

Manhood Is Not Natural

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Manhood is not natural, but it is essential. No society can endure if it does not harness male sexual energy and teach men to take care of the children they father and the women who bear them.

Few would disagree that manhood is in crisis today. Men are falling behind women in important measures of personal and social well-being. This is well-documented in books such as Hannah Rosin's bluntly titled *The End of Men*. In deeply consequential ways, they have become the weaker sex. Some women celebrate this. Most, however, are deeply concerned, especially since the weakness of the men in their lives makes it increasingly difficult for them to become wives and mothers. The equation is really quite simple: if boys don't become good, dependable men, they can't become good, dependable husbands and fathers.

The majority of women want marriage and babies, and usually quite dearly. They don't need to be talked into them and never really have. Ask women today their biggest obstacle to achieving this goal. It's not a shortage of males, but of responsible adult males. Men. If they cannot find marriageable men, they often go with other choices. It's no coincidence that the two fastest growing family formation trends are unmarried cohabitation and out-of-wedlock childbearing among twenty- and thirty-something women.

The causes of these trends can be found in the underappreciated and often-denied distinct natures of manhood and womanhood. It's rooted in a strange but essential anthropological truth: *Womanhood is natural. Manhood is not.*

Womanhood Is Natural

Womanhood is a natural phenomenon. A female's biological make-up usually ensures that she will grow into a healthy woman. Leave her to

herself, and it's likely to happen. It's why the phrases "woman up," "be a woman," or "make a woman out of her" don't exist.

As her body matures, internally and externally, it sends her and those around her an unmistakable message about what she is and what she's becoming. It moves her inexorably in that direction with a force as great as it is mysterious. Few girls miss these cues. It's not just her body that is changing; she is becoming a different person. Her family and community treat her differently because of it. A father shudders at it, as it forever changes the way he interacts with "his little girl." He must bow to and honor it. I'm the father of four girls. I know it all too well.

Women must be taught, with great political and ideological pressure, to ignore their womanhood and abandon their children, for doing so is contrary to all nature.

Manhood Is Taught

The opposite is true of manhood. As George Gilder explains pointedly in [*Men and Marriage*](#), "Unlike a woman, a man has no civilized role or agenda inscribed in his body." The boy has no onboard GPS directing him toward his future. His transition into manhood can only come into being with significant, intentional work by other men. As a behavior, manhood must be *learned*, proven, and earned. As an identity, manhood must be *bestowed* by a boy's father and the community's larger fraternity of men. His mother can only affirm it. She cannot bequeath it.

Maleness just happens, but manhood does not. The first is a biological event, while the second is a developed character quality. When manhood is not formed and cultivated, males fail to mature, resulting in the "perpetual adolescence" or "failure to launch" that plagues our culture. When so many men play beer pong into their forties, live in their parents' basements, play videogames twelve hours a day, and encounter women only in the form of pixels on a porn site, it seems clear that we have a manhood problem.

The human male nature doesn't naturally go in the direction civilization requires; it requires the direction of other men. Unlike the female nature, which tends to exist reliably among the median scale of human behavior,

the male nature is oriented more toward extremes, for good or bad. As Camille Paglia has commented, there are no female Mozarts for the same reason there are no female Jack the Rippers. *Lord of the Flies* is not a novel about the dark side of human nature. It's about the nature of raw, yet-to-be-formed maleness.

Manhood must be crafted and refined in order to orient males in pro-social, communitarian directions. In fact, this is the first work of every civilization. [Anthropologists](#) tell us that the original and most fundamental social problem of any culture is the unattached male. Left to his own, he is not inclined to play well with others. He is not disposed to make himself, or anyone around him, a better person. He is not likely to become other-focused. Either fiercely competitive or indolent, he is more likely to become a social contagion. He will either seek to define himself in the community by power, false confidence, and selfish conquest, or shrink away toward inactivity and reticence.

Margaret Mead was one of the early anthropologists to study the social nature of manhood, which she presents in [Male and Female](#). From her cross-cultural observations, she explains a central anthropological truth: manhood must be *taught*.

In every known human society, everywhere in the world, the young male *learns* that when he grows up, one of the things which he must do in order to be a full member of society is to provide food [and protection] for some female and her young. ... every known human society rests firmly on the *learned* nurturing behavior of men.

Thus, across virtually all cultures, manhood has largely consisted of three essential qualities: procreation, provision, and protection. If the boy doesn't learn these things, then he is not likely to become a good, selfless, serving man. Shame and derision from the community will become his lot. As Mead explains, "this behavior, *being learned*, is fragile and can disappear rather easily under social conditions that no longer teach it effectively." Such domestic education can disappear within a generation.

Tragically, manhood is becoming extinct because we are not teaching it.

Male vs. Female Sexuality

Additionally, the most elemental destabilizing force in every culture is not merely unrefined male energy, but his unchecked sexual energy. Full stop. In its fundamental essence, it is deeply anti-social. It has no civilizing, pro-social nature in itself. To become so, it must be acted upon by other forces. By contrast, female sexual energy tends to be inherently pro-social. Female sexuality has the power to create human civilization by moderating the behavior of men, but it can only do this when there is social appreciation for these differences in male and female sexuality, coupled with the strong social mores they require.

Of course, the dark side of unmoderated male energy goes beyond sexuality. A female's naturally domesticating influence on overall male energy and behavior is easily demonstrated. Who pays substantially lower auto, health, and life insurance premiums, married men or their single peers? Service to the god of equality requires there be no difference here. But we all know better. The wedding-ring-clad man enjoys the financial benefit, and not because insurance companies have a sentimental heart for weddings. Every insurance company knows married men direct their male wanderlust and energy toward safety and responsibility. Single men, not so much.

The unique feminine power over male sexuality is curiously demonstrated in the nature of a relatively new social development: the long-term homosexual relationship. Many—perhaps most—gay men in such relationships develop and agree to live by self-determined rules allowing for [extra-curricular activities](#). This is beyond dispute. It is not controversial among gay men to acknowledge that they understand fidelity and monogamy as two different things. “Fidelity” means being faithful to the mutually agreed upon rules of a relationship, whatever those might be. “Monogamy” means only having sex with one person. For gay males, these are two different things: hence the “[monogamish](#)” relationship. Such agreements are nearly nonexistent among women, including in lesbian relationships.

This phenomenon is well-established in the academic literature. It’s even common enough to have gained a clinical name: “extra-dyadic sex.” One widely respected [investigation](#) from Rutgers University, whose author is a

gay man who publishes widely on these topics, found that only a third of long-term gay couples had monogamous agreements and truly honored them with no outside sex. In the openly non-monogamous relationships, he reports the frequency of sex outside the relationship from its inception ranged from two to a whopping 2,500 separate incidents. The median was forty-two extracurricular hook-ups across the relationship's history. Frequency in the previous year ranged from zero to 350 occurrences of outside sex, with a median of eight incidences. Among those who pledged true monogamy, the range was from one to sixty-three "slip-ups" with a median of five.

Without the essential tempering influence of female sexuality, male sexuality is a whole other animal, and not a pretty one.

Sex Makes Babies

This is a problem, because *sex makes babies*. Every society must give greater attention to this fact than it does to the need for food, shelter, and protection from outside attack. These and all other vital needs are either enhanced or crippled by what a community expects of the relationship between a man, the children he sires, and the woman he does so with. If it doesn't get this right, few other good things the community needs are likely. Of course, the male's attitude and approach toward his procreative act is drastically different from hers. His *necessary* participation in the act is solely orgasmic, lasting seconds, and is all pleasure. He is not naturally connected to the potential of that act. The mother's connection, however, is profound, starting shortly after conception and intensifying daily. It costs her dearly in energy, sleep, and overall comfort, starting long before the pain of childbirth. She is inescapably invested. He is not.

In Gilder's words, "The crucial process of civilization is the subordination of male sexual impulses and biology to the long-term horizons of female sexuality . . . It is male behavior that must be changed to create a civilized order." *The crucial process of civilization*. No society can develop or endure without succeeding at this.

Manhood, Marriage, and Fatherhood

The woman is not only the stabilizing force of male sexuality; she is the authorizing factor in fatherhood. If a particular man desires to be involved in the life of his child, it is the child's mother, and she alone, who

determines whether and how he may do this. His paternity is established by her fiat. She typically desires to make this relationship public by making the father of the child her husband. Anthropologists have called this the legitimization of the child.

Consider the etymology of two key words: *matrimony* and *husband*. The first comes from the Latin, *matrimonium*, meaning literally “[obligation to the mother](#).” Since it is virtually impossible for a mother and her child to thrive by themselves, marriage arose in nearly every civilization throughout time as a way to have the impregnating male take responsibility for his child and the mother. The surrounding community expects the male to fulfill his obligation so it doesn’t have to. It is why marriage is a deeply public act and no society has found a way to function without it.

Thus, the good man steps up, and in doing so, becomes a *husband*. This stems from the [Old Norse](#), meaning literally house dweller: *hús* (“house”) *bóndi* (“dweller” and “bonded serf” or “slave”). The husband settles down and confines himself to a particular household, serving and providing resources for its inhabitants. He becomes a whole other kind of man, taking full responsible for his sexuality and his part in the coming generation.

What Happens When Manhood Isn’t Taught?

It is then certainly no coincidence that the term “feminization of poverty” was coined as the sexual revolution initiated the great divorce between sex, babies, and marriage. Feminist scholar Diane Pearce, who introduced this term in an [important essay](#), lamented that while large opportunities were opening for women due to greater equality, “Poverty is rapidly becoming a female problem.” She blamed the significant increase in the number of female-headed families.

Ghettos are not created by city planners, crime by the police, or failing health by big pharma. Each of these social ills arises by inattention to the sexual behaviors of males. If he doesn’t have to marry before having sex (and potentially fathering children), the average man won’t. So he hasn’t. The feminization of poverty and the accompanying declines in [female happiness](#) and childhood well-being are the tragic results.

In [Manhood in the Making](#), anthropologist David Gilmore provides an essential insight:

One of my findings here is that manhood ideologies always include a criterion of selfless generosity, even to the point of sacrifice. Again and again, we find that “real” men are those who give more than they take away; they serve others. Real men are generous, even to a fault. Non-men are often those stigmatized as stingy and unproductive.

A good man is the fountain, not the drain. The formation of such men is the first task of human civilization, and its largest threat when ignored.

The question is, how can we recover manhood today? We must find the answer. For it is not only the fate of men that is at stake, but the fate of our women, children, and society as well.

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