

Why Does Manhood Matter?

By Glenn Stanton – Focus on the Family, 2017

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The unattached and immature adult male is every society's first social problem. This statement might strike us as overly dramatic, but it's true. Think about it. Basic male energy and sexuality are not naturally refined. They must be harnessed and channeled in directions that are beneficial and safe to the larger society. Gentlemen don't just happen. This is not so with women's sexuality. George Gilder states in his important book, *Men and Marriage*, "Unlike a woman, a man has no civilized role or agenda inscribed in his body." He must find, learn and activate his social role. Every society since the beginning of humanity has found this to be quite true. Consider humanity right out of the gate: the brothers Cain and Abel.¹ When male energy and sexuality are harnessed, they become an essential and powerful social good. When they are not, we get violence, sloth, victimization, and impoverished women and children, among other social ills.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that seems increasingly convinced that there are not really male and female people, just people. Any recognition of distinct qualities of male and female are not only denied, but often forcefully condemned as sexist or just unenlightened. But this fashionable view is itself terribly unenlightened and precisely contrary to our most sophisticated science. Male and female are the only two models of humanity, and they both mean something unique and essential. Not only is there an objective human reality that is universally recognized as healthy and authentic manhood, but human civilization cannot exist without it. This report explains why.

First, it's helpful to look at what anthropologists have long observed about manhood around the world, across diverse cultures. Many anthropologists report that social manhood is fully achieved when a young male accomplishes three things:

1. Procreation: Marries and impregnates a wife.
2. Provision: Learns to deliver well for her and their children's needs.
3. Protection: He keeps his family from the dangers of nature and other tribes.²

In our society today, these are not the only ways a boy can become a man, but they are common to organic human experience. Manhood is not as likely achieved without them. A single man should be willing and desirous of doing these even if he cannot find a wife. It is the very rare single-man-by-choice, save for being compelled by his obedience to a deep religious faith, who is sexually virtuous and self-sacrificing, giving his time, money, and energy to others. It is only marriage or commitment to a particular faith practice that creates these virtues in a man. Marriage is the most common, universal and effective way. It's why the phrase "Behind every great man is a good woman" is not controversial in the least to most men or women. We know it's more often true than not.

What Manhood Does for the Man

This is obvious, but deserves saying: Manhood makes a man. It's an achievement. It turns a carefree boy with little sense of commitment to anything or anyone into a man who is eager to take on responsibilities for others. He becomes someone who produces, sacrifices, and commits himself to the good of others. He becomes dependable and protective. He develops manners and self-control. Others become better people by knowing and being influenced by him. He becomes someone who helps strengthen rather than drain the community. He produces more than he consumes and takes responsibility for his actions.

Research FACTS

George Akerlof, a Nobel Prize-winning economist from UC Berkeley and Georgetown University, explains in a famous essay, [Men Without Children](#), that "men settle down when they get married and if they fail to get married, they fail to settle down. There is no question that there is a very large difference in behavior between single and married men." Married men live longer, earn more, are more likely to be employed, miss fewer work days,

and stay employed longer. They are less violent and sexually manipulative, contribute and volunteer more in the community, and spend more time with their children. It's not for sentimentality that insurance companies charge married men markedly lower premiums for car, health and life insurance than their unmarried peers. They are consistently safer and more responsible.

Research from multiple leading universities captured in the journal article "[The Puzzle of Monogamous Marriage](#)" carefully explains how the greater prevalence of monogamous marriage in a culture reduces its overall male crime rate against women and in general by remarkable measures, from 35 to 50 percent. Its reforming impact is primarily upon men by linking one man to one woman.

What Manhood Does for Women

Put bluntly, manhood provides for and protects women. In fact, manhood itself is most often demonstrated in some relation to women. A man's reaction and attention to her, whether she be his mother, sister, beloved, neighbor or stranger, is most often his greatest proving ground. It is the extremely rare society – if one exists – that esteems a man who abuses or ignores the well-being and safety of women.

Therefore, an authentic man is one with whom any woman feels safe, someone she can depend upon. Women typically have a keen sixth sense for determining whether one is such a man. A true man respects her femininity as something powerful and precious. He esteems her as one who can uniquely bring forth and nurture new life. He calls out other males who fail to do so. His behavior here elevates her individual rating in the community as one who should be honored. A good man helps his wife and daughters develop and exercise their God-given talents and passions. He helps them become better people. Women thrive in the presence of good men.

Research FACTS

In their respective works, James Q. Wilson in [The Marriage Problem](#), and Linda Waite in [The Case for Marriage](#), illustrate how married women and

mothers are dramatically less likely to live in poverty and suffer less physical, sexual or verbal violence. They are less often required to work outside the home to meet basic household bills and receive more help with household chores. It is a research-based truism that a married woman is more influential in her relationship than a cohabiting or dating girlfriend.

What Manhood Does for Children

Regarding children, a good man always takes responsibility for the children he helps bring into the world. One cannot be a good man and fail at this. Like caring for women, this is a "one strike" rule for men in most cultures. It is nearly impossible for a man to compensate for this weakness with strengths in other areas. For example, it would be preposterous to say, "Sure, he neglects his kids, but have you seen him hunt a moose?"

A true man works hard to provide for, protect, educate, and integrate his children into the life of the community. Thus, a man provides a wider range of experiences for his children: greater opportunities for education, travel, a healthier and diverse diet, future employment, personal safety, and enriching community relationships.

Manhood also teaches both boys and girls, by word and example, what good, healthy masculinity looks like as a father, husband, and member of society. This gives boys a role model to aspire to and girls a criterion by which to judge potential suitors.

Research FACTS

Noted family sociologists David Popenoe, in *Life Without Father*, and Sara McLanahan, in *Growing Up with a Single Parent*, convincingly demonstrate with a mountain of diverse and irrefutable research that engaged fathers substantially increase every important measure of well-being for their children. Men stepping up to their duty as fathers produce children who do markedly better in all measures of educational attainment, overall physical and emotional health, developing empathy for others, self-confidence, and protection against criminal, violent and sexual behavior. They are also much

more likely to never live in poverty. The well-being of every child, and thus society's future, depends as much on the presence and involvement of that child's father as it does on the mother. By some measures, more so.

What Manhood Does for Society

At the most basic level, healthy manhood determines the health and future of every community. Yes, women give birth to and raise the future of any society – a Herculean task for sure - but the community cannot sustain itself without the good man. While the woman demands society consist of a peaceable and cultured environment, it is the good man who actually builds and maintains it. He reduces violence and creates the resources and structures necessary for civilization. The following have been previously stated, but are worth repeating.

First, extreme violence is largely a male phenomenon. Women are not likely to start gang fights or wars. Males do these things. A major line between bad and good men is their relationship to violence. The good man knows its proper place and will only resort to violence to protect against bad people. This means the community is safer because good men control and demonstrate their male strength in pro-social ways.

Second, good men produce. A man brings more to the table than he takes away in food and other natural and financial resources, often beyond that which is needed only for his family. Therefore, the community benefits from such a man, and the more good men they have, the wealthier and more stable the community becomes. Boys who are learning how to produce for themselves and others are coming into manhood. Boys who do not learn and demonstrate simply cannot become authentic men. They are adult boys.

Research FACTS

No society has discovered any means of compensating for the absence of or poor quality of its men. Crime, violence, educational and economic prosperity, community infrastructure, prison population, sexual exploitation, status of women and children, out-of-wedlock child-bearing, and overall

safety of a neighborhood or nation – nearly every good or bad thing that can arise among a group of people – are directly driven by the quality of the manhood of its male citizens. An overwhelming [body](#) of [research](#) demonstrates this time and again, bringing us to an indisputable conclusion.

Conclusion

The human male, for good or bad, is a terribly consequential character. Like fire, if not tamed and corralled, he can cause devastation. If controlled and channeled in the right directions, with the right expectations assigned him, he can do remarkable and essential good. A human culture cannot long survive and thrive without good men. This shaping, channeling and reforming require great expectation, energy and intentionality by nearly all parts of society. It must be the first effort of any people group.

1. We must go all the way to [Judges 4:21](#) to find the only women in Scripture who killed someone. [↪](#)
2. David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*, (Yale University Press, 1999), p. 48; Margaret Mead, *Male & Female: A Study of Sexes in a Changing World*, (William Morrow & Company, 1968), p. 189; Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex, Culture and Myth*, (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 63