

WHO SAYS IT'S STILL A MAN'S WORLD? QUESTIONING THE MYTH OF
MALE PRIVILEGE IN AMERICA

by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Women in our American society today claim they must continue their fight for equality. Statistics are often cited regarding the wage gap and violent acts against women as proof that women are denied the same rights and protection as males. This paper argues that in many situations men are often denied the same rights and privileges that women have today. This discussion concentrates mainly on family law proceedings as well as criminal court cases and investigations in which men are not given equal consideration. Primacy for women's issues had its time and place, but now it appears as though the pendulum has swung too far and as a result our society is losing empathy for men.

The theory that in order to make up for supposed injustices to women we must sacrifice basic human rights of men is becoming increasingly evident in American society. In today's American culture we are spoon-fed one alarming statistic after another reminding us that women are at risk as we are more likely to be assaulted and mistreated due to men's supposedly oppressive nature. There is a tendency to blame men for any perceived slights upon women and because of advocacy research geared solely towards women's issues, we concentrate our efforts in preventing harm and injustice for women only. As a result, we make the mistake of ignoring or dismissing hardships that men face in America today. We do this because of the popular belief that men are the privileged sex in most aspects of our society, so when there is obvious bias against males in family law, criminal justice, and overall popular opinion, our American society shows a staggering lack of empathy for men.

In present day, women claim to continue in the struggle for equality in a patriarchal American society. The supposed evidence of this patriarchy are statistics that claim women are still suffering injustices in many areas; namely, equal salaries, holding high-ranking positions in government, marriage and family life, and violent acts against female victims. Advocacy research tends to highlight statistics that lead the public to believe that American women are still being held back and abused, so it is a common practice to omit positive statistics showing the incredible progress we have made. It is also common practice to cite statistics and automatically blame oppression instead of considering plausible reasons that could explain how the statistics came about (Sommers, 2004). For example, studies tell us that there is an undeniable wage gap (Population Reference Bureau, 2007), but we are remiss by refusing to discuss the possibility that the wage gap

exists because men are more likely to enroll in science and technology fields, while women, of their own choosing, lean more towards careers in the social sciences (Population Bureau, 2007).

Though feminists claim their research is done as a means to provide awareness and equality, what it truly does at this stage of the game is pin one gender against another. Advocacy research claims women are left wanting and men are the cause of our plights, but if research were to be conducted for all human rights and not solely geared towards the feminist agenda, we would find that men are not privileged and naturally oppressive. Studies would show there are situations where men certainly do not dominate despite this theory of male advantage.

The wage gap is only one of many examples that society deems as evidence of a patriarchal system. Statistics are often cited that convince the general public that “marriage is the vilest form of chattel slavery, men molest their kids when they’re not beating them like drums” (Reed, 2000). As a result, women’s rights advocates pressed for the organization and expansion of women’s shelters causing the populace to accept the widespread belief that men are more likely to perpetrate abuse within the family.

This paper argues that these assumptions about men exist because of advocacy research and there is no need to perpetuate primacy for women’s rights in our present-day American society. There is undoubtedly a need for a women’s rights movement in many third-world countries but not here in America. Women have made tremendous advances here in America and now advocacy research sponsored by women’s rights groups does nothing more but create a bias against males. It ignores the suffering that men face particularly in family law and criminal court proceedings when the victim is male.

This tendency for sweeping generalizations and disregarding men's equal rights must be addressed for the sake of our sons, brothers, and nephews who will grow up in an America in which males may become, if they are not already, the oppressed minority.

Women have come a long way from the era in which they were considered "property" of men. At one time, women did not have the right to vote, but now women dutifully take themselves to the voting booths all across America. Once, when women could not seek a formal education, modern women take their rightful seats in colleges all throughout the United States, where they can enroll in any number of women's studies classes or engineering and science classes if they choose. Less than a century ago children were also considered property of the father, and when a man could divorce his wife on a whim, those children were automatically placed in his care. At that time, society accepted that it was only he that could provide financially for them (ABA, 2004). Today, however, in custody disputes women are granted primary residential custody of their children, and the divorces that lead to the aforementioned custody battles, women may now initiate. Men are no longer the sole financial providers in the family as women here in this country may and do seek gainful employment in any profession they choose. Women are a far cry from where we once were thanks to a movement that sought equality for the right to vote, the ability to seek employment, the ability to continue to care for our children should a divorce come to fruition, and these are all undeniably great accomplishments. Feminism, when it strove for equality, was indeed an honorable and just notion, and it was only right that women should succeed in their fight for equality in all matters both public and private.

Arguments have been made that should one advocate for total equality when it points

out injustices towards men that the advocate must be anti-feminist (Sommers, 2004). Those arguments demonstrate a black-and-white mindset that benefits neither gender. There are feminists who oppose any sexism and oppression in any and all forms regardless of the sex of the victim. For years, “equity” feminists such as Christina Hoff Sommers and Camille Pagliana have persuasively argued many statistics that set out to demonize men, and they make a fair case that constant blaming only demonstrates a victim mentality and true feminists cannot support that mentality (Gillis & Munford, 2004). In order to achieve true equality in all aspects of American society, one must also bring attention to the statistical evidence of unfair treatment experienced by men. These injustices are evident especially in family court cases and criminal court cases where the victims are men.

To date there is very little research of the struggles that men face (Fox, 109) and there is little awareness that a men’s movement exists at all. Because primacy on women’s issues continues to strengthen in America, it is important to remind the public that too much emphasis on women’s rights only has resulted in a biased opinion against men in general and a tendency to sweep aside the statistics that highlight men’s issues.

To further my study, I conducted a survey consisting of 29 responses (16 women and 13 men between the ages of 21-45) and asked them to state their opinions on matters related to equal rights for both men and women. I acquired these participants mainly through social networking and directed a total of 40 individuals to the survey posted on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). I informed my participants that their answers to the survey would be posted on a blog and published as part of my final thesis. They were given the option to have their first name and last initial included or they could remain anonymous.

Interestingly, more women than men responded to the survey though that was not by design. Out of 40 requested participants, 20 men and 20 women, more men than women declined to take the survey. All of the participants' answers were very thought-provoking and insightful and will be discussed in more detail throughout this article.

Does America Still Show Evidence of a Patriarchal Society?

Of the 29 responses received in the survey conducted in preparation for this article, the majority argued that patriarchy is still very much evident in our society. 20 respondents said yes, 2 had no opinion, 3 responded with a yes and no and expounded on their answers, and another 3 said no. Those who felt that we do live in a patriarchal society mostly cited government and corporate positions being male dominated as evidence.

Jean L.

I think we live in a patriarchal society, but I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing. Men are usually less emotional than women, and therefore frequently make better leaders. Also, the fact that men still make more money than women for the most part naturally puts them as head of household. I don't think that it's as set in stone as it was, as there are many women that are rising to power in government, corporations, and in households. But I think it will be a long time, if ever, before we become a matriarchal society, without any gender hierarchy.

Laura L.

Of course we do. We live in a society run by wealthy white men who value white men over white women and white people over all others. Look at the racial and gender makeup of Congress and corporations.

Felicia M.

Yes, men in general still hold the majority of higher ranking government positions and typically most individuals would not be comfortable with a woman as the president.

The fact that many men and women claim patriarchy exists because of men holding the

majority of high ranking government officials is interesting. It's true that while many women are climbing the political ladder, most of the officials are male. However, one would be hard pressed in current times to find evidence that our male leaders create laws to benefit males only. With women making up slightly more of the voting population, (US Census, 2010) it makes sense that male politicians would cater to women's wishes in an effort to secure a re-election, and that is, in fact, exactly what is taking place. Just one example is Joe Biden, current Vice President and sponsor of the Violence Against Women's Act. Biden was best known for this legislation that focused mainly on women's rights and safety before he became Vice President. Another example and latest development is what is referred to as Obama Care, a 907 page document that outlines special considerations for women's health issues but does not do the same for men's health (healthreform.gov).

While it is true that men make up the majority of political officials, there is little evidence to suggest that typical middle-class men benefit from this supposed male advantage. The average American man who wishes to marry and have children doesn't appear to be privileged at all. In fact, if one were to weigh the pros and cons of men marrying today in America, they would find that in this aspect, patriarchy is no more. Men have much to lose should they choose to marry and father children, and the statistics alone might be enough to convince many American men to opt out of marriage and fatherhood. Many of these statistics show that men are at a serious disadvantage concerning their status in the family and most feminism advocates simply ignore the bias shown in favor of females in American family law today.

Women Dominate in Family Law Proceedings

Current statistics show that women are 66% more likely to initiate divorce proceedings (Brinig, Allen, 2000) and if there are children born of that marriage, women are named primary residential parent in 85% of the cases (United States Census Bureau, 2009).

According to their website, the American Bar Association (ABA) claims,

The law of child custody has swung like a pendulum. From the early history of our country until the mid-1800s, fathers were favored for custody in the event of a divorce...by the mid-1800s most states switched to a strong preference for the mother...referred to as the Tender Years Doctrine or Maternal Presumption...the automatic preference for mothers continued until the 1960s or 1980s depending on the state. Then principles of equality took over, at least in the law books... (Chapter 12).

The ABA continues to say that at this time the law began to favor “joint custody” for both parents so that mothers and fathers would have a share in the major decision-making concerning the child but there are judges who persist in awarding primary custody to mothers due to their personal preference. This was no doubt a step in the right direction, however in joint custody decisions one parent is named the primary residential parent while the other parent was granted visitation. The term “visitation” in itself was poorly chosen as it assumes one parent will be reduced to a visitor in the child’s life, and in many cases that is exactly what occurs for those, mainly men, who are named the “non-custodial parent.” The ABA’s Family Legal Guide states,

For parents who do not like the terms “visitation” or “custody,” it is possible to draft a custody and visitation order which leaves out those terms and just describes the times at which the child will be with each parent. Instead of “visitation” and “custody” some states use terms such as “parenting time” or “access to the child” (81).

Changing the language in the court orders is considered by many a positive change but it seems like a small win compared to the fact that mothers will still have considerably more parenting time than non-custodial fathers. I asked my participants to state their opinions as to why more mothers than fathers are granted primary residential parenting rights.

Mark D.

I think this is simply a result of society and how it has placed "prejudices" on men.

Kathy R.

85% of women care about the kids and the men care about themselves.

Karen K.

Leaving the child(ren) with the mother would be a safer environment [sic]. She is the caregiver so will do her best for their well being.

Michael H.

Women believe that they are better parents and it's a belief of society as a whole.

Jen E.

I think this is good because men can be selfish and would prefer to be on their own, therefore, they would not have the capability to raise their children in a loving household. Although, there are some selfish women, I think there are more selfish men.

In these examples, one has to notice that both men feel that the rulings are based on societal expectations but neither state that they necessarily agree. The women seem to automatically assume that the mother cares more or will provide a safer environment.

There is an interesting statistic that claims only ten percent of all custody battles are decided by a judge (Stamps, 2002). The rest of the outcomes are agreed upon by the parties before ever stepping foot in the courtroom. This may lead many to believe that fathers willingly give up primary residential rights to their children and simply place the burden of responsibility on the mother. Yet, instead of assuming that fathers do not want their children to live with them, one might consider other circumstances that explain this

tendency. Two of the survey respondents commented on this subject:

Barry J.

When my parents divorced, I automatically went with my mother. My father conceded to this, but I feel like he could have done just as good of a job. For him, it seemed like it was just expected that my mom would get full custody. Almost like society demands mothers to always get custody. Keep in mind that most television shows and movies perpetuate this observation, as well.

Jamie A:

I would assume most dads do not want to disturb the family dynamic and most moms are "in charge" of raising the kids". Dads will be there for their kids, but mom is the one who makes schedules up of when what activity happens and who will be there to say, "pick them up", "drop them off", make sure they are fed and so forth...

Several factors may lead a father who wishes to have 50/50 parenting time or primary custody with his child(ren) to settle for less time. Aside from the aforementioned societal expectations of mother's automatically getting custody, many men today feel that family law judges continue to favor the mother in custody battles. This could be why men sign a mediation agreement for the standard time granted. "A standard visitation schedule is every other weekend (Friday evening through Sunday; a weeknight (for dinner)...(ABA Family Legal Guide, 81).

Should the divorcing parents have a child younger than the age of six, the father's suspicion that a judge would rule in favor of the mother could be correct. A 2002 study performed by researchers at the University of New Orleans claimed the following results:

In general, it seems that judges are unwilling to explicitly specify whether mothers or fathers are the preferred parents, with the exception of the situation when children are under the age of six, in which case they believe that the mother is the preferred parent...Overall on each of the five items the means indicated a preference towards mothers over fathers

which are consistent with the theory of maternal preference (Stamps, 7).

Fathers may also decide upon the minimum time allowance in an effort to save on lawyers' fees as the cost of a trial may result in thousands of dollars. This extraordinary expense truly does not benefit any party, except the lawyers, and funds must be saved as it is expected of men to provide child support payments to the mother without fail.

Another very plausible reason is men are expected to work and in the case of divorce, they may even be expected to take on more hours to ensure the children are provided for in their primary home as well as the father's new dwelling. General consensus is that a father is expected to bear the burden of financial support to his children and one survey participant commented on fathers' roles as a provider:

Dom C.

My own experience is that our children get nurtured by their mother. Father is provider.

The Deadbeat Dad Myth

Another surprising statistic is one provided by the United States Census Bureau, "In 2009, custodial mothers received \$19.5 billion of the \$31.7 billion in support that was due (61.5 percent), and custodial fathers received \$1.9 billion of the \$3.5 billion that was due (54.3 percent) (pg. 11). The phrase "deadbeat dad" is thrown about quite frequently when, according to these findings, mothers have the higher percentage of defaulting on their child support payments, and one must note that the total number of payments due overall is significantly smaller for mothers than that of fathers. Yet, when speeches are to be made about parents stepping up to the plate and fulfilling their duties to their children, fathers alone are reminded of their responsibilities. On Father's Day, June 27, 2008,

President Obama addressed American men not just with a message of respect for all of the dads who provide both economically and emotionally for their children, but that address ended with a stern reminder that the deadbeat dad scenario is all too commonplace.

Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded today that family is the most important. And we are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation. They are teachers and coaches. They are mentors and role models. They are examples of success and the men who constantly push us toward it. But if we are honest with ourselves, we'll admit that what too many fathers also are is missing - missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it (cnn.com, July 27, 2008).

It is simply unheard of that the president, or any other kind of high ranking political figure or celebrity, would dare to chastise mothers during any kind of public address, and especially on Mother's Day. Yet, again, for some reason, men are expected to take this kind of criticism and bear it with no complaints and no grievances. Perhaps it is because all the public knows is child support is not paid in full according to the stats. That well-known statistic on its own is proof of the deadbeat dad.

The statistic that women are less likely to pay their court-ordered child support is very rarely cited and therefore less likely to be known. Yet, there are studies that reiterate the fact that the wage gap exists and this is the main reason why women are do not honor their financial obligation to their children, "custodial mothers were less likely than custodial fathers to have been employed either full- or part-time in 2009," (US Census, 7). Justifiable reasoning, whether it be positive or negative, for the delinquent mother can explain away matters but for fathers with the inability to pay, society and the law are less likely to consider reasons whatsoever. Despite the arguments made that child support

obligations are set entirely too high (Ellis, 2006) fathers are more likely to be sent to prison for the failure to pay the arrears. The American Bar Association's Family Legal Guide claims:

Under the Child Support Recovery Act of 1992, it is a federal crime to willfully fail to pay child support to a child who resides in another state if the past-due amount has been unpaid for over one year or exceeds \$5000. Punishments under the federal law can include fines and imprisonment. States also have criminal penalties for failure to pay child support (86).

It stands to reason that because fathers are responsible to pay child support in more than sixty-five percent of the cases (US Census) fathers are more likely to end up in prison for failure to pay. In fact, in 2002 the US Bureau of Justice reported that 10,000 men who were imprisoned were there due to failure to pay their court-ordered child support payments. Debtor's prison was supposedly abolished for some time and the practice of imprisoning an individual without due process is unconstitutional, yet this practice continues, along with revoking a driver's license and garnishing income tax returns if needed to pay arrears (ABA Family Legal Guide, 67).

Father's Have No Say Regarding How Child Support is Spent

The courts do all that they can to ensure that children are financially provided for by their non-custodial parents but not all states ensure that the money is being used strictly to benefit the children. It was not until recently that measures were put in place to account for the money being sent to the custodial parents. Only the following eleven states have written statutes into their existing family law guidelines that include the possibility of requiring the custodial parent to account for the funds provided depending on the reasons why such accounting is being requested: Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Washington

(Morgan, 2002). Given that most custody orders are written with parents having joint custody, it seems fair that the non-custodial parent, again, usually the father, would have the right to request an account of how his funds are being utilized to provide for the child. An additional factor to examine that the courts would be very slow to consider is the amount of money the custodial parent contributes herself to the welfare of her child(ren). For example, it is completely possible that a custodial mother could choose a dwelling that is well out of her range of affordability and she uses the child support to cover the high rent/mortgage. As a result, when the time comes for school books, clothes, and haircuts, funds are lacking and the mother may feel she has a right to petition the court to increase the father's child support obligation. Without a discovery process to account for how the custodial mother manages her finances, this situation can occur, and the courts, short on time and administrative power to investigate, might be inclined to simply increase the father's obligation without just cause.

Visitation and Parenting Time Agreements

Another aspect of family law that seems to be lacking in fairness to fathers is the matter of ensuring parenting time/visitation agreements are adhered to without interruption and that the custodial parent truly does their best to encourage a healthy relationship with the non-custodial parent. It is unfortunate that the courts do not monitor this portion of the agreement with the same diligence that they use to track receipt of child support payments. There appears to be a concentrated emphasis on father's being financially there for their children but there is less importance in making sure that a father's time with his children, post divorce, is also given a good amount of consideration. When contempt charges are brought to family law judges for non-

compliance regarding parenting time, women seem to have the upper hand in this situation because statistics show that mothers who are noncompliant concerning parenting time with the non-custodial father merely get a “slap on the wrist.” Other efforts such as trying to prove parental alienation have fallen on deaf ears as well as that ‘syndrome’ was determined a junk science (Bow, Gold, Flens, 2009). Mounting evidence must be given to the court that a mother is willfully withholding the child from the father for even the possibility of the court considering a motion to change primary custody from the mother to the father. Though all the academic studies and reported findings insist that the best interest of the child is best served by encouraging a good, healthy relationship with both parents, (Levy, 57) judges simply do not seem to put as much effort concerning a father’s parenting time. Mothers are mainly in control when it comes to the emotional relationship that a man has with his child and mothers are entirely in control on who provides economically for the child. This fact becomes all the more evident when it comes to establishing paternity.

Paternity Fraud

Issues concerning paternity are also heavily slanted in the mother’s favor and are yet more examples as to how men surely do not dominate in matters concerning the family despite popular opinion. First, women are able to list any name they choose as father on a birth certificate. This action alone is the biggest factor concerning recognizing who is the legal father of a child. The concern with this practice is that it is completely dependent on the mother’s integrity and honesty. For instance, if an unmarried woman became pregnant and more than one male was the possible father, the mother has the ability to name either man as the father on the birth certificate. The choice is hers entirely and the

factors that she may use to determine who the father will be might not be based on biology. A mother has the opportunity to name the man that she feels would provide better either financially or emotionally and the onus is on the man to prove otherwise. Men have only a very short window to contest a paternity claim. Some states allow only six months to question paternity within the courts while other states allow up to two years to eighteen (Family Legal Guide, 2004) . When a couple is married however, most states automatically presume that the child born within the marriage is the husband's (Hirczy, 1994). In these situations when the couple is married, many states do not allow the submission of DNA testing at all as the courts find that this is detrimental to the family structure (Hirczy, 1994).

The needs of the child in paternity cases greatly outweigh the rights of the father as it is a societal judgment that once a man creates a bond with a child that he believed to be his biological offspring, there is no good moral reason to seek a paternity test and prove the possibility of fraud.

A recent article written by two scholars Draper & Ives at the University of Birmingham, UK claim there are several different meanings of the word father. There could be a "moral," "causal," and "material" father. They argue that the moral father is the most important of all as that is the man who has most likely formed a bond with the child in question. Once a moral father has taken on the responsibility of raising a child, Draper & Ives believe there should be no opportunity for the father to fight paternity. This piece never addresses the immoral conduct of the mother who allowed a man to believe he fathered a child when in actuality he did not. This article concentrates solely on all the reasons why a moral father should continue his relationship with the child he raised, yet

the authors do not consider that often times it is the mother who may decide to dissolve the marriage, then decide to reunite the child with his or her biological father, and all the while, the moral father now becomes no more than a visitor to the child should the parents divorce.

These hypothetical scenarios are indeed as complicated as they sound but one fact remains clear; in a paternity fraud case it is the mother who has committed the fraud and yet she is the only who decides who raises the child and who supports it financially.

Where the wife is entitled to deny the husband's paternity, the father's ability to preserve the legal and emotional parent-child relationship is governed by her action. His legal ability to retain his status as a parent depends on whether or not the wife engaged in extra-marital acts resulting in conception and birth of a child into the extant marriage, and whether the wife decides to exercise her legal right to deny the husband's paternity. In other words, the presumed father is at the mercy of the mother. He has to rely on her conduct to preserve his relationship with the child, and has no remedy to prevent the termination of his legal relationship with the child (Hirczy, 93).

Furthermore, because child support will be paid directly to her, the mother is financially rewarded for her actions and suffers absolutely no punishment from the court system whatsoever (Hirczy, 2009). In these cases willful fraud is very hard to prove and the court acts supposedly with the "best interest of the child" in mind.

The wife is the only party to benefit from her right to rebut her husband's paternity. The presumption allows her to have her husband support children conceived in adultery (or misrepresented as his as a reason for relationship between the husband and such children, discretion that can be used as leverage in divorce negotiations. In fact, wives enjoy more rights by "virtue" of adultery or marriage fraud, than by virtue of giving birth to their husbands' children. It cannot be presumed that divorcing mothers will act in disinterested fashion on behalf of the child, since the breakdown of the marital relationship in itself implies conflict and animosity between husband and wife. Consequently it can be expected that wives will use their right to attack the marital presumption to further their own interests, to gain sole custody, spite their (ex)spouses, and possibly seek child support from the biological father (Hirczy, 96).

Some researchers feel that the main reason the courts allow for a non-biological father to pay is in an effort to prevent the state from having to give assistance to the mother. So judges insist that the “established” father continue with his financial obligation to the child though he may have proven through DNA testing that he is not the biological father (Hirczy, 2009). There have even been cases where a father has been mandated to pay child support for a child born out of wedlock to a woman the man has never met (canadiancrc.com, 2002).

So while it is commonly believed that a patriarchal society still reigns supreme here in the United States, one can begin to question the validity of that belief by considering the fact that men are less likely to initiate divorce, are only named primary residential parents to their children in fifteen percent of the cases, are aware of the stigma of the deadbeat dad, even though it is less likely that a mother would pay child support if ordered at all, and duped or unaware fathers have a very small window of opportunity to prevent paying child support for a child that is not his biologically. These are all common practices during family law procedures and judgments. We will find that there are also societal beliefs against men that lend to unjust practices and bias in the criminal court system as well.

The Stigma of the Naturally Aggressive Male Preying on Women and Children

When the shooting at Columbine High School occurred in Colorado, the Center for Men at McLean Hospital’s director, William Pollack claimed that “the boys in Littleton are the tip of the iceberg. And the iceberg is all boys” (Sommers, 13). It is ingrained into our culture that if violence is perpetrated, than the perpetrators are most likely males and for the most part, as statistics will show, this is true. Almost all of the survey responders

agreed that violent behavior and aggression occurs more frequently with males:

Mary A:

I feel that the physical "makeup" of males (testosterone, androgen) [is] an obvious reason for aggressiveness in males. Males are taught to be competitive and are programmed to dominate. Women are not. Statistically, men perpetrate more violence in relationships and women are more likely to "smooth things over" for the sake of the family.

Patty V.

Just as young girls are molded into nurturers, I think aggression in boys is encouraged. Young male children are given toy guns and encouraged to play rough, competitive sports. They are taught that weakness is bad. A boy who has feminine traits is treated far more harshly than a girl who has masculine traits. Boys are discouraged from crying and expressing their feelings. As a result, I think many boys turn their feelings inward and the expression of their feelings finds its way out in violent expression. This results in more physical violence emanating from males. I do think there is a biological component for aggression in males as well, but I think it is encouraged by the way males are socialized.

Jen E.

Men, they act quickly with their feelings and put little thought into their actions.

JDS.

Yes, men have more violent tendencies. The husband is more likely to perpetrate abuse in a family as he is considered the dominate part of a family. He is the breadwinner and stronger physically in most cases. When men lose control of his manhood (loses his job) anger sets in. Abuse makes him feel more manly and in control.

Kate.

I do think that men have more violent tendencies. I do not know why this is, but from my own personal experience I do think that men are more violent.

While we know for the most part that males make up the larger number of violent offenders, we assume that the majority of victims are females when they are, in fact, males. Due to all the concentrated efforts to highlight female victims of violence our

society feels justified in its belief that women are more likely to be at risk, hence the reason for the aforementioned VAWA Act. Another tendency due to primacy research is to ignore studies that include statistics on women who perpetrate abuse. Our society feels that an issue such as male victimization is not prominent enough to warrant further study. Instead, more and more research is conducted to remind women of the harm that men can do to us. This could be the reason why men and women dismiss physical cruelty, including mutilation, when the victim is male.

The Catherine Kieu Becker case is only one example of the extreme cruelty and violent behavior that women are capable of displaying. On July 15, 2011, a popular CBS daytime television show titled *The Talk* discussed the news story of Becker who was charged with drugging her husband, tying him to the bed, and waiting until he awoke to sever the man's penis off with a knife. She then proceeded to throw the appendage into the garbage disposal before calling 911 and reporting the crime herself. When she called the authorities, Becker, 48, "told the responding officers that he 'deserved it'"(NBC Los Angeles News).

This case of horrid mutilation was introduced with a warning to the male viewers of the Talk. The host began with, "Men out there, brace yourselves, we are about to go there..." She showed a photo of the perpetrator and described the crime. The audience members along with the other hosts immediately after hearing the details and the supposed reasoning for the mutilation (the husband had asked for a divorce) responded surprisingly by laughing. One woman in the audience was heard saying, "That'll teach him" and the host found it amusing enough to repeat it so it could be broadcast (CBS, 2011).

Sharon Osbourne, one of the hosts of the show, offered her opinion that she felt the crime was “quite fabulous” only after making a gesture with her hands mimicking what the severed body part would have looked like while being destroyed in the garbage disposal. Later, Mrs. Osbourne claimed that she felt that the wife’s action could be judged only after more details were given. Osbourne felt certain details were required such as why the husband wanted a divorce, and what he did to his wife that could have made him deserve such punishment. In fairness, another host asked, with what seemed like sincerity, if any reason really did matter in this case, but for the most part, all who participated in the taping of this particular show sounded as if the mood on the set was, despite the severity and gruesome nature of the crime, quite light-hearted.

Many viewers and men rights activists were appalled by the hosts’ behavior as well as the audience members’. Several websites and forums discussed the matter and asked critically important questions: 1. Does the fact that a husband wants to divorce his wife warrant justification for a wife to mutilate her husband? 2. What if the genders were reversed? If this were a case in which a man tortured his wife by mutilating her body in any way, would anyone be laughing? The answer is the same to both of these questions as it is a definite and resounding *no* and one would hope that all would agree. Yet, when harm or injustice is done to men it simply is not taken seriously. In some instances, the female offender is exalted

Another similar case made headlines all across America when Lorena Bobbitt cut her husband’s penis off with a knife the morning after she claimed her husband raped her. Americans, especially women, took a great interest in the case and later, “for dismembering John Wayne, Lorena Bobbitt has become a reluctant ‘national folk

heroine” (Deem, 1996).

Feminist artists have taken up Lorena Bobbitt...to examine women’s acts of violence against men. The collection, *Critical Condition: Women on the Edge of Violence*, examines, through both visual and written artistic endeavors, primarily the phenomena of women killers. These murderers were not “overly-aggressive women” or raging feminists, but ordinary women fighting for survival against both the men closest to them and a social world that fosters and tolerates violence against women (Deem, 519).

This claim that we are a society that “fosters and tolerate violence against women” is a bold statement to make. Yet, statements like these when they are constantly repeated convince a population that women are heroes when they brutally injure or kill a man. True, studies claim that men are more likely to perpetuate violence, but statistics show that male-on-male violence is much higher than that of male-on-female violence. So one many ask why the need for primacy for female victims when discussing violence awareness and prevention.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Violent Crime Trends by Gender of Victim:

1. An estimated 4.3 million violent crimes...were committed in 2009.
2. Violence against males, blacks, and persons age 24 or younger occurred at higher or somewhat higher rates than the rates of violence against females
3. About half (49%) of all violent crimes...were reported to the police in 2009. Violent crimes against females (53%) were more likely to be reported than violent crimes against males (45%).

However, for some reason, male-on-male violence is not a popular concern with our society.

The Definition of Rape and Rape Statistics

One statistic in particular that is cited regularly is nearly one out of every two women

will be raped or sexually assaulted and perhaps more than once in her lifetime (Gilbert, 1992). Some have deemed our society a 'rape culture' (Sommers, 1994). Rape statistics have been argued and because the crime is so heinous there tends to be severe backlash for questioning whether or not the figures and results provided to the public are accurate.

Discussions of the data on rape inevitably seem callous. How can one quantify the sense of deep violation behind the statistics? Terms like incidence and prevalence are statistical jargon; once we use them, we necessarily abstract ourselves from the misery. Yet it remains clear that to arrive at intelligent policies and strategies to decrease the occurrence of rape, we have no alternative but to gather and analyze data, and to do so does not make us callous. Truth is no enemy to compassion, and falsehood is no friend (Sommers, 209).

Rape is a very real issue and all efforts should be made to bring about awareness and prevention. The most frequently cited study was performed by Mary Koss in 1985 and several scholars researched her methods and questions. One review, in particular, was performed by Neil Gilbert for *Society* and he claims:

There are several reasons for serious researchers to question the magnitude of sexual assault conveyed by the Ms. findings. To begin with, a notable discrepancy exists between Koss's definition of rape and the way most women she labeled as victims interpreted their experiences. When asked directly, 73 percent of the students whom Koss categorized as victims of rape did not think that they had been raped. This discrepancy is underscored by the subsequent behavior of a high proportion of identified victims, forty-two percent of whom had sex again with the man who supposedly raped them. Of those categorized as victims of attempted rape, 35 percent later had sex with their purported offender (pg.4).

While Koss's findings provide a questionable statistic, nonetheless it is the statistic that many are aware of and repeat constantly. Popular opinion is that one in four women will be raped or sexually assaulted during their lifetime, so there are support groups and demonstrations at colleges for women such as "Walk A Mile In Her Shoes" but what are the statistics for men?

Concerning the issue of male rape, studies and reviews of findings are very difficult to locate. Currently the Bureau of Justice Statistics states the definition of rape as

“Forcible rape—The carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Rapes by force and attempts or assaults to rape, regardless of the age of the victim, are included. Statutory offenses (no force used- victim under age of consent) are excluded (Definition and Terms).

The definition provided by the Bureau alone is evidence that our society deems this solely a women’s issue. Yet, Ohio State University conducted one of the very few studies concerning male victims of rape:

The rape of adult males has been so largely neglected and collectively denied that its invisibility has given rise to the notion that it just does not occur in our society. While some acknowledgement of male rape in prisons and jails has emerged in recent years, most people do not consider the sexual violation of adult males to be within the realm of possibility in non-institutional communities (Ohio State University, 1).

The study goes on to tell us that five to ten percent of male rapes are reported and they suspect that 90-95% of cases are never reported at all (2). The study even dares to assert that females can indeed rape a man and more studies should be conducted so society can have a better understanding for male victims (1).

Female Offenders

Organizations such as NOW and advocates for the VAWA act are very rarely going to initiate discussions regarding the statistics that show that women are just as likely to display violent tendencies towards their partners (Straus, 2005).

The initially released results reported that men physically assaulted their female partners at three times the rate at which women engaged in such behavior. This was interpreted as evidence showing that domestic violence is a male crime. There were, however, several problems with this widely disseminated conclusion. First, although the rate of perpetration by men was three times greater, an unbiased interpretation would have also noted that women committed a third of domestic assaults—one-third of offenders cannot be ignored. Second, buried in publications released a year later was a table giving the past-year prevalence rates, as contrasted with the lifetime prevalence rates released earlier.

Past-year prevalence rates are the most usual way of reporting crime statistics, and they are considered to be more accurate because they do not depend on recall of events long past. When past-year prevalence rates are used, women committed 39 percent of the partner assaults. Third, the NVAW survey was presented to respondents as a study of crime and personal safety, and therefore respondents were implicitly encouraged to restrict their reports to "real crimes," thus excluding most instances of assault by a partner, and especially "harmless" assaults by women. Thus, a study that, in my opinion, was carried out to refute the idea of gender symmetry in partner violence instead gave strong support to the conclusion that women physically attack partners at about the same rate as do men (pg. 60).

Other similar studies showing that females are just as likely to harm their partners do not make it into mainstream media. Consequently, popular opinion is men are more likely to perpetrate abuse in the family, but some of my survey respondents did mention the possibility of women perpetrating emotional and verbal abuse.

Michael H.

Yes. Men are more physical and abuse does seem to originate from them. With that being said, women can be more emotional and verbally expressive, which can lead to verbal abuse.

Felicia M.

I do feel that men show a tendency towards violence towards women due to cultural views and acceptance of this.

Poppy C.

Statistically men are more often violent in a relationship (as per 7 patriarchal stereotypes of behavior hurt men as well as women) however in terms of abuse.... I think women can be capable of huge psychological & emotional abuse often borne out of frustration.

Surprising statistics exist concerning child abuse as well. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families reporting on perpetrators of child maltreatment cases claim in 2001, 59.3 percent of the perpetrators were women

and 40.7 percent were men (Chpt.4) and even more recently in 2010, the statistic has not changed dramatically. 53.6 percent were women and 45.2 percent were men. Overall, women are more likely to cause harm to their children. Statistics such as these, ones that do not strengthen the theory that men make up the majority of violent offenders never make it to mainstream media unless they are cited by opposing groups such as men's rights activists.

Though these statistics are proven and publicly stated, somehow they are overlooked, outright ignored, or blatantly denied despite the studies. Those statistics quoted earlier, made popular by women's advocacy groups are the ones that shape our society's opinions.

When one is presented with studies that claim women are just as likely to perpetrate violence against a man, and women are more likely than males to hurt their children, one might ask if this is the case then how do we explain why more males are serving prison terms than women? Similarly to family court judges showing partiality to mothers, studies show that criminal court judges do show preferential treatment to female offenders (Anderson, Spohn, 2009). If women are sentenced then the length of prison time is shorter than those given to males.

Conclusion

Questioning why women fare much better in family court is not the same as saying we should return to the days of male dominance over women and children; it merely discusses the possibility of all parties, mothers, fathers, and children, benefiting the most by advocating for an even split in custody cases where children will spend an equal amount of time with both parents. Discussing men as victims of violent crime is not the

same as saying women are not raped and victimized; what it does is show that these crimes happen to both men and women and all efforts should be made to represent all victims of any heinous crimes.

We must begin to acknowledge that men do not 'rule the roost' in every situation and it is unfair to assume that men are favored in every aspect of society. Because of this belief that men have had it too good, the pendulum has swung too far resulting in domination over men while misguided feminists, who continually cite statistics that only strengthen their cause, demonize males and proclaim them to be violent, sex-obsessed, or privileged. Advocacy research for the women's movement is causing society to view men in a negative light and as a result we lose empathy. While devout feminists insist that men had it coming to them, we must realize that oppressing one group as a means of payback for alleged past injustices is not how a society thrives and continues to progress.

Despite popular opinion it is most certainly not a man's world. In America, men are deemed the more violent and the less trustworthy of the sexes and for that they are often separated from their children, assumed guilty when they are innocent, and laughed at when they suffer physical harm. Men's issues have been overlooked but improving awareness can be achieved if we insist on research that does not omit data due to sex. We should insist on rehabilitation and support groups that do not discriminate due to gender. Change can occur if 50/50 splits in parenting time become the default in most cases. Eliminating child support in those cases as both parents should and can be expected to take care of their children while those children are in that parent's care should be the norm. We should hold all individuals accountable for fraud, even paternity fraud if that is the case. Crimes should have similar sentencing rules regardless of gender. Medical

advances such as developing cures for cancers and improved birth control methods should be made with both men and women in mind. Finally, all scholarly research should be conducted with the sole aim to guide us as to how we may prevent harm to human beings as a whole and never segregate or prioritize by gender. This will create that balance that is needed and with that balance, hope that the inequality between the sexes will finally come to an end.

Sexism is alive and well in this day and age, and there is no doubt some men still believe women are not their equals. However many women are guilty of the same. We should no longer concentrate solely on how women were oppressed as it does nothing but perpetuate a victim mentality. As with any other group who has suffered from the tyranny of a stronger sect, speaking only of the atrocities does not result in progress, but discussion as to how we may repair and find balance benefits all of society.

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