning to FGMo, a main question is whether or not it is essentially the same phenomenon as MGMo, and, in particular, whether or not it is male imposition. Given that it is the much less widespread and more recent practise (Gollaher, 2009; Davis, 1976), with only MGMo occurring in every continent bar Europe and represented in paleolithic cave paintings and sculptures (Augulo & García-Diez, 2009), and with no geographical occurrence of FGMo in the absence of MGMo, then the female procedure may well be derivative of its male counterpart. If that is so, then it would be expected also that its proximal function is similar; but with the fundamental distinction between the sexes in overall function (see Moxon, 2016, for a full outline), then the distal function of FGMo nevertheless may diverge profoundly according to sex.

With FGMo, unlike MGMo, not being a contemporary 'medical' established practise in the USA, there have not been corresponding outlandish notions as to function. In striking contrast to the case of MGMo, regarding FGMo there has not been resistance to accepting the obvious diminution in sexual sensitivity – not in Western nations, that is. As with MGMo, evidence of reduced sexual sensitivity and increased sexual dysfunction is provided by many researchers. Formerly, it had been to an extent mixed (likely because of methodological issues, arising especially from research by nationals of countries where FGMo is the norm, either inadvertently or through a desire to uphold the procedure); but not so today. Most recently, Rouzi et al (2017), Biglu et al (2016) and Anis et al (2012) all found that for 'cut' women sexual dysfunction was much higher across all domains – desire, arousal, lubrication, orgasm and satisfaction – except pain during sex, which only Biglu et al reported. Two other research teams publishing in 2012 found that FGMo results in little or no sexual desire or satisfaction, and also either pain during sex (Berg & Denison) or that it significantly reduces women's sexual quality of life as a whole (Andersson et al). Older surveys of 'cut' women returned that half of them do not enjoy sex at all (Hosken, 1983; 1989). There is plenty of further evidence from male partners, who complain that sex is far less enjoyable with 'circumcised' women because they are at best passive, if not actually suffering (Sæverås, 2003). Lightfoot-Klein (1989) observed that men sought non-FGMo wives on the grounds that they enjoy sex; even to the extent of seeking European women.

Shandal (1967, 1979) most interestingly investigated the preferences of men who had multiple wives, only some of whom had undergone FGMO, and to varying degrees; finding that nearly all the men preferred their non- FGMO wives, and of their FGMO wives they distinguished in favour of those with the less severe forms.

The real question, though, if FGMO is akin to MGMO, is the impact specifically on extra-pair sex. This is not indicated in the abstract of what to date is only a conference presentation (Howard & Gibson, 2017) of a forthcoming paper on the impact on sex of FGMO, and would seem either not included or not separated out, though with no available methodology this is impossible to say. The findings are that FGMO “is not a significant predictor of reduced sexual activity either before or within marriage for the majority of women”, but that’s not inconsistent with FGMO causing a reduction in extra-pair sex, and the authors state (personal communication) that indeed extra-pair is the operative form of sex. As above-outlined with respect to MGMO, it would not be expected that there would be a decline in sexual activity other than extra-pair. The first study to directly address the relation between reduced sexual function and extra-pair sex is that by Onyishi et al (2016), who report that for individuals who have undergone FGMO, willingness to engage specifically in uncommitted sexual relations is more restricted across all domains examined: in terms of attitude, behaviour and desire. This comprehensive result reveals that in terms of proximal function GMO indeed appears to be the same in females as in males.

The utility of FGMO – its *distal* function – is generally agreed by academics to be ‘paternity certainty’ for males in the face of the risk of being cuckolded. This was first suggested by Hartung (1976), and then taken up and developed by many others, eg, Ericksen (1989). The World Health Organisation states that FGMO is: “to ensure premarital virginity and marital fidelity ... believed to reduce a woman’s libido and therefore believed to help her resist extra-marital sexual acts” (WHO, 2014). In the same text, the WHO then falls in with the usual presumption of male imposition rather than female initiative, but this is to extend beyond evidence and logic, based on nothing more than an ideological perspective; which is disputed, not least even by feminists themselves (most notably Germaine Greer, 1999).

The notion of FGMO as helping to ensure ‘paternity certainty’ pertains not just within the developed world and academia, but also within the societies where traditional FGMO occurs,

though in terms of its corollary: an attribute for females in obtaining marriage partners. It may or may not be intuited to be of use to males re 'paternity certainty', but by all accounts 'cut' women universally accept that without undergoing the procedure they will not be able to find a husband, or at least would have severe difficulty in this regard; and often they do recognise that this stems from a reduction in sexual sensitivity. For example, FGMo women told Hosken (1983, 1989) that it would be impossible for women to control their own sexuality and remain faithful to their husbands without 'cutting' to reduce interest in sex. And Lindner (2008) found that both young women and their relatives believe FGM curbs sexual desire, 'purifying' the girl into a 'treasure' to make a chaste wife for an eligible man.

Although in such societies there is some rationalisation paralleling that for MGMo -- including regarding cleanliness and also removing part or parts that may be considered somehow redolent of opposite-sex genitalia -- the prevalent reason by far given for undergoing the procedure is marriageability (Ross et al, 2016), or at least it's the most common one, notwithstanding the very wide variation of the practise across many dimensions (Hadi, 2006). Ross et al divide the range of justifications provided into three categories: re marriageability, 'heterogeneous', and tradition; but explain why all of those in the latter two categories should be considered to varying degrees more proximate considerations linked to marriageability, however indirectly. This is fully in line with other researchers surveying across FGMo societies, who cite preserving family honour and safeguarding female sexual purity along with enhancing marriage chances as clearly being facets of the same ideation (eg, Shell-Duncan & Hernlund 2000).

The alternative perspectives of the advantage to the male partner of assuring 'paternity certainty' and the female advantage of a bargaining counter to secure a better-quality pair-bond partner, are often denied in the West through the usual feminism-derived understanding that there is no female advantage. Instead, the advantage is held to be only for the male. This is an extreme ideological partial view predicated on the notion that all matters male-female involve male 'oppression' and female victimhood. Females here are deemed to have 'internalised' what is in male interests to falsely cognise and/or intuit that the interests served are their own. But if females did act actually against their own interests, it is hard to see how this would be a matter merely of 'oppression' by further degree rather than in some way qualitatively different. As well as being a non-parsimonious and thereby inherently implausible explanation, there is

comprehensive evidence against ‘internalised’ male interest, both generally and with respect to FGMO specifically. In a major review, many separate lines of evidence converge to show that the range of phenomena that are subsumed under a ‘male control’ theory of female sexuality, instead are accounted for by female intra-sexual competitiveness (or what may be dubbed in mirror image, ‘female control’). Baumeister & Twenge (2002) conclude that:

“The male control theory was repeatedly contradicted. In view of these data, it would take a considerable amount of new and strong evidence even to make the male control theory plausible again. The female control theory, however, appears to provide a good fit to most of the available evidence”. (p. 189)

The authors go on to address the issue of possible male influence other than the proximal:

“... there are two important reasons to be skeptical of the view that men in general have conspired to exert indirect, distal influences to suppress female sexuality. The first is the fact that when we did find evidence of male influence over female sexuality, it was generally in the opposite direction. ... [and, second] when the sex ratio is unbalanced in favor of men, the result tends to be more sexual activity. These findings suggest that if men really could exert direct control over female sexuality, they would opt for more of it, not less. To maintain a belief in male suppression of female sexuality, it is necessary to believe that men directly influence women toward greater sexuality while indirectly exerting influence in the opposite direction.” (p. 189)

Although now fifteen years old, the review has not been countered by any paper other than one (Rudman, Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2013) purporting to take issue with Baumeister & Twenge’s overall conclusion but actually addressing only attitudes to what is anyway the slippery itself ideology-laden concept of the ‘sexual double standard’, which attitudes themselves change under ideological influence. On this sub-topic Baumeister & Twenge used mostly data preceding the hegemony of feminist ideology for the very reason of avoiding such contamination. It is, therefore, a poor basis of criticism; especially in claiming to be valid in respect of the overall conclusion that the ‘female control’ and not the ‘male control’ model fits the data across all of the male-female phenomena where there is apparent or there might be ‘control’ by males.

In a ‘male control’ model it would be expected that FGMO would correlate clearly with what supposedly are the most obvious facets of a male-controlled or ‘patriarchal’ society: polygyny (the form of polygamy where there is one male pair-bonded separately with each and every one of a multiplicity of females) and formal hierarchy in a large-scale society manifesting

as 'social stratification'. Yet comprehensive cross-cultural review reveals polygyny is not an independent variable here (Hicks, 1993). What's more, it has recently been found that there is no evidence that polygyny itself is to female disadvantage, but the opposite; supporting models of polygyny based on female choice (Lawson et al, 2015). As for social stratification: FGMO many times has arisen in cultures without any, and the pattern of occurrence of FGMO is mainly caused by factors orthogonal (with no relation at all) to stratification, leaving stratification itself a very weak part of FGMO aetiology (Ross et al, 2016). This anyway is unsurprising, in that ascribing significance to social stratification of indicating hierarchy where otherwise it would be absent, is false. Hierarchy, in being a universal male social structure, does not require any formal social structure to be manifest. That it may be thought not to be evident in non-complex human society goes against what would be expected: that a stable hierarchy in a small group usually would not and does not need to be to the fore. There is little if any evidence, then, to support any assumption that FGMO arose in complex societies built on agricultural surplus and conquest, featuring all-powerful rulers with huge harems (so-called 'imperial polygyny').

What looks like the most salient factor common to all occurrence of FGMO is arranged marriage; this being all but ubiquitous across the world prior to industrialisation (Apostolou, 2010), and it remains the dominant form of match-making across Africa, the Middle East and Asia (Hamon & Ingoldsby, 2003). There is no requirement for complex social structure, and socio-environmental variables generally have no impact: 85% of hunter-gather societies have arranged marriage (Apostolou 2007), and the few that don't are strongly suspected to have lost it only recently, though disruptive pressure from agricultural neighbours, and assimilation and acculturation into state-level societies (Walker et al, 2011).

With arranged marriage much the more widespread phenomenon, then it appears to be the more ancient; and, therefore, likely the background from which FGMO sprang. If this is so, then the issue of whether men or women are the more operative in arranged marriage becomes material to the question of FGMO origin; of its character at its inception. To ascertain antiquity, mitochondrial DNA phylogenetic reconstruction of human marriage practices using Bayesian, maximum likelihood, and parsimony methods, reveals, regardless of method, that arranged marriage goes back at least to the initial modern human expansion, 50,000+ years ago (Walker et al, 2011), if not to 'mitochondrial Eve'; an order of magnitude older than FGMO is assumed to be.

The reviewers state that it is conceivable that arranged marriage has no less antiquity than the cultural encoding of pair-bonding – marriage – itself. It may, then, be a necessary albeit not sufficient condition for the emergence of FGMO. Either way, it is the principal background to and sets the scene for FGMO.

On the question of whether arranged marriage is controlled by men or women, there is no dispute. All evidence points to activity very much within a female domain: all is orchestrated by women family members (aunt, elder sister, sister-in-law), possibly an older ‘matriarch’, and/or an outsider female ‘matchmaker’. Throughout history this was the cross-cultural norm, whether, for example, anciently in China (Benn, 2001) and Greece (Noy, 2012), or just as today with the famous ‘rishta auntie’ remaining a fixture in this regard across India and Pakistan (Krishnan, 2010); likewise the ‘khatba’ in Egypt (El Feki, 2013), and even in polygynous highly traditional African tribal societies, such as the Igbo of Nigeria and the Betsilio of Madagascar (Kottak, 2003) or the Vhavenda of South Africa (Raphalalani & Musehane 2013).

With FGMO likely being an extension of the female intra-sexual practising of arranged marriage / matchmaking, then in turn it is likely itself to be a female within-sex phenomenon, as would be indicated if those who actually *perform* the procedures are all or mostly female. This is just what is found. Only women are practitioners (except where, in attempting to minimise harm, contemporarily it has become medicalised, or, in a few places, sometimes the village barber is employed). Usually it’s the mother, grandmother or local specialist ‘cutter’; generally an elderly woman of the community (Lindner, 2008). Sæverås (2002) found that “*a grandmother may set up the circumcision of her granddaughter even if the child’s mother is against it. Friends may do the ‘operation’ on the daughter while the mother is away*”. The mother-in-law is also regularly cited, though it seems that rather than relatives the bulk of operations are done by the older female ‘specialist’ (Worku Zerai / Norwegian Church Aid, 2003). Sæverås points to the power of the ‘exciser’: in being often also the community birth attender and/or healer, she’s held in great respect.

Regarding specifically who makes the decision that a female should undergo FGMO, Koroma (2002) summarises:

“FGM is women’s business and they more actively perpetuate FGM than do men. ... decision-making for undergoing the operation is in large part made by mothers, although

there are instances where it is a joint decision by both mother and father with the latter 'only informed to obtain his blessings'. Other decision-makers are wider female family members, particularly grandparents".

Earlier investigators concur that it's the grandmother who decides if it's not the mother (Hicks, 1996; Lightfoot-Klein, 1989). Shweder (2000) reveals that: "the practice is almost always controlled, performed, and most strongly upheld by women (p222).

Where men fit in, or rather don't, Shweder continues:

"... men have rather little to do with these female operations, may not know very much about them, and may feel it is not really their business to interfere or to try to tell their wives, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers what to do. It is the women of the society who are the cultural experts in this intimate feminine domain, and they are not particularly inclined to give up their powers or share their secrets".

Rye (2002) finds that "many many men find it a problematic part of their culture". Hejll (2001) observes that "all too often men see FGM as 'women's business'. This is understandable in societies that segregate the sexes and where men and women seldom discuss sexuality. Women also keep men out of the matter" (p. 11). In noting that a midwife figure usually carries out the operation, Boddy (1989) notes that "men are completely excluded" (p. 84). So completely excluded are men that Greer (1999) concludes from her own non-formal fieldwork in Africa that most men don't even know whether or not the women within their own families have undergone any FGMo procedure. If this is as much indifference as exclusion, it's but another measure of the complete absence of any 'male control'.

It is not merely that women perform FGMo, then, but that they make the *decision* that FGMo should be carried out, and they also *exclude men*. Tellingly, it is not the men but the women themselves who *support* FGMo ; and zealously so (e.g., Boddy, 1989, 1998). There is virtually no fieldworker who doesn't at least acknowledge this. The female peer group regards the operation as a mark of positive status, and girls who have not yet had it are sometimes mocked, teased, and derogated by their female peers (Lightfoot-Klein, 1989). Priya (2007) concludes "it is much more difficult to convince the women to give it up, than to convince the men" (p189). Ali (2012) complains of "the cultural resistance of women, more than men" to rejecting FGMo. In a 2007 UNFPA report, it's stated that "paradoxically it is Maasai women, more than men, who have insisted on keeping the tradition of FGM/C alive ... most men, once they

understand what the practice entails, are horrified by it and oppose it ... in their extra-marital relations they prefer uncircumcised women from other communities”. Formal surveys have been conducted across several countries, confirming that smaller proportions of men than women support FGMO (Population Council, 1999; Population Reference Bureau, 2001). Even in countries where concerted campaigning to dissuade women has already led to a major shift away from supporting FGMO by women, it’s still not amongst women that opposition is strongest. Women lag behind men in this regard. Lindner, in her own survey, finds 79% of all male participants do not support FGMO, which is significantly more than the 67% of women, despite male attitudes not being targetted in campaigns. Men also actively object. Several papers reviewed by Hicks (1996) detailed men’s attempts to persuade women to substitute less radical forms of FGMO, but this is always thwarted by women; and even fathers objecting to their daughters being subjected to procedures are overruled (Lightfoot-Klein, 1989).

A case study providing an in-the-round illuminating picture has been made by Dellenborg (2004), of an in-depth project among the Jola in Senegal. To briefly summarise: here, FGMO was only recently introduced (fifty years ago), mainly by young women, who, as do young women today, viewed excision as crucial to a female collective identity: a female secret society in which unmarried young women and childless married women live most of their social lives, and they feel empowers them to fully become female adults. The very few young women / teenage girls who had doubts rarely expressed them even to the investigator, an outsider; and never to the older women in their families. Some young and middle-aged men have joined together against what they see as an imported tradition ruining women’s health, fecundity, and, in particular, sexual desire – men preferring to marry uncircumcised women, whom they assume will take fuller pleasure in sex, and they describe as more ‘tasty’. But the mens’ opposition has met fierce resistance from their married daughters, sisters and wives, as well as from now older women earlier adopters of FGMO, who are its chief defenders. Most men, though, would not express their critique in public; its being considered indiscreet and shameful for a man to talk of ‘women’s matters’. Older women ridicule the male detractors as childish, irresponsible, and only thinking of sex. The very few women who did have doubts could not say why; just that it was ‘not good’. Sexual control is not mentioned either as a reason for women to be excised or a result of it. People were not concerned with women’s chastity or virginity-- traditionally, the only taboo was reproduction out of wedlock (such babies usually were killed at birth). Female sexuality was

not seen as a problem.

From this account it is even clearer that a ‘male control’ understanding of FGMO cannot be sustained, and that the phenomenon is profoundly female intra-sexual. The odd aspect is the apparent loss of any understanding of the function of the procedure just as it has come to occupy such a central place in local female sociality: that the women don’t register – or pointedly decline to register – the reduced sexual sensitivity caused by FGMO. Rather, though, this may be more of a key than a mystery. Dellenborg supplies a pointed anecdote: about the reaction of some Somalian women on a trip to Europe to a mistaken title of ‘mutilated femininity’ instead of ‘female genital mutilation’.² They angrily protested that merely their genitals had been ‘mutilated’, not their femininity. This indicates a starkly different cultural perspective on sexuality that may be widely shared by women across African traditional or non-developed societies. It might be thought that perhaps it can be understood in part in the light of the notion that female orgasm is more a brain than a genital mechanism, but so is all orgasm, both male and female; and the contrast with males seems to be in the different nature of the tactile sexual stimulation than in brain mechanisms (Georgiadis et al, 2009). That the Senegalese Jola women here appear to view sex-organ mechanics as subsumed within a much wider, deeper sensibility of womanhood that is not only whole-body/mind but profoundly collective, seemingly with a spiritual dimension, would be consonant with religion hypothesised as being based in helping to ensure ‘paternity certainty’ (Strassmann et al, 2012). Alternatively, it may be more the case that these MGMO women are rendering more psychologically salient the human female reality of being highly co-operative, if not to the extent of humans being a ‘cooperative breeding’ species, then in women’s profound, protracted mutual child-caring evident in all traditional cultures. To a traditional African mindset, a European feminist focus on expressing one’s own sexual being as in essence mere clitoral stimulation, appears to be viewed as silly, vulgar, aberrant extreme individuality.

² The expression *genital modification* is here used in preference to the pejorative *mutilation* or still slightly loaded *cutting*, in accord with an emerging scientific convention to resist what had become usual inappropriate moral / ideological imposition into what should be objective study.

The most striking aspect of FGMO in its variable traditional manifestation is the absence of recorded evidence from interviewees in surveys within societies where FGMO occurs, that the procedure is in any way male imposition rather than female initiative. What makes this particularly remarkable is that it's notwithstanding the feminist-inspired interventions to try to eradicate FGMO. Many investigators are part of these political initiatives, and, having the required feminist or extreme-feminist mindsets, many would arrive in Africa with the expectation that they would be obtaining data revealing male imposition of FGMO. Such data would be expected to be contaminated with the researchers' own confirmation bias to record victimisation at the hands of males. Yet survey data re FGMO indicating any sort of male coercion appears to be non-existent. It is only from outside these communities – outside the under-developed world – that it is taken to be axiomatic that apex males must be the dominant or controlling party in all matters male-female. Men are assumed to be behind FGMO by extension from them being considered to be generally 'in charge' of society as a whole; but this itself is an ideological construct not congruent with human sociality, consisting as it does of essentially sex-separate sociality evident even from toddler age (Fabes, Martin & Hanish, 2004), with the male sociality of dominance / prestige hierarchy not impinging on females given that dominance hierarchy is an intra- and not *inter*-sexual phenomenon (Moxon, 2016) – indeed, dominance hierarchy is found to be male-specific (Van den Berg, Lamballais & Kushner, 2015). Males are not 'in charge' even within their own pair bonds (Vogel, 2007; Coleman & Straus, 1986; Bates, Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2014).

With the examination above of FGMO in all its facets revealing it to be comprehensively a female intra-sexual phenomenon, it still may be thought that it is merely its second-order frequency-dependent manifestation; in other words, that it's the *maintenance* of the phenomenon which is intra-sexual, with the origin after all being in 'male control'. This would appear to be suggested if FGMO, as in the case of the two other 'female cloistering' phenomena of face/body veiling and Chinese foot-binding, had disseminated down through the rest of society from a beginning in nobility. This is taken to be as reasonable an hypothesis as any other (Mackie & LeJeune, 2009), but that's as weak a position as could be posited. It remains non-evidenced conjecture, as Mackie & LeJeune concede. By contrast, foot-binding is well-evidenced to have "spread from the Imperial palace, to court circles, to the larger upper classes, and then to the middle and lower classes" (p1001) (Mackie, 1996). Similarly, veiling in Middle-Eastern ancient

empires is documented to have been restricted to elite, married, 'free' (not slave) women (Khairunessa, 2013). It is not unreasonable, therefore, to assume FGMO developed according to a not dissimilar pattern, but this does not help a 'male control' model.

The parallel with foot-binding and face/body veiling is apposite, but for the very reason that all indications are of these phenomena being even more clearly female intra-sexual and not male-imposed. Veiling in Mesopotamia and Persia was so popular among women that it had to be forbidden by law to poor and single women, prostitutes and slaves (Khairunessa, 2013), with the laws backed up by punishments. In Assyria, veiled servants and prostitutes could have their garments confiscated, be given fifty blows and tar poured over them (Kinias, 2010). Laws required the reporting of women who should not be veiling, and that serious punishments (imprisonment, mutilation or public flogging) were introduced even for this (Nemet-Nejat, 1998), is good indication of men feeling decidedly non-involved and unconcerned with the practise. For such extreme measures to be warranted strongly suggests that men persistently failed to report women for these breaches.

Foot-binding in China is the more recent of the three 'cloistering' modes, and emerging within the bureaucratic ancient Chinese state is well-documented, so is the least opaque. Women bound their own and their daughters' feet (Ko, 2008). The 'matriarchy' from both families of a couple were behind it, but specifically the prospective mother-in-law was responsible for marriage selection requiring foot-bound discipline (Blake, 1994). The practice "produced permanent bonding with (their) mother(s) and female ancestors" (Ping, 2000). So taken with it were women that through the ages repeated attempts at banning by emperors failed and were reversed (Levy, 1992). From the many accounts of foot-binding (including all of the above-cited), it's clear that acquiring a pair-bond partner – necessarily competing with other women in this regard – was the root of the custom. Mothers, family 'matriarchs', female village elders and 'professional' specialist practitioners were behind and to the fore regarding all aspects of the custom: introducing girls to it, carrying out the procedures and monitoring that it's adhered to. There was the fear of not being able to find a husband and outcasting as lewd anyone who did not undergo the practice: give-aways as to the basis of the practise, as with FGMO and veiling.

There is anyway little in FGMO serving the purposes of an alpha male – just as there isn't in

the case of foot-binding or face/body veiling. The alpha male is at little or no risk of being cuckolded, because his wife / wives can have no use as extra-pair sex partners for other locally available males, given that they would not be of still higher genetic quality than the male to which they're already permanently partnered. As cited above, in line with theory, the empirical evidence is that human females 'up' their criteria in choosing extra-pair over pair-bond partners. In any case (again, as mentioned above), engaging in extra-pair sex would not be worth the risk for a wife of being deserted by the highest mate-value male she already has as a pair-bond partner. What is more, the alpha male is of all males the one who would be able, potentially, to acquire any female as an extra-pair sex partner, and is likely to choose an unmarried younger (maximally fertile) female from a lower social stratum over the older, likely pregnant, same-stratum females to whom the males nearer to him in the hierarchy are pair-bonded. Not least are other considerations of avoiding destabilising the uppermost portion of the hierarchy that might lead to bids to oust him as leader. The alpha is on the lookout not only for extra-pair sex but also additional wives (in formally polygynous societies) or 'mistresses' plus serial wives (where polygyny is more clandestine); and again he would prefer young (maximally fertile) women – not that older still-attractive females anyway are available to pair-bond. Unlike females 'marrying up', males correspondingly tend to 'marry down'. [To clarify the meaning of 'marrying up': a highly physically attractive (high fertility, high mate-value) female within what in male terms is a lower social stratum (that is, the social stratum to which her father and male relatives belong, and in which she was raised) can realistically seek high-status males (males from a higher social stratum) as prospective pair-bond partners in assortative mating, given that all concerned share high mate values (the female fertility and male status measures are at similar levels, and, therefore, are equivalent).]

The availability to the alpha male of young females potentially for extra-pair sex is tempered by usual female reticence and procrastination in the face of considerable potential costs, and the generic reduction in female sexual receptivity that FGMO produces can only compound these obstacles. This can be anything but welcome to the alpha. Likewise the lessened sexual receptivity in his own wives. Still further, with females being unlike males in not functioning as a 'genetic filter', and with their mate value being in terms of the fairly narrow set of criteria that constitute fertility, then the differences in quality between females (in comparison to that between males) is not that great, rendering those above a reasonable

threshold of fertility to a considerable extent effectively inter-changeable. As an alpha male anyway will easily be able to obtain multiple pair-bond partners (in whatever form) from a considerable pool of females, then with the combination of near sure loss in competition to the alpha and the large supply of what is being competed for; there is little basis for intense male intra-sexual competition for wives at this level. It would be expected, therefore, that with the interests of the alpha male not being served, that neither he nor any of the males in the group, whom he out-ranks and controls, are involved in FGMO, just as evidence confirms.

FGMO presumably confers an advantage not to males, then, but to individual females. It might be imagined that high-fertility females who become the wives of apex males would require other women to undergo FGMO to render them less likely to lure away their husbands. Only weak motivation could pertain here, though, given that for wives any extra-pair sex by their husbands is not a major problem. There is no possibility of the pair-bond being vulnerable to the importation of genes from a third party to produce offspring. The husband cannot be impregnated by an extra-pair sex partner, then to be unavailable for reproduction for several years, as would be the distinct possibility should a wife engage in similar activity. This is a key reason why wives are minded and tend to stand by even serially unfaithful husbands, whereas husbands are minded and tend to desert wives at the first instance of unfaithfulness. [This appears to be a recently taboo area of research, rendering it difficult to find and cite any study of what is well attested anecdotally, but abundant research has unearthed an indirect measure: unlike men, women are less concerned with purely sexual than with emotional betrayal (eg, Sagarin et al, 2012), reflecting a relatively relaxed attitude to a partner's extra-pair sex; reserving concern for the likelihood of being abandoned. This is in complete contrast to men, who are anxious not to be cuckolded, and it would seem that as long as they feel assured that no sex is entailed, then husbands may not be worried about a wife's even profound platonic relationship with another male.]

Men rarely wish to convert an extra-pair sex partner into a wife, because, being already in possession of a wife or wives, extra-pair sex fulfils the extremely powerful male motivation for sex with partners in numbers; this being an obvious evolved predilection serving to profoundly increase potential fertility (overall reproductive outcome). For this reason too, male extra-pair sex typically is anyway merely fleeting and serial. Any residual threat to the integrity of the pair-

bond is minimised by the usually clandestine nature of assignations. All in all, far from leading to the male dissolving the pair-bond, extra-pair sex by the male partner is often considered to act as a safety valve, in providing an alternative and different form of sexual outlet, or partners younger and more sexually active than an ageing spouse, taking the pressure off the pair-bond, leaving the male less inclined to seek its replacement. Paradoxically, male extra-pair sex in effect can assist in maintaining the pair-bond it circumvents. All in all, then, a woman does not have much to fear from her partner's extra-pair sex, and, consequently, doesn't have much to fear either from rival females poaching her man.

In the absence of an apparent individual benefit to women of their reducing their propensity to engage in extra-pair sex, it might be imagined that there is a collective benefit if all or at least a large proportion of females undergo FGMO, in that an overall restriction in the availability of extra-pair sex might serve to increase generically the value to males of pair-bonding. Considering, however, that with the raised criteria females require, then extra-pair sex effectively is unavailable to most males; still further restricting its availability would not seem to be an effective way to bolster the value of pair-bonding – particularly in the light of the 'safety valve' argument that extra-pair sex indirectly bolsters pair-bonding. A putative collective advantage also would have to outweigh the undermining of pair-bonding that FGMO produces through the general reduction in female sexual responsiveness being detrimental to sexual satisfaction of both wives and their husbands.

There is instead a benefit to females, individually, of FGMO, that would be obvious but for feminist or feminism-derived assumption of male imposition. This is in the use females have for FGMO not to try to maintain a pair-bond *but to obtain one*. Rather than intra-sexual competition between wives and women trying to lure away husbands with extra-pair sex, women here engage in another form of intra-sexual competition: to appeal to and hopefully secure as a pair-bond partner a high mate-value (high genetic quality) male in the first place. Even a relatively high mate-value male (albeit not the alpha male) faces the potential problem of his pair-bond partner being in effect protractedly off-line, as it were, with respect to reproduction *employing his own genes* (rather than those of a male interloper); if she were to be impregnated in extra-pair sex, to then gestate for nine months, before bearing a child and lactating – which, ancestrally, would have been for several years. The issue here is usually held to be 'paternity certainty', but this is

predicated on male investment, and human males did not evolve to significantly invest in offspring (Chapais, 2008, 2011; Geary & Bailey, 2011; Winking, 2006). The problem instead is the opportunity cost of being tied to a female whom (from a cuckolded husband's perspective) is non-reproducing for several years. This is not a great issue ahead of marriage, because the intensity of courtship displaces any interest the female otherwise might have in extra-pair sex (which anyway could not be clandestine with the male being so closely attentive and able to close-monitor), and any prior impregnation quickly would become apparent not long into the courtship period – even well before visible pregnancy, in that males implicitly assess female attractiveness in terms of a high waist depth to waist circumference ratio, which indicates non-pregnancy (Rilling et al, 2009).

The evolutionary logic, therefore, is not that a male seeks a virgin bride per se. Virginity is a poor proxy, at best highly indirect indicator of being unreceptive to and unlikely to initiate extra-pair sex; albeit it is the best concrete evidence, and it has clear, indeed powerful symbolic value. The problem for the male suitor is how to gauge the future likely behaviour of his prospective pair-bond partner after that bond has been cemented. Not only is non-pregnancy anyway assured by courtship ahead of an actual sexual relationship, but virginity is evidence only of never having had sex. It is not evidence of the likely sort of behaviour engaged in once regular sex commences – that is, whether or not there is any predilection for or resistance to having sex additional to that within a pair-bond. The male needs to look out for indications of this if he is to try to 'future proof' against the possibility of being cuckolded, but there is obvious difficulty in how a male may go about detecting not an observable sign of past behaviour or even behaviour as it is current, but a mere attitude, and how this might or might not change over a considerable period in the future, after a significant change (embarking on sexual activity) that itself may trigger other changes in turn. Females can key into and pre-empt this male concern by formalising an 'honest signal' in this regard. And they will be exceptionally keen to do so in the case of apex males, in trying to obtain such a male as a pair-bond partner (to reiterate: pair-bonding evolved in the female interest – in effect allowing a forward projection in time of peak fertility, as well as to keep away social and sexual attention of low mate-value males) (Moxon, 2013).

The males who have come first and nearly so – the beta and gamma (and delta, epsilon,

etc) as well as the alpha, as it were – in protracted competition to display genetic quality are indisputably the males with the very highest mate value, and will be the subject of determined efforts by females to secure them as pair-bond partners. With the entire basis of social system being to deal with the accumulation of gene replication error by a ‘genetic filtration’ / ‘mutational cleansing’ mechanism where males compete to be the formally appointed reservoir of the most uncontaminated genetic material; then a ‘top dog’ male or a small apex cohort of males would be the clear preference of all of the females within the local reproductive group. It would be possible and, indeed, in important respects desirable if all of the females could be impregnated (and repeatedly) by this / these few males. There are not really any corresponding females. Not only, in any case, can there be no female prodigious reproducer – all women are limited to a very slow rate of serial birth of offspring, ancestrally limited still more by several years of lactation – but the female mate-value criteria of fertility is a well-shared and fairly narrow measure, with not very many possible indicators – fairly obviously, youth (given that eggs are stored and decay), facial and bodily symmetry (revealing health and developmental stability) and a low waist-depth-to-waist-circumference ratio (indicating non-pregnancy) -- over which it is hard to contest in order to increase it. The upshot (as argued above) is that compared to males, females above a threshold that itself can be nothing like as discriminating as in the case of males, are rather interchangeable. The mating game at what in male terms is the very apex of society, is, then, an inversion of the usual scenario of males competing fiercely for females. Here, instead, many females are competing fiercely for a few particular males. At the level of nobility (in a stratified society; just the group leader(s) in a simple sub-tribal community), in important ways an individual female has far more use for a particular male than the other way round. In consequence, even a highly attractive female would have very good use for anything which could give her an edge over her rivals in finding an apex pair-bond partner.

The direct intervention in the form of FGMo to conspicuously advertise marked diminution in sexual sensitivity achieves this neatly. Within the context of female mediated arranged marriage, the ‘cut’ female can offer herself as such to a high-mate-value male, with the guarantee from the marriage arrangers that the procedure indeed has been performed (and which anyway is a simple physical check for the male to confirm). This initiative provides a highly significant competitive advantage to the female who has adopted the ‘honest signal’, obliging her rivals to follow suit. On a conceptualisation of societies as being ‘stratified’

according to different levels of male hierarchy – as are all human societies, including supposedly egalitarian hunter-gatherer groups (hierarchy being indirectly present but not to the fore when it is stable) – then cohorts of females corresponding in mate value through their fertility to males of equivalent mate value in terms of genetic quality, would need to adopt FGMO in imitation of the cohort immediately ‘above’ them in order to be able to ‘marry up’ (see above), as women usually if not always try to do and often achieve. This is just what is thought to have happened historically with FGMO, though evidence is lacking. In some societies, where the practise does not become ubiquitous, or once was so but then slips back; an advantage of FGMO to individual females would remain. However, once the practise becomes a fixed universal one, then the advantage to individuals would disappear. Yet the procedure still would be maintained, because social sanction for non-compliance would be a self-reinforcing phenomenon. The serious costs to reproductive potential that would be incurred strongly militate against any individual female breaking ranks, no matter how flimsy are complementary or substitute justifications for FGMO that may emerge to try to salve ‘cognitive dissonance’ over the mismatch between the severity of the practise and the paucity of any apparent advantage bestowed. It is easy to see how the original function of FGMO is lost from collective memory. Only if, unusually, a significant minority of ‘un-cut’ women quickly emerge, for men to realise they could obtain more sexually receptive pair-bond partners if they learn to distinguish between non- FGMO and FGMO individuals, could the benefits of being non- FGMO then start to outweigh the costs of non-conformity. [However, recent research shows it’s more complex than a battle between two norms of FGMO and non-FGMO. Attitudes towards FGMO evidently are heterogeneous, indicating that positive reasons for adherence to FGMO account for its persistence, and not just conformity to avoid sanction (Efferson et al, 2015). As a result, there is no coordination across communities whereby a non- FGMO norm can easily emerge, rendering interventions to try to eradicate FGMO still more difficult.]

The upshot is that whereas sub-alpha apex males likely would not be in a position to impose FGMO, even if they had sufficient motivation and also could figure out what would work for them, to then devise FGMO as a practical measure; women *are* both motivated and able to do so. A ‘male control’ form of FGMO presumably would never arise given that the alpha male (or a cohort of male leaders) could stymie any such attempt by lowlier males, but women constitute a completely separate sociality over which the alpha male (or a cohort of male leaders) has no

jurisdiction. FGMO is a female ploy outside of and in effect circumventing the architecture of male sociality to provide a lure of something for which males hadn't realised they had a use and could devise; so as to obtain the much-prized service of pair-bonding by a high genetic-quality male.

The overall picture of genital modification, whether in men or (and especially) in women, is remarkably different from what commonly has been assumed – commonly but not universally, given some feminists (and not only Germaine Greer) have recognised that FGMO is a 'difficult' issue. Most aspects of FGMO, whether within- or between-sex, do not conform to standard expectations. Far from there being anything akin to 'oppression' by men, the only locus of what could be deemed 'male control' is *of* men; and in place of a feminist model there is a completely female same-sex self-grown phenomenon, that notwithstanding any self-inflicted harm entailed, arose and developed as a real asset to women in their narrow locus of mutual competition. This is far from the supposed internalised male 'oppression' supposed by feminist 'analysis', predicated on the assumption that pair-bonding is an imposition on women they agree to in exchange for resources, when actually human pair-bonding did not arise from a need for males to provision females, and far from itself being male imposition, evolved in female interest, as explained above. [Indeed, it is the ideological blindness to this – the assumption that pair-bonding is itself male imposition – that is a major root of the long-standing failure to comprehend FGMO.] The notion of who are 'victims' in GMO has inverted, and inasmuch, in light of this, there are those who wish genuinely to assist 'under-developed' societies in ridding them of FGMO (and MGMO) instead of intervention that is really a conduit to impose extreme ideology; then a proper understanding of the phenomenon is essential. Otherwise, as currently, a principal effect often will be a counter-productive refusal by women to abandon the practise, instead utilising it to maintain a sense of group identity, by expressing a renewed vigour in adhering to the custom (Esho, Van Wolputte & Enzlin, 2011) -- an effect so strong that concerted programmes to eradicate FGMO in some places has achieved the very opposite. A problem here is that feminist ideologues have a vested interest in FGMO persisting, because the ideology requires supposed female victimisation for its own validation and for it to continue and to attract funding.

The impact on MGMO of its proper understanding may be particularly profound. In place

of the continuing unjustified resistance to consider MGMO as being in any way parallel to FGMO, 'circumcision' may come to be seen as the more major issue, reflecting that it is this form of FGMO, and not FGMO, which at root is an imposition. Given the enormous disparity in the prevalence of the practices in developed societies (especially in the USA) – where FGMO may be present to a degree in some migrant enclaves but non-existent in host populations – then MGMO is set to rise up the agenda as concern with FGMO may fatigue. The already steep decline in neonatal 'circumcision' in the USA may accelerate with dissemination of the insights into its function, leaving MGMO (outside the Jewish sub-population) to become a purely elective adult practise with few adherents. In turn, an appreciation that GMO in both sexes actually is an *intra*-sexual phenomenon with no inter-sexual 'oppressive' dynamic, and that it's explicable in biological more than merely cultural terms; contributes to a gathering general radical 'bottom-up' reappraisal of human sociality and the sexes.

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THE NEWSPAPER BOY

Daniel O'Ciardha



ABSTRACT

The Newspaper Boy is a memoir of growing up as the youngest boy in a large, enormously troubled, poor, alcohol-saturated, contentious, and mental health-challenged Irish household in the Midwest rust belt during the 1960s and 70s. As the child of a suicidal, depressed, regretful, and overwhelmed mother of six boys and two girls, and an emotionally-unavailable, alcoholic gambling addict and sometimes violent father who both suffered personality-altering brain injuries when the author was four years old, the author experienced varieties of intense abuse, neglect, and sexual assault that taxed his psyche and impacted his dreams, behavior, choices, and life path. By presenting details of his dramatically unfortunate, lonely, and unprotected childhood – during which he had no grandparents, aunts, or uncles, and there were no reliable siblings, or others to turn to for desperately needed help – this evocative piece provides a window into what it was like to be subjected to abusive treatment by a variety of the older people around him. As a pillar to telling of his childhood, he includes a riveting account of being violently molested and then stalked by a middle-aged man who was a customer on the author's paper route when he was thirteen years old.

Keywords: boyhood, memoir, male studies, coming of age

As I was working on writing this, a boy knocked on my door. He asked me if I'd like to subscribe to the newspaper. There was an irony to his timing. He looked to be about 14 years old.

As I closed the door, my mind surged with a snake pit maze of unpleasant memories that I was already dealing with, as I had been reading through things I had written as a teenager, including what happened to me as a newspaper boy.

I recently realized that on the Internet I could see photos of the Cleveland neighborhood that I had grown up in. I haven't been there since I left as a teenager.

By looking up the Internet street view of the neighborhood, for the first time since I was a teenager I saw the apartment complex where I had delivered newspapers. Remembering what had happened to me there in the spring of 1975, I cried.

That gave me more motivation to write this to establish a record, and to tell a story that might help others who are dealing with experiences of childhood assault.

I was of one of the last generations to experience the way newspapers were delivered, which has been portrayed as a gleeful boy riding a bike while tossing newspapers to the homes of appreciative customers. In my case, I did my route on foot. I worked every morning in any kind of weather to deliver *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* to customers in apartment buildings and some businesses.

Being alone on the streets delivering newspapers and then having to go alone to collect money from subscribers left the child laborers susceptible to certain risks. Among them: being prey to predatory pedophiles.

In the spring of 1975, weeks before my fourteenth birthday, I was collecting money from my subscribers while thinking that I liked having a paper route. What I didn't know was that I was about to walk into a situation that would transform me.

I didn't tell anyone this story until I was in my forties. Even then, I was vague about it. Recently, I have told a therapist the details of what happened to me. She cried, and encouraged me to write this article.

To prepare to write this, I read through things that I had written as a teenager. And I wrote this article while feeling as if I were purging long-held toxins from deep in my soul.

Out of curiosity, I looked up some stories about newspaper carriers. While reading the stories, it became easy to reason that the publishers knew what could happen to their child laborers.

It was from the backs of child laborers that newspaper publishing became a multi-billion-dollar industry.

Fourteen-year-old Cyrus Everett of Fort Fairfield, Maine, was last seen while collecting money on December 26, 1964. The following May, his decomposing body was found beneath a log.

In October 1970, an 11-year-old Indianapolis paperboy, Jerry Bayles, was stabbed to death. His nude body was found on the side of a country road.

In March 1975, 15-year-old Joey Didier of Rockford, Illinois, was abducted, raped, and strangled by a man who said he couldn't sleep, and decided to "go driving around looking for a paperboy."

In October 1979, 14-year-old Curt Cuzio vanished while delivering the *Detroit Free Press*. His body and bike were found in the attic of a man on his route. He had been sexually violated.

In 1981, 12-year-old Benjamin Lee Brenneman of Anaheim, California, was abducted while delivering the *Orange County Register*. A 42-year-old man had sexually assaulted and strangled him.

On September 5, 1982, 12-year-old Johnny Gosch of Des Moines, Iowa, disappeared while delivering newspapers.

On March 20, 1983, 14-year-old Christopher Gruhn of Rockville Centre, New York, was delivering newspapers when a 17-year-old boy accosted and sodomized him, and then killed him by stabbing him 27 times.

On August 12, 1984, 13-year-old Eugene Martin of Des Moines, Iowa, vanished while delivering newspapers. He had been seen talking to a man appearing to be in his 30s.

On Feb. 15, 1988, in Hagley, Worcestershire, England, a 32-year-old man led police to the body of Stuart Gough, a 14-year-old paperboy the man had abducted and sexually assaulted.

In 1989, a newspaper boy in Cole Spring, Minnesota, was kidnapped and molested.

In 2004, a Nebraska man was convicted of the 2003 rape and murder of 15-year-old female newspaper carrier Heather Guerrero.

In July 2011, a St. Paul, Minnesota, man was sentenced to 33 years in prison for the 2010 kidnapping and assault of a 14-year-old female newspaper carrier.

In 2013, a New Castle, Pennsylvania, man molested two newspaper carriers.

Those are some of the crimes against newspaper carriers that made the news. My situation did not, nor had it been reported. The difference between those stories and this one is that they were written by someone other than the victims.

Children had been used to deliver newspapers as early as the 1700s. Benjamin Franklin wrote of being a newspaper boy. Homeless youth in cities often made money by purchasing bundles of newspapers and selling them on the streets. Legend has it that the first American paperboy was 10-year-old Barney Flaherty who was hired in September 1833 to deliver Benjamin Henry Day's *New York Sun*.

It was 141 years later that I began my paper route.

I don't know how much money I made as a paperboy. I was continually disappointed by how little was left after paying for the papers. In a pinch, my mother dipped into the money to buy groceries, which was okay with me.

Legally, the pay of newspaper carriers could be lower than minimum wage. They were not given Social Security benefits, nor were they covered by workers compensation or unemployment insurance.

How did publishers get away with paying low wages to unsupervised child laborers working in potentially dangerous conditions?

Since the 1930s, newspaper carriers have been left out of the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act

relating to child labor.

On the site of the U.S. Department of Labor, it states, “Newspaper Delivery: Minors employed in the delivery of newspapers to consumers are exempt from Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) child labor provisions, as well as the wage and hours provisions. This exemption applies to carriers engaged in making deliveries to the homes of subscribers or other consumers of newspapers (including shopping news). It also includes employees engaged in the street sale or delivery of newspapers to the consumer. However, employees engaged in hauling newspapers to drop stations, distribution centers, and newsstands are not exempt because they do not deliver to the consumer.”

The newspaper industry successfully pressured the federal government to place newspaper carriers outside of the most basic wage and labor laws.

I was a second-generation paperboy. My father, who grew up in poverty, and had a tough, complicated, and tragic life, was once a newspaper boy.

My job as a newspaper boy began when I was 13, just after entering eighth grade in the autumn of 1974.

I learned that I was going to be a paperboy when my mother, who barely spoke to me, said that I needed to wake up early and follow one of my brothers to learn the paper route.

My training for the job involved tagging along with my brother for two days in the morning and then going collecting with him during one evening.

Going on the route with my brother was awkward. He and I had always avoided each other. I was used to him and his friends belittling, bullying, and brutalizing me. I didn't talk much as a child. I had never had a conversation with him. We said very few words during the training runs.

Each morning, the route manager dropped off bundles of newspapers in front of an apartment complex. I stuffed the papers into canvas shoulder bags, and delivered them to many of the apartments, and to some nearby businesses.

Other than briefly being introduced to him, I never had a conversation with the route manager. I sometimes saw him from a distance when he dropped off the bundles. He stopped by the house once a week to collect the money from a metal box kept in a dining room cabinet. He didn't say much. If nobody was home, he let himself in. That was the arrangement.

I was surprised to get the paper route. I was an underperformer in school, got lousy grades, and was often belittled and ridiculed – especially at home. My parents called me “dummy,” and other names. My brothers took their lead. “That idiot” was practically my nickname, as was “little sissy.”

Throughout my childhood, I never had a conversation with anyone in the family. Only the minimal amount of words were used when communication was needed, or forced – usually in frustration, impatience, or anger. Saying little or nothing was the rule of every day.

Being the youngest of six boys, I felt like an afterthought, or at least one of the final attempts by my parents to have a girl – of which they eventually had two.

The brother a year older than me also seemed to be an afterthought. It wasn't unusual for our parents to refer to us as “the other two.” I never once heard my mother or father have a conversation with that brother. Although we didn't look alike, when we were very young, people sometimes referred to us as “the twins.” We shared a bedroom. After the first four years, we didn't have much to do with each other.

Good relations are not my family heritage. Alcoholism, brain injuries, mental health issues, low self-esteem, and poverty are.

Our parents were only children. We had no aunts, uncles, or close cousins. My grandparents died before I was born. There were no other relatives to consult or reason with, to rely on, or to protect or nurture us.

My father's parents were born in Ireland. My grandfather had forever left Ireland in the early 1920s, after being in a drunken brawl with my great-grandfather. My father's parents met and married in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Days after he was born, my father's mother died as a result of an infection of the birth canal. My father didn't know that his stepmother was not his birth mother until he saw his birth certificate when he entered the army during the Korean War.

I didn't know the details of my father's parents' deaths until after my father died in his late sixties of "bad medical care" for some sort of brain situation. He had been so badly burned by radiation treatments that his scalp and skull died weeks before he did. At the time of his death, I was thirty years old and hadn't seen him for more than a decade.

My grandfather married another Irish girl who had no children. She raised my father as her own, in poverty, in Cleveland. My father's alcoholic father was mostly absent after my father became a teenager.

My father stopped going to school after ninth grade, worked as a bike messenger for Western Union, sold soda at the baseball and football stadium, and got into boxing, and drinking.

My father's father suffered a brain injury during a fight outside an Irish pub. He spent his remaining years in a mental institution, where my father once took my mother to meet him. He died in the 1950s.

My father's stepmother died when I was five years old. I remember her as strict with my brothers, having a strong Irish accent, sometimes babysitting us, and giving me mints when we visited her in her tiny apartment deep in the city.

My mother's parents were Scottish. Her father was born in the U.S. Her mother was born in Scotland. My mother spoke of her father as stinking of cigarettes and being an awful drunk.

In her later years, my mother told me that her father had an affair with his sister-in-law, and the resulting baby was my mother. My grandfather's sister-in-law – possibly my grandmother – did have two other babies, including one by a wealthy, older man whose family she worked for as a maid in their grand mansion.

Maybe because they both were single children, my parents thought that having a bunch of children would be better. Maybe they thought that we would be friends.

Shortly after I turned four, my parents had their eighth child.

It wasn't unusual for Midwestern people to have large families. The Kennedy imagery idealized the situation.

With eight children, our father had a lot of people relying on him.

Our mother was overburdened, and likely suffered multiple layers of postpartum depression.

Similar to the Kennedys, we were Irish-Catholic. Up until I was in fourth grade, we went to Catholic school. Then, everyone stopped going to church, and we switched to public school. By that time, our mother gave up on a lot of things, was ruled by depression, and seemed more focused on political news and hating politicians. Our father wasn't attentive. With no stern nuns to keep us in line, we wore whatever we wanted, our hair grew, and my brothers pretty much became recalcitrant.

When I was four years old, our father crashed while driving drunk. He smashed through the windshield, cracking open his skull on a utility pole. It left a horrible scar on his forehead. The injury altered his intellectual capacity. When he finally returned from the hospital with his head wrapped in bandages, he didn't know who I was.

Before the accident, my father sold residential real estate and insurance. After the accident, there were years of financial issues, food stamps, and welfare. He worked a variety of jobs, including as a milkman, and delivering for an industrial laundry service. While doing one of those jobs, he fell and broke his neck, which took many months of recovery, but left him in permanent pain. By the time I was in junior high, he landed a union job working at a steel mill. The iron worker job was steady – when there weren't layoffs, union strikes, and reduced hours that put us back on food stamps and welfare.

It was an awful thing for a mother of eight young children to experience her husband suffering a personality-changing brain injury. The man she had married was gone. It would be reasonable for a woman in that situation to assume that troubles would be numerous, and common.

Months after my father had suffered the brain injury, late one night our house started on fire. During the confusion and panic, my mother went back into the house. She fell down the

stairs, suffering a brain injury. After being hospitalized for weeks, she was sent home as if all was okay.

From that point forward, my mother was absolutely not okay.

She had made money singing at weddings and funerals. In the fire, in addition to her brain, her lungs and vocal chords were injured. She could no longer sing. Her joy and income vanished.

Even at the age of four, I recognized that my parents' personalities had changed. They were frustrated, stressed, regretful, poor, and had no parents, brothers, sisters, or family to turn to. In their situation, having one child would be a bit much. They had eight.

Being a mother is nonstop work, especially with a flock of children, little money, and endless, terrible problems. Those were years before disposable diapers. That meant she cleaned diapers by hand for many years.

When my father wasn't home, my mother often mentioned that she was not interested in being a mother, wished she hadn't had children, felt trapped, and that men ruin women's lives. She expressed her desire not to be alive. She often looked weary, and stared. Those expressions continued through my childhood.

After briefly living in rental homes, we moved into a modest, three-story house purchased using a down payment from a small inheritance my mother had received from the last uncle she knew of. The house had five small bedrooms, with our parents' room at the back of the first floor, three bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor, and one bedroom in the attic. My mother often said that the house was cursed.

When I was in second grade, my mother got pregnant. She carried the baby to full-term. The baby was a girl, and died.

My mother looked dreadfully gloomy. Her state was likely another layer of postpartum depression mixed with grief, sadness, frustration, and regret stuck in poverty.

I saw her staring at the floor. She asked, "Why can't I die?" I didn't know if I was supposed to answer.

My father was a horse racing and alcohol addict. He often was not around. When he was, he didn't carry on conversations with us. The few times we did things with him, it was more like a dad process. He took us bowling, and to a few baseball and basketball games. He played catch football with my brothers. I was too young to play.

Several times the whole family went on single-day road trips to Niagara Falls, caves in Kentucky, and museums in Michigan. I don't know how my father did all of that driving in a crappy station wagon filled with ten people. My mother brought loads of sandwiches. Those day trips were our vacations.

While I was in grade school, my mother sometimes sent me up the street to find my father in the pubs. Sometimes I found him. Those escapades ended after he took me with him. I sat alone as he spent hours getting drunk at the nearly empty bar.

By the time my brothers were young teenagers, they were drinkers. The attic bedroom was used for listening to rock music, drinking beer, and smoking weed with troubled friends that most parents wouldn't want around. A stack of porn magazines accumulated.

The sister two years younger than I had Down syndrome. She was unable to talk. She was a sweet girl who liked catsup sandwiches. When she reached school age, a bus stopped by to take her to a school for children like her. I didn't like that certain brothers and their friends referred to her as cave girl.

Three times, I saw one of my brother's friends suddenly stop doing I'm-not-sure-what to my sister in her bedroom. He threatened me. I didn't know what to do. He was often around, getting wasted with my brothers in the attic. When he saw me alone, he'd whisper insults, shove or hit me, or try to trip me. He was mannerly to my mother. Several times when she took us to a beach, the boy came with us. After high school, he entered the military. Recently, I found his Facebook page. He posts about loving Jesus.

My other sister was quiet, pretty, and unusually intelligent. In school, she was in the advanced classes. She seemed to be the only light of my parents' eyes. Not that she didn't experience neglect. There were summers when she wasn't cared for, her hair matted, her clothes filthy. Neighbors asked me why my mother let my sister's hair get like that. I tried to teach her how to brush her hair. Our mother saw and angrily told me to leave her alone. When summers

ended, my mother spent hours untangling the mats as my sister cried. She couldn't attend school like that.

My sisters' bedroom was permeated with the smell of urine from my Down syndrome sister's bed wetting. The sheets often didn't get changed for days. Sometimes, I changed the sheets. Sometimes, the bed and floor of the hallway and bathroom were smeared with poo from my sister trying to make her way to the bathroom. As she entered her teenage years, there sometimes also was blood.

My overwhelmed, sad mother didn't care for herself much. She'd go days without cleaning herself. I'd occasionally see her pour a pitcher of water over her head in the kitchen sink. Most mornings, she sat reading the newspaper while scratching dry skin from her scaly feet. She usually stared at the TV for hours every evening. Other family members sometimes did the same. No discussions. Only staring at the TV.

It was clear that four of my brothers were going to struggle through life. The other two of us boys had problems. They were all problems for me.

When I was a baby, my father brought home a miniature collie puppy. She was my best friend, slept on my bed, greeted me when I came home from school, and sat at my feet while I ate. She often tried to protect me.

At the end of third grade, I came home from school one day and my dog didn't greet me.

My mother had a mood swing. She had sent my dog to the pound, telling them that my dog bit people. I begged her to go get my dog back. When my father got home, my mother wanted us to eat dinner. I threw my one and only extreme tantrum that seemed to amaze them. Finally, after dinner, my father drove me and a couple of the brothers to the pound, only to find out that my dog had been killed.

My father was prone to flashes of anger. I was afraid of him. He didn't seem to like the brother who was a year older than me who was quiet, introverted, and rarely spoke. For his first several years, that brother had a bed-wetting problem.

For years after the fire, our parents sometimes yelled at each other. She was tired of slaving away morning to night while he was spending money nights and weekends on booze and horse races. We knew yelling was going to start when she told us to get upstairs as she anticipated our drunk father arriving.

Her life was frustration, headaches, worry, sons she didn't know what to do with and who she said that she didn't want in the first place, nonstop food to shop for and make, endless laundry, nobody helping her, and a drunken, brain-damaged husband. She vividly complained that the alcohol reeking from his pores smelled up the bedroom.

Many times during the yelling, my mother mentioned my brother's bed-wetting. Before my father made it upstairs, my brother cried in fear. It was awful to hear him scream in pain as the belt hit him while my father yelled at him.

I once had my brother get into my bed, and I got into his. Our father burst in and lashed at me with his belt. I screamed in pain. Realizing he was hitting the wrong kid, he went after my brother.

That treatment set the stage for my brother's sad, tragic, short life.

Outside of the yelling that my father did while he was hitting my brother, I never heard my father talk with him. My mother wasn't much better in communicating with him.

Although that brother was the only one who didn't hit me, he also didn't talk to me. By the time I was nine, if I spoke to him, he told me to shut up. I asked him if he wanted me to never speak to him. He told me to shut up. We never spoke again. We shared a bedroom until I was 16. Although he hung out with our brothers and their troubled friends, he barely spoke with them.

Like me, school was likely an escape for him. Like me, his grades weren't good.

I didn't attend kindergarten.

On the first day of first grade, I was surprised that the other kids in class could read and knew math. To me, the alphabet and numbers were a bunch of intimidating pieces of games that I didn't understand. I was behind, and I wasn't good at catching up.

For some reason, the teachers put the misbehaving and allegedly dumber kids in the same part of the room. I was there. One teacher called us “the penal colony.”

My third-grade teacher wrote a letter to my mother complaining that I stared out the window, didn’t pay attention, and got low grades.

The teacher laughed as she read my mother’s response letter out loud in class. My mother wrote that I should be made to sit on a stool in the corner of the classroom with a dunce cap on my head. I felt tremendously betrayed.

I was to sit at the dining room table doing homework. I was not allowed to watch TV. As I did my homework, my father sometimes stood above me. He’d hit me in the head if I had answers wrong, if I misspelled a word, if I was seen counting with my fingers instead of in my brain. Trying not to cry while being hit in the head and called dummy by my father was not easy. Sometimes I cried so hard that I could barely breathe. “Only sissy boys cry,” he said. “Are you a little sissy?” he’d ask. Some brothers found that entertaining.

Was his hitting me in the head and calling me names the type of help my mother wanted in raising the boys? Did her not stopping it mean that she approved of it? Was she afraid of him? I never knew of him to hit her, but people have potential.

There were times that I couldn’t sleep at night. It could be difficult to find a position to put my head on the pillow without feeling the pain of bruises on my skull.

Being bruised, in pain, scared, called names, sleep deprived, and unsafe doesn’t improve grades. It triggers the tissues to produce fear, stress, anxiety, and fatigue chemistry.

As I was trying to figure out how to ride a bike, my father saw me. He began telling me what to do. He walked over and pushed me on the bike down the sidewalk. I lost my footing on the pedals, and they hit my ankles. Irritated, he slowed so that I could put my feet back on the pedals. He pushed the bike and let go. I fell. He picked the bike up, told me to get back on it, and he kept pushing. I kept losing my footing as my ankles painfully got hit by the pedals. After some distance, he picked up the bike, with me on it, and threw the bike, and me, into bushes. A man walking with children across the street said something as my dad stormed off back home.

Even though I was lousy at it, I liked baseball. I joined the school team, as did two of my brothers. My drunk father showed up at the games, angrily yelling insults at me from the sidelines. Other parents tried to calm him down. He ignored them. My brothers appeared to think it was funny. I dropped out of the team. Nobody tried to coax me back.

Months later, I was in the park with some neighborhood kids. In the distance, the baseball team gathered around the coach. He called my name. I nervously approached. He was giving trophies to the team members. He handed a trophy to me and told me that it was for putting up with my father.

The only baseball I played after that was with neighborhood kids, and sometimes in junior high.

My father hitting me ended in May when I was in fourth grade.

That was after two neighborhood boys lied about me starting a small fire in an old hobo fire pit in the woods. Another boy had started some leaves and twigs on fire as I was backing away telling him not to do it. The teenage boys grabbed me. The other boy ran. The police brought me home, where my father was drunk and alone.

The beating started in the living room, continued up the stairs, down the hallway, into my bedroom, and ended when I crawled beneath my bed and held onto the bed springs. He gave up and left the room. There was pain in many places.

I woke up at night as my mother used a washcloth to clean blood from me.

Before I was allowed to go back to school, my mother stood in the dining room and rehearsed with me what I was to say if the teachers asked about the wounds on my face. I was to say that I was in the back seat of the car when she stopped fast to avoid hitting a car that went through a red light, and my face hit the dashboard.

Nobody at school asked me why I had scabs and bruises on my face.

If being bloodied by being whipped with a belt, hit, kicked, and thrown wasn't enough for doing nothing wrong, my mother grounded me for two weeks. At first, I was stuck in my bedroom. Then I was allowed in the living room. After days, she decided that I could be on the

porch. Brothers and their friends pushed me off, then told her that I had left the porch. I was smacked and banned back to the bedroom.

There was an older, strong teenage boy who was often in the house. He did things to me that I didn't like. Things that I didn't understand had already been done to me by another boy. It was painful, frustrating, and embarrassing, and I didn't understand or know what to do about the situation. I now know that it is called rape.

One of my brothers with a condition of being mentally slow, cleverly funny, and socially awkward, told numerous boys that my parents hated me, that people could do anything they wanted to me, and that nobody cared.

Some boys brutalized me as a form of entertainment. My crying, being in pain, humiliated, and unable to defend myself seemed funny to them. There was no escaping. They were older, taller, faster, and stronger.

I hid from humans. Being away from the house was best. But, rain, snow, and cold happened. Sitting in the car with the doors locked, or staying behind the sofas, or in closets, in the basement, or on the top shelf of the upstairs linen closet was common. Sometimes, a brother found me hiding and hit me around, accusing me of spying.

After hearing about a famous person dying from an overdose of pills, I swallowed all of the pills I could find. Some were aspirin, others were vitamins, and some were my mother's prescriptions. As I got sick to my stomach, I vomited into the toilet.

I heard my mother mention something about all the pills being gone.

In school, my grades continued being awful. To keep advancing to the next grade, I spent a few summers in school.

Summer school kept me away from the house, and was almost kind of fun. Except that kids who weren't in summer school considered us dumb.

The summer school kids could be more fun. Except when they weren't.

I went home from school with one of the summer school kids. He had a pet mouse. His mother didn't allow friends in the house. He took the baby mice outside to show them to me. He

laughed as he tossed them high up into the air, letting them land on the street. He laughed when they stopped moving, and called them stupid. He laughed at me for looking freaked out, calling me an idiot. “They’re just stupid mice,” he said. He told me to leave.

I didn’t want to be stupid. People treat things they perceive to be stupid as okay to harm.

I found a book about what students learn during each year of schooling. I could barely understand it. According to the book, I wouldn’t be an adult until I was twice my current age. It sounded like forever.

One gloomy day, my mother, my sister with Down syndrome, and I were the only ones home. My mother had me help her put the living room furniture against the front door, which she locked. She had me help her put the dining room chairs against the side door of the kitchen that she also locked. I asked her why we were doing it. She didn’t answer. I factored that she was going to clean the floors. But that didn’t seem correct. She was determined and eager. She told me to sit in the kitchen with my sister. My mother taped cardboard to cover the doorway of the kitchen to the living room. She opened the oven door.

A noise was at the side door. One of my brothers was trying to get in. My mother started tearing down the cardboard. My brother was then trying to get into the living room door. My mother told me to go move the furniture. I went in there and unlocked the door. As I tried to move the furniture, my brother impatiently pushed his way in, asking me what I was doing, and calling me names. My mother entered and asked what was going on, as if she didn’t know. My brother hit me as my mother yelled at me to put the furniture back, as if I had done it on my own. She didn’t stop him from hitting me, as if I deserved the punishment.

Once, my mother took the Down syndrome sister and me on a long drive. During part of the drive, she drove wildly fast on a road along a canal. I was afraid we were going to end up in the canal, or smashing into oncoming traffic.

Having nobody to talk or relate to, I felt as if I didn’t know how to communicate with humans. I was socially inept. Having a true friend eluded me. When someone spoke to me in a normal way, I was more surprised than anything else. I tensed up and said little to nothing, or something awkward. I must have appeared dumb, or faulty.

Other kids spoke of their families as if they enjoyed them. They had aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. I didn't.

I dreaded my family.

My way was being silent and diverting my eyes from those of family members. My parents didn't seem to care to hear my voice, and quickly became irritated if I spoke. They mocked my voice. It was not uncommon for my parents to refer to me as "dummy" for asking a question, as if curiosity is wrong. My mother warned me to stay away from and to stay quiet around my father.

My brothers copied my parents. The words "shut up," "sissy," and "idiot" were probably the most common words said to me.

My older brothers could have conversations with my mother. Ghosts, UFOs, black magic, witchcraft, and the occult were common topics. They got books about those from the library. Hating Nixon and other politicians was also discussed. Our mother often said that Nixon should be shot for treason. She yelled at him when he was on TV.

I wasn't welcome. If I tried blending in, my mother told me to go to my room, which I did. I listened to them downstairs watching TV and talking. One night, I made the mistake of asking her why I couldn't be there. She got angry, threatening to hit me if I didn't leave, then going after me as I ran up the stairs.

One day while making popcorn, the butter burned as I was melting it. While holding the pan as I removed dirty dishes from the sink, the boiling butter spilled all over my right hand. The pain was intense, and I screamed.

From another room, as if I were nothing but a burden, my mother asked what happened. I could barely talk as I said that I had burned my hand. She told me to put some butter on it. As my hand trembled, I cried.

A variety of large, liquid-filled blisters formed on my hand and fingers. To quell the intense pain, I spent days keeping my hand in ice water. For days, I stayed in my bedroom, in a cardboard box on the porch, or in the backyard shade. The sun made my hand hurt.

A college girl was employed by the city to provide summer game activities for neighborhood children in the park. When she saw my red, blistered hand as I was sitting bent over to shade it, she appeared repulsed. When she found that I hadn't been taken to a doctor, she gathered up a few neighborhood moms. They spoke to my mother.

My mother wasn't happy. I was not to talk with the neighbors. I was to stay in the yard or the house.

She bought me some lotion for my burn. I wasn't taken to a doctor.

I continued going to the park, but was afraid to be seen near the neighbors. The injury seemed to give me a temporary reprieve from being brutalized.

As the blisters eventually burst, I cut off the hanging skin. I was left with raw skin that stank and oozed water and some pus, but little blood. Crusts and scabs formed. Moving my hand or fingers was painful.

My mother took my sisters, the most brutal brother, and me to a beach. There was no conversation. It was awkward. I couldn't swim or let the sun hit my hand. I kept my hand in an empty bread loaf plastic bag.

It took weeks for the scabs and dead skin to fall away. My hand was extremely sensitive, the skin was tight, and I couldn't make a fist for many months.

My hand remained pink for years, but few scars remained.

I stepped on a long nail in the backyard. It nearly pierced my foot, pushing up against the skin on the top of my foot. Crying, I hobbled to the house. "What is it this time?" my mother impatiently asked. She angrily yanked the nail from my foot. I screamed in pain. She said, "Shut up and go outside. I don't want to listen to you."

I sat on the porch. The bleeding stopped. My foot swelled and throbbed in pain.

When I dared to come limping into the house, she told me to hurry up and eat, and that I was going to the movies with my brothers.

Limping the mile to the theater while carrying one shoe, I followed behind a few of my brothers and their friends. During the film, my foot hurt so badly that I could barely pay attention. Afterwards, I was left alone to limp home.

During much of one summer, we didn't have a working refrigerator. It had broken because my oldest brother continually used it as a punching bag, denting the doors. He was brutal, barely spoke, stank, didn't seem to have friends, spent hours lifting weights while blasting rock music, and often paced in the attic. It seemed that my parents were afraid of him. Numerous times, while saying nothing, he grabbed one of my arms and squeezed it hard while he watched my face strain and turn to tears. I once saw him kick the sad dog across the living room. He stomped if the cats came near him. If I walked near him, he shoved, hit, or kicked me. He told another brother that our parents couldn't afford to send them to college because they had too many children. One evening, our father yelled at him like I had never seen him yell at anyone. He became less of a problem, but remained an unpleasant, threatening, quiet loner.

School continued to be an escape. Not that I was doing so well there, either. Teachers seemed perplexed by me. By eighth grade, I could read aloud okay, but I didn't retain what I read. When I was asked what I had just read, I'd be blank.

While doing the paper route, I sometimes carried a little radio. I followed the exploitive news stories of Patty Hearst being held hostage by the Symbionese Liberation Army. The combination of hearing the news and reading the newspaper made my brain click. I could retain what I had read.

Finding an old copy of the novel *Old Yeller*, I read it cover-to-cover.

Showing the book to my mother, I told her that I had read it. I thought she would like to know. She laughed mockingly. My sister asked what our mother was laughing about. She said that I was reading a book for fifth graders.

Later, she told my brothers and father that I was reading children's books.

Being able to understand what I had read was a revelation. I wasn't so stupid after all. My retention, attention, understanding, and writing improved, as did my grades.

While my intellect improved, things were far from ideal. I didn't talk much with anyone at school, and with nobody at home. There were some neighborhood kids I was friendly with, but they didn't seem to like me much, with some calling me names like "weird" and "strange." I'm sure that I was different.

A family down the street took me places with them, to an amusement park, their father's company picnic, and their father's team baseball games. Their son my age didn't seem to like me. The situation was uncomfortable. It seemed as if their mother was the one who included me. The oldest daughter regularly had me play cards on their front porch while she played pop music on vinyl records.

I didn't bring friends to the house. My brothers did, often. Up to the attic they went to listen to rock and roll, smoke weed, and drink into the night. My bedroom was beneath the attic bedroom. Through all of my teenage years, I lost sleep from the noise.

My newspaper route became an escape. It was a few seasons of being occupied with a tight schedule. Although I didn't understand the concept then, having the route gave me a sense of pride and purpose. For the first time, I felt good about myself. Not that they said so, but it was the first time I had felt as if my parents were okay with me. Or, at least, I was out of the way – and I brought some money into the household.

My days involved waking up before sunrise, delivering newspapers, showering, going to school, doing homework, eating, sleeping, and collecting route money during the early evenings on Wednesdays and Saturdays. I was used to people in the house not speaking with me, but it became as if I were practically invisible.

A few times as I returned from delivering papers early on Saturday, my mother said she needed me to go with her in the car. It was odd. I was used to years of being told to shut up, to get away from her, being called names, being mocked, being smacked for minor or assumed reasons, and her not correcting my brothers when they brutalized or bullied me – even laughing when they did. In previous years, she had me go with her in the car with my sisters so that I could sit with them as she went shopping. Then, a few times that spring, I was alone in the car with her. As she saw something left for garbage, she'd stop half a block away, sending me to see if something was worth taking. We got chairs, picture frames, tools, and various other stuff. If I

saw milk or soda bottles, I was to get those as they could be returned to the store for coins. We did that, but we didn't have conversations.

I wasn't surprised to find that she was garbage picking. We weren't the kind of family to have new things. The furniture was used, from thrift stores, given to us by someone, or found. Our clothes were mostly from thrift stores. My clothes were usually hand-me-downs.

With paper route money, I sometimes bought clothing. Simple things like jeans, a shirt, a pair of canvas shoes. I wasn't flashy, and I avoided attention.

At school, I wasn't popular. I was an observer more than a participant. Nobody seemed to seek me out for anything. I was usually among the final picks for the baseball, volleyball, and other teams during gym class. I hated wrestling.

Few of my newspaper customers said much to me, nor I to them. Because I delivered papers early in the morning, I rarely saw anyone. I saw other customers when I collected. Some left the payments beneath their doormats, or in envelopes taped to their doors.

Fall and winter went by as I delivered newspapers in some lousy, and sometimes extremely cold, snowy weather. Then spring arrived, which made things easier.

One early evening in late April, I was in an apartment building collecting money from customers and was thinking about how much I liked having a paper route.

While I was knocking on one door, across the hall a door opened. I turned to see three college-age men walk out as they thanked the apartment complex manager for showing them the place.

That apartment was used as the recreation room for the complex. People could rent it for parties.

After the college boys passed me, I glanced through the doorway. The apartment complex manager was in there. He saw me and did a double take – as if a thought entered his mind.

The man was about 50, tall, strong-looking, and had very short hair. He had recently taken over as manager after the young, friendly married couple who were the managers had moved out.

He asked me if I wanted to see the apartment. I didn't.

He backed into the apartment, as if to invite me in.

I looked in, noticing that it didn't have much furniture. There was a pool table. I stayed in the doorway, and had a feeling that I wanted to bolt.

He went to the other side of the pool table and pointed to that side of it, saying that I should come see something there. I hesitantly stepped in and approached his side of the table. There was nothing there.

The man said it was just under the edge of the table, that I needed to lean down to see it. I did. There was nothing.

He grabbed hold of my hair, forcing my head down near his crotch. I lost my balance and fell to my knees.

Things got frantic with me trying to pull loose from his iron grip of my hair. He was undoing his pants with his other hand as my head, face, and chin banged onto the side of the pool table while I tried to keep my face away from his crotch that he kept forcing toward me.

It was confusing and rough.

He forced my face to his penis.

I kept pushing away. Then my head was stuck between the pool table with his thing on my face.

As if angry, he grabbed me and slammed me face up onto the table.

As I tried to stop him, he yanked my pants halfway down, ripping my underwear.

I heard my collection money scatter.

I kept hold of my collection book, as if that mattered.

He kind of sat on my torso.

I said something about not being able to breathe. He cruelly asked, “Is that better?” as he kneeled on my arms.

Then, my arms were stuck between my torso and his legs.

He was above me as he rubbed himself in his fist. I didn’t know what he was doing. He seemed determined to have it in front of my eyes. He stank. His expression was some sort of strange, angry smile.

I closed my eyes.

He made groaning sounds. My face became wet. It got in my eyes, nose, and mouth. I didn’t understand. I had no knowledge of this sort of thing.

Then, he stopped moving so much.

He said, “Stupid boy.”

He shoved my face back and forth, one way, then the other. Like heavy, slow slaps. He seemed to be smearing that stuff on my face.

I felt like I was going to start crying, or vomiting, or both.

He said something as he got off me.

I thought he was helping me from the table, but he pushed me down again, forcing me on my front with my face and chest against the table. He groped me, roughly grabbing and slapping my behind. It was humiliating, awkward, disturbing, confusing, and made me angry. My heart raced and my brain felt strange.

He stopped.

I got off the table and nearly fell against the wall while trying to pull up my pants. I felt pathetic, foolish, frustrated, embarrassed, and stupid.

He closed the door.

He said something about how I had better hurry and get dressed. I thought that he meant that someone was approaching.

He watched me try to arrange my torn underwear as I pulled up my pants. I gave up on that and simply got my pants pulled up.

He said I'd better not tell anyone, including my parents. He said he knew where I lived, where I went to school, and what my friends looked like.

He told me to pick up my change that was scattered on the floor.

As he remained standing near the door, I collected some of the change while I kept looking over at his feet. My hands were shaking. I kept dropping coins. He said something about it being enough. But I hadn't picked up all of it. I needed that money.

He looked out the door, then held it open and told me to hurry up and run out.

I didn't want to go near him. Instead, I went toward the windows. He raced over and grabbed me. I struggled as he dragged me to the door, and shoved me out.

Still holding my collection book, I ran down the hall and out the door.

I ran to the back parking lot, because I thought he was running after me and went the other way.

I hid behind cars. There were people talking by another building doorway. I thought they noticed me. I crawled to hide behind another car. I peeked up. They were gone.

Panicking, I ran out to the main street. Still thinking he was going to follow me, I went an alternate way.

Someone in a passing car yelled something and seemed to be laughing.

I noticed my torn underwear hanging from the back of my pants. That too was frustrating and embarrassing.

Getting to railroad tracks, I followed them to the woods of the park. In a grassy area, I got on my hands and knees. I stayed like that for a while looking closely at the grass, as if there was some answer there.

I heard voices of older teenagers. A girl said there must be something wrong with me. A boy approached and asked me about being “on something.” I didn’t know what he meant. I didn’t look up at them. I turned and sat down.

They went on their way.

I went to the sports field of the park. In the distance, there were baseball players ending their game. Not wanting them to see me, I lay down face first on the grass.

It started getting dark. I walked home.

Upstairs, I locked myself in the bathroom.

There were red scuff marks, like bruises, on my skin around my privates, hips, and my upper legs. My head hurt.

I took a long shower, as if that would wash it all away.

In bed, I wrote the words “stupid boy” over and over and over on a piece of paper.

The next morning when I delivered papers, I was sure to be quiet while entering the criminal’s building. I wrinkled up and tore a newspaper and left it by his door. Then I urinated on the newspaper, the door, and the rug.

In following days, I damaged his newspaper, or left only part of it.

One morning, the route manager, with whom I had still never had a conversation, sat waiting for me in his truck parked next to the bundles of newspapers. Sounding irritated, he said that one of my customers complained about getting damaged newspapers. The route manager asked me if I knew anything about it. I said I didn’t. He looked at me as if he knew something was up, or that he thought that I was odd.

Regretfully, I left the criminal a newspaper every morning. I had avoided collecting from him. He was getting free newspapers, which I was paying for.

Every morning I became filled with anxiety as I went into his building, but I had to deliver the papers to several apartments in there.

One morning he quickly opened his door. I ran away.

He started showing up places, from around corners, popping out of doorways, or standing in stairways in the other buildings of the complex, blocking me from being able to do my job.

I stopped collecting from the people in his building.

The apartment complex was also along my way as I walked to and from school, so I began taking a different, longer path.

One evening as I was collecting, to avoid the possibility of crossing paths with him, I walked around the far side of one of the buildings. He popped out from behind a corner, and nearly grabbed me as his fingers brushed me. I left the complex, not finishing my collection route that evening.

The money in the collection box kept in my parents' dining room cabinet was dipping below what I owed for the newspapers.

I had been feeling dreadful for weeks. I feared that I would have to explain what had been done and was happening to me.

Nobody had ever spoken with me about private parts or bodily functions. Other than slang or childish words, I didn't know what the body parts or body functions were called – or that certain functions occurred. I only had a vague understanding of how babies happened. I hadn't known the words testicles, penis, erection, masturbation, orgasm, ejaculation, semen, or anything like those. Other than sometimes hearing someone say crude things, I knew nothing about masturbation. Other than what people did to me, I was innocent.

Apparently because the money in the collection box wasn't enough to cover the cost of the papers, the route manager said something to my mother.

When you mess up at a job, does your boss go to your mother? Why couldn't he have asked me about it? He knew where I was every morning.

On a Saturday, my father, who rarely said much of anything to me, and who, because of his history of drunken anger, hitting, and harsh treatment, made me feel uncomfortable, mildly said something to me about going collecting.

Maybe my father thought that my mother had told me that he was going to take me collecting – she hadn't. Maybe he thought that I had asked for help.

The next thing I knew, I was alone in the latest used car driven by my father. He said nothing as he drove. I was panicking, but tried to avoid making motions that could reveal how uncomfortable I was.

As we went door-to-door, using few words, my father explained how I should collect, how I should mark the collection book, how I needed to collect a certain amount of money every week to pay for the newspapers, and how all of the money after that was mine to keep. It was as if he didn't know or somehow forgot that I had been successfully running the route for several months. I wondered if he confused me with another brother.

We got to the building where the criminal lived.

The collection card my father held showed that the next customer hadn't paid in weeks. My dad was extra sure to knock on that door.

The criminal opened his door. I stepped back. He instantly looked agitated. As if he were identifying a suspect, he pointed to me and said loudly in an accusatory tone, "There he is!" He told how his newspaper is always a mess, torn, wrinkled, or wet.

The man didn't seem to know or care that he was talking to my father.

I stood with my heart racing as I thought he was going to charge after me.

I thought that maybe he would do something to my father, who was a strong man, but seemed short compared to the criminal.

As if my father didn't appear to notice how angry the criminal was, my father told the man how much he owed.

The guy was not having it. My father listened while holding the collection book, then looked at me, as if he didn't know what to say to the man, as though I was to be the voice of reason in the situation. I remained silent, and panicking.

My father told the guy that he didn't have to pay for the unpaid weeks, and asked whether he still wanted the newspaper. The man said that he did, as if the question were absurd. My father marked off all of the weeks that were not paid.

I wondered if my father had noticed me being nervous and fidgety.

Even if I had skipped the delivery, or had put damaged newspapers at the guy's door, didn't my father notice that the criminal's anger was far beyond reasonable? Did my father have any concern about his son having to deal with that sort of aggression from a tall, strong, middle-aged man?

Without my father saying anything about what had just happened, we went to the next door. I felt let down, frustrated, confused, and extremely uncomfortable.

Was my father afraid of the guy? Was he not the strong, tough, bullheaded, Irish factory worker he seemed to be? Was he unaware of things? It wasn't until after he died that I understood how deeply the car crash impacted his intellectual capacity.

Going collecting with my father that evening remains the most time I had ever spent with him, and the most he had ever spoken directly to me without anger.

I became another teenage boy silently critical of his father. I avoided him.

After school one day, a loud, husky-voiced girl a year older than me and who lived on my street asked me to walk home with her. I told her that I had been taking a different route home from school, because a man in the apartment building where I delivered newspapers wouldn't leave me alone.

I didn't tell her what happened.

As we approached the apartment complex, I saw the criminal raking the lawn. How convenient for him to be there during the time of day when the schoolchildren passed by.

He saw me and paused. His face contorted into anger.

The loud, husky-voiced girl started shouting things to him like, "Fag!" "Leave my friend alone, you fag!" and, "Stupid ffffag!"

I didn't know what to do, other than to keep walking alongside the girl.

The criminal looked at me as if his blood was boiling over and he could kill me.

I became friends with a boy in school who was tall, strong, popular, adored by girls, and had a paper route. I told him that a man on my route wouldn't leave me alone. I think I gave my friend the impression that the guy was trying to steal my collection money.

My friend came up with a plan that he would collect my route one night to see if the guy tried to do anything to him. My friend seemed to think of it as entertaining. But he didn't know the details, and I didn't know how to tell him.

I met up with my friend and another boy on a Wednesday evening. We were on bikes.

From a distance in the parking lot, I watched with the other boy as my friend went into the building. The criminal exited the building. Cars in the parking lot blocked our view, but we could tell that the criminal was doing something. He then went inside.

My friend exited the building, looked around, and then walked across the parking lot to us.

The criminal had stolen my friend's bike.

I didn't know what to say or do. My friend seemed to brush it off as if it were funny.

My friend couldn't keep collecting for me. I had to do it. And I had to wake up before sunrise every morning to deliver the newspaper.

The criminal continued bothering me, showing up around various places in the apartment complex. Doing my route saturated me with anxiety.

Again, I was falling behind in the collections.

Before the man ruined things, I was feeling the best I had ever felt about myself. I learned how to read, was getting better grades, was doing my job, and making some money – including money that sometimes helped my mother purchase food. I was the boy being responsible, as my brothers were shaggy-haired, beer drinking potheads.

Doing the route continued to be frightening, stressful, frustrating, and dangerous. I didn't want to do it anymore.

One morning when I went to deliver papers, I left the bundles sitting on the sidewalk.

When I arrived home, my mother said something about the paper route. Apparently, the route manager had called. As if my mother were an irritating pest, I said that I wasn't going to do it anymore. That felt awful.

I went up to my room and sat crying on my bed.

Nobody mentioned the paper route to me again. To me, it was stolen – along with so many things that I didn't understand.

That summer of being free of school and the newspaper route became a surreal feeling of being untethered. I went from having a schedule, responsibilities, and discipline, to having none. Nobody seemed to pay attention to or expressed any interest about where I was, what I did, when I woke up or went to bed, what I ate or wore, who I spent time with, or what I thought. It was like being invisible in the house, where I was practically mute.

Inappropriate teenage behavior became my norm. Away from the house, I began swearing. Not that teenage boys don't swear, but my switch to talking that way was sudden, constant, and moronic. I became a disjointed, weird, socially awkward version of a jaded teenager feeling like he was an unwanted mistake, didn't matter, and whose parents seemed to prefer not seeing or hearing him.

Adult males became suspect. I was aware of them like a person would be while in the presence of aggressive, feral dogs. I'd get a sense of panic if I were around men. My thoughts overly analyzed why anyone looked at me in any sort of way that I might perceive as considering. Avoidance strategies became a minor obsession. I crossed streets or switched paths to avoid men. When I saw my friends' fathers, uncles, or older brothers, I said little or nothing.

Sometimes there would be a comment, like, "What's wrong with that boy?" Any kind of recognition or questioning of my behavior induced anxiety. Speaking about myself was uncomfortable, especially if anyone asked me about my family. Questions were more likely if they found out that I lived in the house that looked as if it were haunted. Other than, "I don't

know,” I didn’t have much to say about my family. Without family conversation, there wasn’t a way to understand the reasoning or rationale.

I was overly aware of my movements, expressions, tone of voice, and words. I didn’t want anyone to get any ideas about or to have the option of doing anything wrong to me.

My brothers continued hanging out with other messed-up boys, and not doing much of anything with themselves. The oldest were out of high school, had crappy cars, and worked at low-paying jobs, factories and such, with the money quickly wasted.

My brothers didn’t seem to show any concern for the needs of my poor, troubled, depressed, worn-down parents – who did what was needed for my two sisters.

As in previous years, my mother stared at the TV every evening. Sometimes other family members watched with her. I felt uncomfortable there.

I stayed away from that house as much as possible, even if it was to stay in the backyard tending the small, weedy vegetable garden that I grew there each summer.

I was often alone in the woods, around the railroad tracks, or nearby factories. Sometimes, I sat in the woods or under the railroad bridge with haggard, drunken hoboes barely able to hold conversation. Other times I hung with older teenagers getting high or drunk, sometimes with their younger brothers or sisters sitting with them, listening. Other times, I went for long walks or longer bike rides to a large park that had a river running through it, where I swam on hot days.

I occasionally hung out with neighborhood children whose families warned them to stay away from my brothers and their friends.

A young, married man moved into the neighborhood. His pretty wife loved the Bible. She eventually left him. He let teenagers hang out at his house and in his garage that we helped him build. He overhauled and painted cars. At his house, kids could smoke weed and cigarettes, get drunk, and look at porn magazines. He supplied the porn, and often the cigarettes, and sometimes booze. I didn’t like cigarettes. Weed and booze, I’d have. He and porn gave me the creeps. He taught some of us how to ride a motorcycle. He took a bunch of us camping in the woods on his family farm. He let us shoot his guns. It was fun, but was odd to be around this

man who didn't seem to have friends his age. When he said something he thought was funny, he'd do a high-pitched laugh, as if to prod people into laughing along. He ended up getting a teenage girl pregnant, then marrying her.

I got into hanging out with kids in a different neighborhood who drank, smoked weed, and often stayed up late, or all night. We rode bikes, jumped the fence at the city pool at night, and sometimes went to the movies. I thought that they detected something about me that was off. One of the boys was friendly with me, and sometimes let me sleep in his basement. Their families were a little more functional than mine, and their neighborhood better. But it was still a wasteland of youth lacking healthy communication with their parents.

The most meaningful communication I had with humanity was with myself writing about things that happened to me. I hid that diary in a hole in a wall.

My changing body was mysterious and kind of scary. Especially since nobody talked to me about it, and it seemed unmentionable to the point of shame, disgust, and confusion.

My understanding of the body was the distorted one I got from seeing porn magazines. I wondered if my body were that okay, or not acceptable. I didn't understand how people could allow themselves to be photographed naked for everyone to see. I told one kid who I didn't like much that I was going to pose for porn magazines when I grew up. He quickly told other kids. I thought it was funny.

I had developed a cleanliness obsession. I washed my own clothes, showered two and sometimes three times per day, and washed my comb after showering. I had to have clean sheets on my bed, which also brought me ridicule from my brothers, who usually slept on their filthy mattresses and stained, bare, smelly pillows.

If the brothers' bedrooms got clean, it was because our mother occasionally cleaned them, and put sheets on the beds and cases on the pillows. From the attic, she carried trash bags loaded with beer cans and bottles. She'd neatly stack their porn magazines. Wasn't all that wrong in so many different ways that should have been obvious to her?

I didn't understand why my brothers weren't required to clean their rooms, do laundry, or help around the house. They relied on our parents for every meal, and didn't do dishes.

Apparently, it was also okay for them to drink and smoke weed with their troubled friends in the attic while blasting music. But if I spoke, I was looked at as if I'd better shut up, quickly.

It seemed that my father didn't know what was going on. He worked, slept, and was often gone to the pubs and horse races. My parents' bedroom was at the back of the first floor – away from the attic noise.

Living by what seemed like no rules, I drifted around in tattered, hand-me-down clothes, and my hair grew shaggy. Throughout my childhood, during the summer I often didn't wear shoes. As a teenager, in the summer, I usually wore only cut-off jeans, or those and a T-shirt. I rode around on an old bike. Mosquitos don't bite you and people don't bother you while you ride a bike.

Then summer was over and it was back to school. My grades went down.

Food became an issue. Either I ate too little or I ate too much – then got rid of it by vomiting. I got so skinny that I rolled my pants at the waist. Skinny was good, I thought. Girls liked the skinny boys. Not many seemed to notice me.

I heard a brother say to my mother that he thought he heard someone vomiting in the bathroom. She snickered and said it was probably me. That was the only time I had ever heard anyone mention it. I was surprised that she knew.

With concern in her voice, some girl asked me what happened to me. She said that I seemed like a totally different person, and like something was wrong with me. Trying to diffuse the situation, I kind of nervously laughed. She asked if my parents cared, or if anyone cared about me. I said, "No."

I got into several ridiculous school fights that appeared to explode out of nothing. I wasn't a tough kid. I considered myself weak. But sometimes I got a fierce rush and pounded on some poor kid for the slightest reason that even I didn't understand. I got it back a couple times, but nothing much. When the tougher kids saw me go after one boy and kick him around, I seemed to gain their favor. Not that I was their friend, but they didn't mess with me.

One night out with drunk and stoned kids, I made out with a girl who attended an all-girl Catholic school. My escapade was talked about in school, which I thought was cool. Her mother

heard about it. The girl was forbidden to see me. That bothered me. I was the type that moms didn't want near their daughters.

When another school held a dance social with a DJ, I went to it drunk and stoned. I passed out on the dance floor. When I came to, I was surrounded by kids looking down at me. I popped up and pretended I was okay. At another of those dances, I was so drunk that I began passing out while at the urinal in the bathroom. A strong boy quickly pushed me up against the wall and held me there until I regained my balance.

While walking home drunk and stoned one night in freezing weather, I opened the door of a car in a pub parking lot and urinated all over the inside of it.

For some reason, my mother went into a new level of randomly being nasty to me, telling me that I was ugly, that nobody could stand looking at me or hearing my voice, and that nobody will ever want me. She said those things in front of my sister, especially if my sister had a friend over. I had never heard her say anything like that to my brothers.

I felt lost and had no goals. There was nobody I looked up to. TV was especially opposite my reality, presenting smiley, groomed boys who I couldn't relate to: Donny Osmond, Shawn Cassidy, Michael Jackson, Andy Gibb, and Leif Garret. They were polished. My existence was rotted.

For money, I'd do stuff for neighbors: shoveling snow, raking leaves, cutting lawns, digging gardens, buying groceries, or going to the post office. Sometimes someone made a comment about how they didn't know how I could be from "that family." I considered it a compliment.

At home, I usually was the one who shoveled snow, raked leaves, and mowed the lawn – without being asked. It was one way to stay outside. Once after I shoveled the snow, my mother put two dollars on my lap as I was eating. She didn't say anything, nor did I.

If I wanted new clothes, I'd shoplift. Nobody ever asked me where I got the occasional new jeans, shirts, jackets, or shoes.

If I wanted to get drunk, I snagged a bottle from a liquor store, or hung with the kids who had weed or booze. Sometimes we'd get some random adult going into a liquor store to buy us rum, wine, or beer.

In the spring, a year after I had abandoned my paper route, and weeks from my fifteenth birthday, a friend that my mother had kept in contact with since high school came to visit from Michigan. Seeing me in the kitchen, the woman asked, “Are you ready?” I didn’t know what she meant. She asked, “Are your things packed?”

The woman was there to take me to live with her and her husband. I had no knowledge of the arrangement.

Turning to my mother, I gave her a questioning snarl. She said that it would be better for me to go live in Michigan, since I didn’t get along with my brothers, and I had no friends. Not that she knew how I spent my time.

I was untrusting of adults. I didn’t leave with the woman.

Later that day, my father saw me and asked my mother in a displeased, gruff tone, “What’s he still doing here?”

Not exactly a self-esteem builder.

After ninth grade, the kids who I knew in the other neighborhood moved away.

Other than for food, showering, and to wash and change clothes, I avoided the house, and was continually reminded why.

Sometimes a brother randomly punched, shoved, tripped, choked, or kicked me. Sometimes for stealing money that I knew nothing about. I did steal money a couple of times, the first time, nothing happened. The second time was after my oldest brother once again randomly attacked me when I was 16. He complained to our parents, not mentioning what he had done to me. They were surprised to find that he had saved nothing while working lousy jobs for years after high school and living for free in their house.

On warm nights, I often slept in places like the backyard, an abandoned car, on a neighbor’s back porch, or church steps. Other times, I rode my bike way past midnight before returning to the house to sleep.

At the house, few words were directed toward me. When I was referred to, it would be my mother in her usual displeased tone saying things like, “Is he showering again?” “He’s a clean

freak,” and, “He thinks he’s better than everyone.” When she said “he” or “him” in a disgusted tone, she meant me.

My mother sometimes expressed a concern that I was “talking to the neighbors.” During one of the few times that she instructed me as a teenager, she told me not to talk to the neighbors, and to walk past them if they tried to talk to me.

I continued being friendly with the neighbors, including some Polish kids. I heard my father once grumble to my mother, “Is he still hanging out with those Polacks?”

My father seemed to have no interest in me, not even glancing at me if I passed him. A controlled disconnect. But then, he wasn’t exactly having conversations with any of my brothers, either. At least he worked and kept a roof over our heads and (usually) gave my mother money for food and bills.

It was common for me to go without eating meals. Sometimes, I ate the berries and fruits growing in nearby woods that had once been an orchard. I also had continued to keep the small vegetable garden in the backyard, and ate raw vegetables from that. Sometimes neighbors gave me food.

High school began in tenth grade. There were thousands of students. I felt lost, connected to nobody, and none of the classes interested me. Sometimes, I went alone in the evenings to swim in the school’s indoor pool.

I made friends with a pale boy who sat in the back row in one class. He said that I was the only person who spoke to him. He had a shaved head. He said they did that to him in the hospital where he spent time because he had slit his wrists. He showed me the scars. He stopped coming to class. I don’t know what happened to him.

Two of my brothers attended the same school. We didn’t acknowledge each other. One had friends who sometimes walked past me and called me names, or sniveled – as if I were pathetic.

On my sixteenth birthday, I was doing laundry in the basement when the middle brother handed me a bag of marijuana and said “happy birthday.” I didn’t say anything. It was perplexing. It is the only gift that I had ever received from any of my brothers.

The brother a year older than me continued to rarely speak. He seemed to be invisible to my father, and was barely acknowledged by my mother. For years, he typically went for days or weeks without showering. I was used to our bedroom smelling strongly of body odor.

At night, I had heard my brother whispering in panicky, truly frightened tones. Sometimes, he was telling Satan to stay away from him. Nervously, I told my mother as she was in the kitchen, “He’s talking to Satan at night.” She only nodded, as if it were no surprise.

One morning I walked past him standing in the living room as he drizzled honey over his face. He didn’t seem to notice me. He appeared to be laughing, but with no sound. It was the only time that I had seen him laugh. I had never seen him look so happy.

Then, he was no longer in his bed at night.

I learned where my brother went when I overheard my mother say that he had been put in a hospital. He stayed for months. My mother went nearly every evening to visit him. Sometimes a brother went with her. Surprisingly, sometimes my dad went. I was never asked to go. Nothing was ever said to me about the situation.

He came home from the hospital for a few days during Christmas. Early one morning my mother found him walking barefoot in the neighbor’s backyard. His many hundreds of footprints in the snow formed circles, which resembled two labyrinths. He spent several more weeks in the hospital.

When he got out, a tutor stopped by most days to school him. The little breakfast room in back of the kitchen was set up as his classroom. Eventually, my brother stopped cooperating with that arrangement, and the teacher stopped showing up.

Another time it took me weeks to realize that one of the oldest brothers was gone. Nobody told me. I overheard my mother mention that he was in California.

During the summer after tenth grade, a girl on the next street sold me little black pills. I took them and did things like go biking and walking for many hours. Sometimes I took two or three pills at a time. I got skinnier.

When I couldn't get more pills, I spent three lousy days in bed. Drug withdrawal is not fun – especially when you don't know what is happening and there is nobody to ask or tell.

On the last of those three sunny, humid summer days, I panicked while sleeping, and ended up in my closet in a dream terror. I hit the window in there as if I needed to escape through it. The glass shattered, deeply slitting my palm. Still apparently asleep, I went back to bed.

I woke up with blood all over the place. I could see inside my palm. Not knowing what to do, I went downstairs to show my mother. She giggled dismissively, and said to my sister and her friend as if I were a pathetic fool, "He cut his hand." My sister's friend complained that a drop of my blood landed on her.

I went down the street to the friendly family. The mother said that I needed to get stitches.

I went to tell my mother that I needed stitches. She said we don't have money for that. She told me to put a bandage on it.

I went back to the neighbor's. They said that my father had insurance through his work, and if I get the insurance card they will take me to the hospital.

I went to my mother and told her that I needed the insurance card. She angrily grabbed her purse, removed the insurance card, and threw it at me.

The guy who lived next to the friendly family drove me to the hospital and waited while I got stitches. A week later, he drove me to have the stitches removed.

During the muggy, hot summer, the filth, dreariness, and depression in the mean house brewed. It became so infested with fleas from the filthy, sad dog and two or three cats that I couldn't walk in there without numerous fleas hopping on my legs. With nobody apparently concerned, I spread newspapers on the floors of the main rooms and upstairs bathroom and hallway, then I spread flea powder onto the newspapers. I washed the dog. After a couple of days, I gathered all of the trampled newspapers and tossed them. It ridded the house of fleas.

On the final day before Christmas in eleventh grade, I was taking a nap after school when the three most troubled brothers entered my bedroom. One punched me in the lower back,

picked me up, and tossed me onto the dresser. He and another hit me around as the brother a year older than me blocked the door. At one point, one had my face pressed against the window, threatening to push it through.

My back hurt so badly that I could barely walk. I had bruises on my face and various parts of my body.

One very cold early morning, with sixty-three dollars in my pocket, I grabbed some things, walked to the freeway, and stuck out my thumb. I wanted to see California beaches.

For two weeks, nobody hit me or spoke badly to me. The various drivers who picked me up hitchhiking talked with me for hours. It was the most I had conversed with people. Surprisingly, none of them asked much about my situation. I felt safe.

My back pain caused me to pass out at a gas station in Yuma. The college student giving me a ride helped me to my feet, got me back into the car, and drove to San Diego.

I saw the ocean and people in it surfing. It was like a dream.

Thinking that it was important to graduate high school, after a week I hitchhiked back to the mean house.

The only question I got about my trip was from my mother. Days after I returned, she saw me in the kitchen and sounded disgusted as she asked how I got to California. I stuck up my thumb as my answer. She looked at me as if I were lying and despicable. We were far beyond the point of not liking each other.

I heard her say to my siblings that my father would never talk to me again. Would I notice?

While I was watching TV, a brother who was often drunk and prone to hitting me came in the room and changed the channel, then appeared to fall to sleep on the sofa. When I went to change the channel, he popped up and attacked me. I got away from him and grabbed a knife to protect myself as I tried to get outside. He slammed me against the door, my cheek breaking the glass. I fell. He got on top of my back and repeatedly slammed my face into the floor. I got away.

As I sat with my left eye swelling shut and my right eyelid cut, my mother approached and said disgustedly, "Wait until your father hears about this. Using knives!" I said nothing.

I went to school with a swollen, black and purple eye and cheek. Teachers said nothing to me. Some girls encouraged me to go to the school counselor.

I got to the counselor's office and waited as she spoke on the phone to a friend about redecorating her house. I watched an hour pass. I wondered what I was supposed to say, and what could happen – if anything. While she was still on the phone, and without saying a word to me, she handed me a late slip so I could go to my next class. She waved me out of her office. I left the school, and went walking until after dark. The cold felt good on my bruised, swollen face.

On a chilly day, I sat in the kitchen while listening to music on the radio. My father walked in and mildly said only that after I graduate high school he didn't want to see my face, hear my voice, or know anything about me ever again. I said, "Okay."

I got a Saturday job at a deli downtown, taking the train to get there.

My art teacher got me a summer scholarship to the Cleveland Institute of Art. One day, a teacher there spoke to me when nobody else was around. He was simply asking me about my art project. I got panicky with the thought that he was going to do something bad. Even though he did nothing wrong, I never returned to classes.

A couple kids a year older than me asked if I wanted to go to Florida with them for a week. We went in one of their cars, slept in a tent at a campground, hung out at the beach, smoked weed, ate pizza, tried to meet girls, and barely afforded the gas to drive back to Cleveland.

In twelfth grade, school bored me. I dated Catholic girls, and worked nights and weekends at a burger joint under the cloud of not knowing what I would become.

The cynical schoolkids voted me "most likely to fail." When some kids told me, I pretended that I thought it was funny.

I went to prom with a pretty girl. We were drunk. We made out for several weeks. She drank a lot. Her family didn't like me.

Nobody in my family showed up for my graduation. I was drunk.

After the ceremony, nobody seemed to notice me as I wandered through the crowds of other students with their families.

I worked in factories, gave my mother rent money, bought a used car, spent time with a girl who wanted me to stay in Ohio, and I saved money to leave.

One day I heard my father say loudly to my mother, “What is he still doing living here?” I had never heard him say that about my brothers.

I left Cleveland in the spring. Nobody in the family said goodbye to me. I have never returned. I had no desire to see the people who assaulted, hit, shoved, kicked, choked, bloodied, bruised, ridiculed, and mocked me, but never hugged or complimented me.

I tried talking with my father on the phone from California. He asked who he was talking with. When I said my name, he grumbled something and hung up.

Eleven years later, when doctors told me I was dying from kidney failure, I called the house. I spoke with my father. He sounded much older and relaxed. He had stopped drinking and was retired from the steel mill. My sister with Down syndrome had died of heart/lung issues.

My dad wrote me a letter apologizing for hanging up on me more than ten years prior. He also apologized for not protecting me when I was young. He said that he knew people were not nice to me, and that I hadn’t been treated right since the day I was born. He said I had a good attitude.

He died soon after writing that letter.

My mother visited me when I was in my thirties. I was not in a good place physically, mentally, or financially. It was not easy being around her. I kept conversations light, and showed her around museums, views, and piers. We played Scrabble on a picnic table by the beach, which turned out to be her favorite thing to do during the trip. It was the last I saw her.

I didn’t know until I was in my thirties that the reason she went back into the burning house when I was four years old was because she thought I was in there. That was when she injured her brain, lungs, and vocal chords. That ended her ability to make money by singing at weddings and funerals, and it killed her joy. A brother whom I briefly tried to communicate with told me that. I finally understood why she said to me as a child that she wished I’d never been born, and that things would have been much better if I hadn’t been.

I wrote her once mentioning a little about the paper route situation. She didn't respond to that. We rarely spoke on the phone. We wrote and emailed.

She brought up the time when she was going to kill my sister, herself, and me. She said that she never felt her mind was right after the head injury, and she often wanted to commit suicide.

She said that she understood why I had never returned. She mentioned that the door on my childhood bedroom remained damaged from my brothers breaking it down to beat me up.

She encouraged me to tell my story. I said that if I did that, it would make her look badly. She said she didn't care since she would be dead.

While my mother was living in that house with three of her sons, the brother a year older than me died in his bedroom at age 45. I found this out from a short email that she had sent to me. I called her the next day. She wouldn't tell me much. She said that the police had asked a lot of questions. She said, "Watch them try to charge us with starving him to death." My breath left me, but I stayed calm to see how the conversation would go. I asked if he was skinny. She said he looked like one of those people from a concentration camp. He hadn't seen a doctor. I asked if he had been sick. She said he hurt his legs a couple weeks prior. I asked how. She said he fell on the steps. I asked which steps. She said that she didn't know. She wanted to talk about her car.

I hadn't spoken with my brother since I was nine, and hadn't seen him since I left Cleveland. He had never moved from that house, had briefly held a job at a laundromat, and spent his adult life going for walks. His autopsy lists his weight as 90 pounds.

I have only rarely communicated with a couple of the other brothers. The childhood was more grotesque than what this article covers. I haven't seen them in decades. They are like strangers – which is okay.

I'm friendly with my surviving sister.

Drugs and alcohol have not been problems in my adult life. Unfortunately, low self-esteem has done its dirty deeds. Low self-esteem can potentially be more damaging and debilitating than alcohol or drug addictions.

I've experienced the dreads of doubt, regret, self-repulsion, body dysmorphia, shattered trust, and dysfunctional relationships. I was leery of adults deep into my adulthood. I have lived far below my potential. I have had dysfunctional relationships with those also in need of help. I have connected with others living in the residues of damaged lives.

When I was thirty, I went to therapy. The first therapist fell asleep on the third visit. After several visits, the second therapist said, "I love this stuff, it's the kind of thing we usually only get to read about in textbooks." I stopped going to him.

In the past couple of years, I had been seeing a therapist who I found to be helpful. Because of financial issues, I stopped going to her.

Therapy helped me to consider the gravity of how deeply the criminal undermined my life. His actions were key to propelling an already struggling boy into disturbed behavior and a more troubled existence. It halted improvements in my life, further warped my ability to relate to people, helped to induce a distorted sense of self and sexuality, and left me with ongoing nightmares.

My nocturnal life has been a problem. When I had an apartment on the beach, I once awoke standing on the beach while looking up at the stars. That might not sound so bad. But many times, I've moved furniture, torn apart rooms, and damaged things in my sleep – and injured myself doing so, including cuts, bruises, breaking my nose, chipping my teeth, badly spraining my wrists, suffering various other injuries, and knocking myself out in falls. I remember the incidents as if they are some sort of dreams. But dreams don't result in injuries and stitches. Girlfriends have told me that I'm nearly impossible to sleep next to. Doctors have told me that I have post-traumatic stress disorder.

I understand the issues spoken of by victims of sexual assault. They feel damaged, used, and disposed of, have fractured relationships, and live troubled lives. Certain sounds, lighting, smells, and sights can be triggers. Experiencing bad treatment can send them on a downhill spin into dread, sadness, frustration, fatigue, and depression. Many homeless people and addicts have experienced abuse and sexual assault – especially homeless youth.

My assailant's actions were calculated, deviant, violent, heinous crimes committed against a 13-year-old working for pocket change, and helping to support his family. That man's choices

were paramount in carrying my childhood problems into adulthood.

Like other child newspaper carriers, I helped build the trade into a multi-billion-dollar industry. The newspaper company got its money. And I got violently molested and then stalked by a predatory pedophile. Then, when I abandoned my route, nobody asked me why.

I have lived in the residues of my memories. Random things remind me of unpleasant events. For instance, there were years that I avoided pool tables. The sound of coins falling on a floor could usher in a swirl of unpleasant memories. Those are some of the triggers that I have recognized.

A person in the condition I was in could take years to realize how to deal with what happened to them – if ever. Trying not to think of my childhood doesn't work, as news stories reporting other cases of what adults have done to boys continually remind me.

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*... and boys will be girls.
It's a mixed up, muddled up, shook up world,
... Lola, The Kinks, 1973*

GYNECOMASTIA: FEMALE BREASTS IN YOUNG MALES

Howard W. Siegel



ABSTRACT

Males sometimes experience the swelling and enlargement of an area around their nipples. The occurrence of gynecomastia is more common than generally known and affects boys' and young adolescent males' lives emotionally and socially as well as physically. Understanding the causes of "female breasts" in males is important in order to help boys receive the correct information about their condition and the proper treatment for it.

Keywords: gynecomastia, female breasts in boys, hormones, testosterone, estrogens, plastic surgery

THE SYNDROME

Gynecomastia, the medical term for the development of breast tissue in men, comes from the Greek words *gyneco* (female) and *mastia* (breast). It usually appears at three stages of life: neonates, adolescents, and the aged for reasons to be discussed. Typically, it is bilateral but unilateral cases occur. The incidence varies greatly according different studies. Suffice it to say that the condition is more common than one would first think. It appears in all races.

The breast is one of the human body's many apocrine glands. These glands have distinct ducts as opposed to the endocrine glands which drain directly into the blood stream. Apocrine glands have a tree-like structure of small sacs (leaves) and ducts (branches) which coalesce into a more central duct and then drain to the skin surface in the nipple. Breast glandular tissue is present in both men and women. In males a small amount of breast tissue is normally distributed in a layer below the skin and over the chest muscles (Fig. 1).

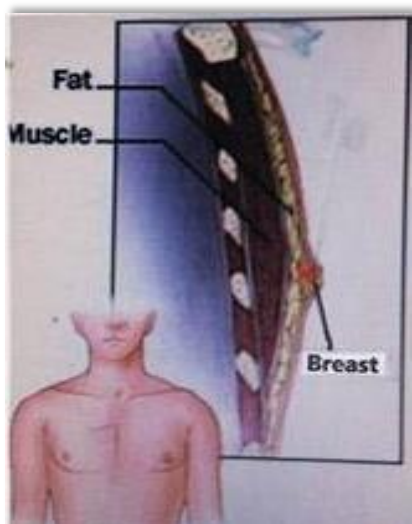


Figure 1. Normal male breast tissue can be seen in the very small region just under the nipple.

The duct structure is minimal and the gland is inactive. In some males, however, the breast increases in size, density and duct structure under hormonal influences at pubescence [Fig. 2].

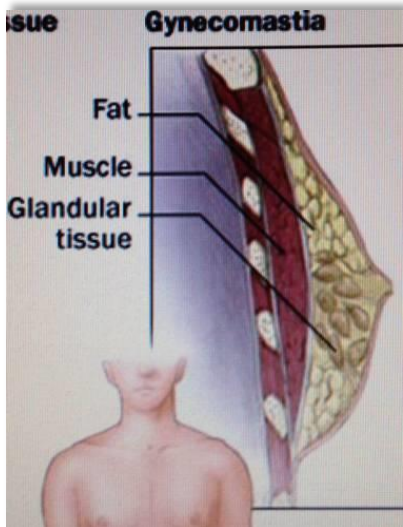


Figure 2. Enlarged male breast tissue in gynecomastia

Breast development is chiefly responsive to the sex hormones, estrogen and testosterone, which are present in both men and women albeit at different levels at different times in life. It is thought that the ratio of estrogen to testosterone is a major causative factor because as previously mentioned gynecomastia presents most frequently at three phases of life: in the neonatal period when there may be high maternal estrogen levels; in the peripubertal period when sexual hormones are in flux, and again at senescence when testosterone levels decrease due to reduced testicular function or anti-androgen medicines are used for the treatment of prostate cancer.

Many drugs, both licit and illicit may cause gynecomastia (see below). It also appears in some relatively rare hormonal secreting tumors, many genetic disorders, and often in conditions of ambiguous sexual organ structure. Awareness, identification and treatment of these underlying conditions is essential. In the light of the important focus on breast cancer today, it should be stressed that gynecomastia itself is not a malignancy, i.e., it has no propensity to metastasize (spread to distant sites) and given our current knowledge has no tendency to change from benign to malignant tissue. However, there have been rare cases of an occult primary malignant breast tumor occurring in association with gynecomastia.

Breast cancer in males is rather rare. However, as one wise physician said, “*Rare diseases are quite common in those who have them, so good doctors need to be aware of them*”. Therefore,

when there is an index of suspicion a careful work-up is indicated and techniques are available to confirm or rule out such tumors. As an example, assume a patient with a left unilateral firm nodular gynecomastia and a palpable lymph node can be felt in the left armpit. Here, a prudent surgeon would consider a possible primary malignant breast tumor which has spread and order appropriate imaging and biopsies to obtain a clear diagnosis in order to render proper treatment.

CAUSATIVE FACTORS

As has been mentioned, the most common presentation of gynecomastia occurs in peripubertal period likely due to sex hormone flux [Fig. 3].



Figure 3. Classic adolescent gynecomastia

This type often resolves spontaneously; however, it may take as long as two years to return to a fully normal male physique. Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict which cases will resolve. Perhaps the most prudent course is to delay and closely follow the patient for signs of early regression, which, if it continues at a satisfactory rate, may make surgery unnecessary.

Psychosocial issues are important considerations at a time of emerging sexuality. Other factors which mitigate toward early surgery include significant body image distortion as well as the degree and duration of deformity, pain, tumors, and co-morbid conditions.

Other causative factors include a wide range of drugs. The list is extensive and a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this article (Nuttall et al. 2015). However, it is useful to

mention at least some of the common drug classes which can cause gynecomastia. Not every drug in each category is involved. Interested readers can get more information or at reliable sites such as WebMD™¹. Chronic marijuana, heroin, and amphetamine use are associated with a high incidence of gynecomastia in adolescents and adult males. Estrogens, anti-androgens such as Flomax and Hytrin for prostate enlargement, anabolic steroids, some psychiatric medicines (e.g., Risperidal, phenothiazene tranquilizers, tricyclic antidepressants), many anticancer chemotherapeutic agents, some cardiac medications, and antifungals may be contributory. It is not well known to what extent cessation of any of these drugs will lead to regression, if at all. Liver damage from hepatitis, parasitic diseases, and chronic alcohol consumption, because a diseased liver can no longer breakdown estrogen, is also associated with gynaecomastia.

TREATMENT

Many methods have been devised for the treatment of gynaecomastia. Some work has been done and is ongoing using anti-estrogen drugs such as Tamoxifen and Raloxifene in an effort to find treatments which avoid surgical intervention. Tamoxifen has been used in a few small limited uncontrolled studies with some success. More recently some work with Danazol has been done. To date, these studies are preliminary and more work needs to be done to fully evaluate them. Hence they are only approved only for “*off-label*”² use by the Food and Drug Administration. Surgery remains the gold standard for treatment.

When advisable, a number of different operative techniques have been developed. These operations usually fall in the province of plastic surgeons. Not only is it important to minimize scarring, but careful attention to restoring the normal contours of the male body is paramount. One does not wish to operate for a deformity and leave another in its place.

¹ WebMD <https://www.webmd.com/>

² The “off-label” designation allows doctors to prescribe a medication for an approved study but the FDA has not yet approved its use for inclusion in its official list of indications.

In most techniques an incision is made along the outer edge of the areola. The skin with its subcutaneous fat layer is elevated above the breast mass. Breast tissue is freed at its edges and dissected free of its deep attachments, staying above the chest muscles. Depending on its size an attempt is made to remove the entire gynecomastia through the incision. This is not always possible when the breast mass is very large. In these cases the tissue may have to be segmented. This can be problematic, as it can lengthen the operative time and contribute to intra-operative and/or post-operative bleeding, an important complication to be considered and prevented. After the breast tissue has been removed, any bleeding is carefully controlled and the incision closed with very fine self-absorbing sutures. Occasionally, small drains are put in place and removed after 24 to 48 hours. A sterile compression dressing is applied. The patient is monitored in the recovery room. Post-operative instructions are given and patients are usually discharged the same day. This type of surgery can be done under local anesthesia with monitored twilight sedation. General anesthesia is also an option depending upon individual case indications and preferences. This surgery should be done in a hospital or in a certified office facility (Salisbury 2007).

With the advent of vacuum liposuction body contouring techniques, many surgeons do not use the periareolar incision initially developed and popularized by Webster (1946). Rather, they employ a closed vacuum suction cannula to remove the breast tissue. Here, only small puncture incisions are needed. This is a useful approach in some but not all cases. When the tissue is soft, chiefly glandular or fatty, it works well. But, when there is an abundance of thick, tough fibrous tissue in the breast it may be difficult to remove using suctioning and an open technique would seem preferable. The same problem exists in cases of firm nodular gynecomastia located just below the nipple. These often adhere to the skin and require passing the suction cannula very close to the skin and there is some risk of damaging the small blood vessels which nourish the skin. If this occurs, the nipple and surrounding areola tissue may die. This is a true surgical catastrophe and will require a complex reconstructive procedure in the future. Additionally, as this technique is not under direct visual control the extent of tissue removal must be judged by touch. Occult bleeding may occur. Removing too little breast tissue may leave the patient with the same problem, while removing too much can allow the skin to scar down to the muscle layer producing an obvious flat non-mobile area. Both situations produce sub-optimal cosmetic results. In spite of these possible problems, this technique has

validity and has yielded excellent results in the hands of experienced surgeons.

If the gynecomastia is massive there will be excess skin after removal which must be surgically excised and contoured. This may add some additional scarring. On the positive side, this situation is uncommon and most patients tolerate the scars better than their original problem.

Another operative method, the “pinwheel technique” developed by David T.W. Chiu has been described in the plastic surgery literature (Chiu and Siegel 1999). This technique combines a periareolar incision, repositioned in such a way as to minimize interference with the delicate sensory nerves to the nipple. Specialized pincer clamps are sequentially placed in a circumferential fashion around the periphery of the breast mass forming a pinwheel. By grasping the clamps breast tissue can be mobilized in any direction. There is excellent exposure of the margins between normal subcutaneous tissue and the breast can be dissected free. Bleeding is easily visualized and controlled. This technique also prevents removing too much or not enough breast tissue both of which are to be avoided as this can lead to asymmetries. Complete excisions of large gynecomastia’s as a single block have been possible using this technique. The tissue removed from each side can be compared by weight and volume. Finally, it allows the surgeon to place a cushioning fat pad to avoid sunken skin or scarring to the muscle which leads to poor body contour and is a tell-tale sign of previous surgery. This operation has been used since 1993 with very good results and minimal complications. [Fig.4].

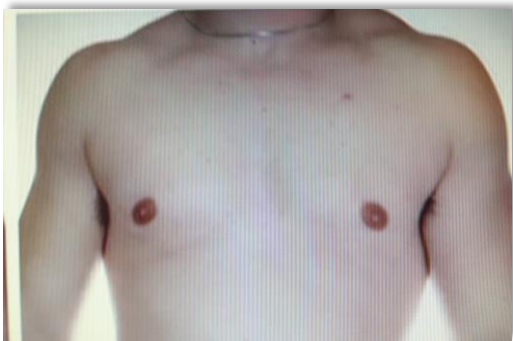


Figure 4. An excellent post-operative result following pinwheel surgical resection of the adolescent gynecomastia

COMPLICATIONS

All surgery and anesthesia have known risks and potential complications that include suboptimal results which occur even in the most competent hands. These are never trivial, especially if you are the patient. All skin wounds, surgical or otherwise heal by scarring. The incision at the perimeter of the areola should be minimal and hard to detect if you are not looking for it. Occasionally, however, it becomes thick and itchy. This can be treated or surgically revised.

Overall, the most common complication is bleeding under the skin. It is rare after the first two days, but very treatable when detected early while the blood is still liquid. It can then be drained or suctioned. If delayed the blood may form a clotted firm mass which is much more difficult to remove. Infections can occur, but are not common. Later cosmetic complications include lumpiness which usually resolves with pressure garments and massage. A more severe problem is a circular skin depression in the region of breast removal. This is a result of removing too much soft cushioning tissue over the breast gland. Consequently the thin skin becomes scarred down to the muscle layer and is immobile. When severe, this deformity has been colloquially termed a “donut hole deformity”. It is difficult to correct and usually requires revisional surgery.

Perhaps the most serious complication is necrosis (death) of the nipple and/or areola tissue due to disruption of blood vessel supply. Fortunately, this particular situation is rare. It requires major reconstructive surgery, which usually falls to plastic surgeons.

SUMMARY

Gynaecomastia is a distressing non-malignant condition affecting young males and has a number of different causes. It can resolve spontaneously, but when it does not, many surgical treatments are available. The importance of choosing a surgical procedure which best addresses the particular characteristics of each individual case as well as an experienced board certified surgeon is well advised.

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BIOLOGY AND RITUAL OUTRAGE

The Future of Gender Relations

Gerhard Amendt



ABSTRACT

The intense argument around the software developer James Damore and his then employer Google was not about the effectiveness of biology or society. For ideological reasons it was denied that differences between men and women in the professional world are increasingly due to independent decisions by women.

Keywords: gender, James Damore, Google, workforce relations, male studies

INTRODUCTION

At Google™ too, freedom of speech only exists if pre-set bans on speaking are obeyed. This is what we have learned from the affair about the software developer James Damore¹. In his essay about diversity and his employer's problematic approach to the issue, he stripped the gender debate of its reproachful moralising, instead letting facts speak for themselves. At the same time, while he was not dismissive of inequalities between men and women, he also wanted ensure the acceptance of differing opinions that are critical of the deconstructionist theorems of gender ideology. In place of dogma, he called for scientific arguments. But Damore was fired due to the dissemination of gender stereotypes.

ENLIGHTENED SAVIOR-ELITE

Damore's thought through and well founded paper on the absence of women in engineering and leading positions posits that at Google too the preferences and abilities of men and women are partly due to biological reasons. Simultaneously, these differences explain why we have no equal representation of men and women in technical professions and leading functions and probably will not have them in the future either.

The reference to the impact of biology triggered the anticipated ritual outrage. As a matter of fact, biology puts an end to the lofty illusions of boundless arrangement options. And it isn't even necessary to return to biological gender differences in order to explain dissimilarities. Therefore, Damore accepts other causes, too. Yet he refrains from explicitly deriving them from every-day habits. Meaning, what's amenable to women or not. Which decisions they are making spontaneously, which ones are made thoughtfully by themselves, together with their partner or in a disputing manner. This equally holds true for men.

Alone these decisions are contributing to the underrepresentation of women in technical and leading functions as well as other specific professions. That is because most women prefer

¹ James Damour. *Google's Ideological Echo Chamber: How bias clouds our thinking about diversity and inclusion*. See <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3914586/Googles-Ideological-Echo-Chamber.pdf>, accessed January 20, 2018.

professions with immediate personal contact. The immediate satisfaction is of higher importance to them than the delayed one. Recognition and satisfaction do exist in male professions as well, but often only after longer lean periods. Research should establish whether women really tend to prefer professions that require the application of female and motherly abilities, at times as a substitute for a family of their own.

Most roles in the field of psychology will shortly be filled 100 per cent by women. That's not much different for social professions such as social education, education, translation and others. In face of the unlimited choices, women want it like this and not differently. They are consciously choosing, they are exerting a "rational choice". The free choice of profession is their attested right; to deny it to them will therefore fail. Statistics about professions testify of women's independence of will and therefore gender ideologues reach the limits of possible manipulation. Women are mostly unmoved by the promises of left-leaning politics and gender theory. Scandinavia and the USA have invested considerable sums into the mobilisation of women into STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics). The successes are scanty, there's talk about failure. Why don't gender theoreticians want to acknowledge this? No matter whether it is founded on biology or behaviour derived from "rational choice"?

The question is explosive because it undermines the foundations of gender ideology. The latter has declared men as such as an obstacle for women's success. According to this, men have prevented women throughout history, by way of discrimination, from rising socially.

It is interesting that this theory only addresses desirable professions. The assertion of the man-made disparagement of all women is and remains the argumentative equity of gender politics. Meanwhile, the reproach has developed into an aggressive culture of shaming. It functions thus: A) The moral outrage about all men is made to appear justifiable. B) It deprives all women of the responsibility for their own lives and for societal conditions. C) All the blame and responsibility for eternal crimes is laid on men. D) Through shaming it silences most men.

The fact that male and female gender theoreticians don't object to the interlinked infantilising of women has one simple reason: They both consider themselves as chosen to be the *saviour-elite* for all women. For that reason we are confronted with their sectarian furore and religious intolerance towards dissidents and also the similarities with the ideology and repression under real socialism. Following the inherent gender logics, confident women are not

possible and therefore female subjectivity does not mean much to Judith Butler and her entourage. Butler has demonstrated this in an argument with psychoanalysts in New York in detail: female subjectivity, in other words historical impact, did not exist. Instead, women should – in analogy to the gender ideologues – adapt the amorousness with the myth of a female existence as a victim. The physician J. P. Möbius established in 1900 a similar diagnosis: the one of the “idiocy of woman”, declaring women unfit for the professional world. The absurd – as it is phrased in a less comprehensive manner – has a notable comeback between the lines of gender literature.

A DOGMA BECOMES SHAKY

James Darmore has aptly brought out the tedium of monocausal accusations of sexism. His dismissal initiated an overdue debate. The “echo chamber of gender-ideology” has not only started to totter in the house of Google but also in other enterprises, in administration and universities. Google has expelled Darmore as a dissident. *“Public shaming serves not only to display the virtue of those doing the shaming but also warns others that the same punishment awaits them if they don’t conform,”* writes Damore.

Men and women are different in many regards. If they have all the more often equal chances, the differences will by no means disappear but rather increase. Women will never be like men and men never like women. That may appear paradoxical at first and may contradict the politics of equality. Much points to the fact that the difference of the sexes could become more pronounced in equal measure as the freedom of a self-determined lifestyle increases.

This tendency begins already to emerge in societies that are wealthy and egalitarian. These give men and women the choice to live according to their own wishes and preferences and to also develop what we describe as “female” and “male” in a biological disposition. These are developments that would not be possible without freedom and wealth. The dialectics between/freedom and biology could further let drift apart the difference of personality between men and women.

It is about time to let go of the intellectually unsophisticated gender-political doctrine, according to which differences between men and women are to be attributed only to sexism, i. e. the mean-spirited and strategic exclusion of all women in the “patriarchy”. The interconnections

are far more complicated.

AUTHOR PROFILE



Gerhard Amendt, Ph.D., is an emeritus professor of the University of Bremen (Germany) and founder of the Institute for Gender & Generation Research. He has published numerous books and essays on the dialectic of gender relations and their conflict dynamics. Amendt is critical of any notion of gender with an inherent polarisation and instead proposes a dynamic model for reorientation within the gender arrangement. Amendt has worked in the past as a documentary filmmaker and had been for many years the chairman of the German Pro Familia, first clinic for abortions. Amendt is currently preparing a conference² aimed at professional helpers to familiarise them with the paradigm shift from polarisations to a dynamic understanding of violent conflicts in family and partnership.

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² *Handling Conflicts without violence. Effective Means of Prevention* at Goethe Universität in Frankfurt, Germany, from 13- 15 April 2018 <https://familyconflict.eu/en/>



DISTORTED BOYS

A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Jan H. Andersen



Distorted boys.

Secluded.

They are wrapped in a film from birth.

An ever growing pupa of fear.

Some try to break free, but they fail.

We would like to comfort them, but we can't.

The more we try, the thicker the wrapping becomes.

And neither of us can see anything but a distorted reality.













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

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