

[http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis\\_e\\_elliott/2008/03/how\\_now\\_make\\_men\\_out\\_of\\_boys.html](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2008/03/how_now_make_men_out_of_boys.html)

## How, Now, Make Men Out of Boys?

When Ashley Montagu came out with his “The Natural Superiority of Women” (1952), I asked him whether it would have been more scientific to write on “The Mutual Superiority of the Sexes.” We had just had a debate in which he opposed my “God is love” to his “Love is god.” He was a feisty character, with a preference for inflammatory utterance. In the debate, I objected that he left God out; in the conversation, I objected that he left men out. They are related: the natural superiority/inferiority of the sexes is a divine design.

Photo your average man alongside your average woman and what do you see? Only the natural superiority of the male, in *size and musculature* – a superiority decreasingly functional to the protection and control of women and children as societies become more complex. / Since the female is naturally superior in *the perception and manipulation of human relations*, female power increases with the complexity of society. / As the imbalance increases, desperate males increase their battering of females. / As the muscular battering is visible (though female internal wounding of males is not), social and legal sanctions against it increase. / As society sees men as at least potential batters, male dignity declines in the public mind.

*Cumulative effects?* Combined with third-wave feminism (its just demands and its radfem overdemand), the increasing feminization of society marginalized males and denigrated the masculine. Girls were growing up in a psychosocial world that fit them to become women, the same world in which boys were *not* being encouraged to become men. (Beginning in the late ‘70s, a spate of book analyzed the social costs of this angelizing of the feminine and demonizing of the masculine.)

“How to Help Boys Become Men” was the way I put it in a national colloquy I initiated. Speakers addressed both the old “sexism” (male dominance in society’s customs/structures/laws, to the disadvantage of girls and women) and the new “reverse sexism” (female dominance within social structures, to the disadvantage of boys [some boys, in growing up, never having a male leader or model] and men).

As women developed their interpersonal powers in a society no longer suppressing their gifts, they became more demanding of marriage, and family became a more fragile institution. Motherhood? Optional, problematic.

The colloquy “How to Help Boys Become Men” addressed a sickness of society, its *failure to balance* the helping of boys to become men and of girls to become women - the ideal finding massive and complex support in the Bible. A woman stormed out of the colloquy, and after that session I asked her whether she wanted her daughters to marry men. “Of course I do,” said she. “But,” I replied, “if we can’t now help boys become men, your daughters will have to choose between remaining unmarried and marrying *oldboys*.” In silence, she stared at me. Then she smiled and said, “Thank you. I get it.”

From an un-obvious angle, I have been addressing the current “On Faith” question: “Which ‘ism’ is more entrenched in America, sexism or racism? Which should religion address?” The question how to help boys become men transcends problems we easily clump together as these two “isms.” My biblical-Christian premise is that God intends the removal of impedances to fairness, justice, love; Christian hospitality cancels the category of “stranger”: xenophilia replaces xenophobia, as in Jesus’ parable that we are all “neighbors.” My way of describing the God-given structure within which we are to try to sweat this all out is “the natural superiority/inferiority of the sexes and races.”

While politicians spin the responsibility for whatever mess is being addressed and who should do what about it, we all know that each of us has both personal and societal responsibilities. Within each race, as well as in the general society, *how can we best help boys become men and girls become women?*

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | MARCH 29, 2008; 6:34 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:        

PREVIOUS: [POPE BENEDICT'S POOR CHOICE](#) | NEXT: [THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL ON RACISM, SEXISM](#)

Please report offensive comments below.

The term gender refers to the male and female of a given species that reproduces sexually.

People do not act according to that biological role in about 2 to 5% of cases. But that doesn't change the fact of their gender. Gender is established science not opinion.

POSTED BY: GARYD | APRIL 1, 2008 1:35 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I'll note, by the way, that Native American societies that said there are six genders \*did so\* because they were all about being orderly and definitive in their way. They \*needed\* six in order to make sure there were enough social roles that everyone could actually live with.

They didn't exactly live lives where five percent unemployment and general social stick-fights as a means of ensuring surplus produce for the monarchy to sponge off was necessary for economic growth, never mind subsistence.

People who claim 'There are two absolute genders, and the definitions are tight' usually have an interest in trying to enforce a conformity that ain't exactly natural to the species.

Or you could kneel at the altars of homophobic priests, or vote for, say, homophobic senators who like to tap their feet in certain places usually intended for other purposes...

Who's in the gutter?

Guess it depends on your definitions, doesn't it?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | MARCH 31, 2008 6:05 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Heh.

'Excuses?' You're the one making \*excuses\* for a view of humanity that doesn't \*function,\* Gary.

The fact that you seem to need to believe that the honest and caring and committed lives of so many others just \*have\* to be all about the hedonistic 'needs of the moment' you seem to be fixated on does not change reality.

However many 'genders' you choose to define, well, if you want to say that's all there is, it's on you to find some definitions that actually \*fit\* nearly everyone instead demanding only the boxes are real and trying to herd everyone \*into\* them. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | MARCH 31, 2008 5:00 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Excuses, excuses. There are two genders. All the rest of it is behavior, some good and some bad. Good in my view doesn't involve risking others health and happiness to please one's own need of the moment.

POSTED BY: GARYD | MARCH 31, 2008 1:28 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

christians society madrasas.

back in the late 60ty, a black activist by the name of elija muhamed announced himself to be the messenger of god to the black man in america.

elija who born and raised in the (christian)america ,seeing the christians whites and blacks bowing and kneeling at the christian church in front of a white european skin image who they call the son of god the lord the savior of mankind????????,elija never regret it .

if the dalia lama decided to be the messenger of god to china towen ,what is the diference ?

on the scale of christianity the white mankind jesus is the son of god while the rest are false gods and heathens!!!!!!!!!!!!!!.

delusionism and colorism share the same underwear and they sleep in the same rotten bed.

there is only one god.every mankind is equal under god means every mankind is the creation of god and under the superiority of god not the superiotity of mankind .

POSTED BY: MO | MARCH 31, 2008 6:18 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

If he \*is\* it'd be a heck of a time to find out, wouldn't it?

Maybe he could settle for letting others be. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | MARCH 30, 2008 9:11 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

" Garyd:

Men is a stereo type Now??? There are six genders???"

Two, three, six, three hundred, ...Frankly I think it makes no difference if your ideals have two separate ones that don't actually even \*cover\* half the population.

It's a problem of your monotheistic and authoritarian tendencies, actually, Gary. You have a singular absolutist ideal for each sex, neither of which even \*begins to cover\* even most gender-unambiguous people, and freak out when both of these ideals only fit a minority either men \*or\* women.

When you guys talk about how men and women 'should' be, you're really talking about one kind or another of 'alpha male' and 'breeding female' ...and relegate probably more than half the world to the status of 'failures and deviants'

...instead of realizing we're socially-complex creatures who tend to diversify, organize, and specialize within groups.

Then wonder why real life just won't be crammed into those shapes. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | MARCH 30, 2008 3:45 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

Well, actually. These are important ideas the Reverend is touching on... of course, as always, he wants to resort to a defense of Biblical perceptions that don't really convey a mature view of the sexes, either.

It's true that our society produces a lot of 'older boys,' ...but I attribute this in large measure to the mixed messages males get in the course of the \*conflict\* created between 'traditional' senses of male entitlement vs the existence of strong women with equal human dignity.

Still operating on 'zero sum,' all they learn about relations between the sexes often \*is\* about unrealistic ideals of musclebound warriors they define as 'real men' and pound each other over until they're either 'dumb jocks' or 'cowed nerds' ...or 'someone with the money.'

One thing a lot of males don't realize is that the stories they tell each other about what comprises 'superiority, whatever that is, are much more about how young males negotiate who among them gets \*access\* to females than what females who are empowered to make up their own minds are actually interested in. They get frustrated and either aggressive or withdrawn when this doesn't work. They feel they're being robbed of something because the 'rules' they feel entitled to being rewarded for following actually involve other living human beings...

So it is with our society on so many levels.

(Yes, it has a whole lot to do with sexuality.)

Certainly, what being male is all about is a societal challenge for many, (And I think as Pagan clergy one that I see a lot of grappling with.) I can only offer in brief the observation that this isn't about competition and rules, this is about spirit and instinct and a will to inform and honor both.

Too often there is a perception that 'feminism' must denigrate males. (Even to the point of confusing second and third wave feminism. \*Second\* wave feminists are the ones who got looked at funny by my generation on certain matters of footwear and overalls. :) But who's counting, right? )

But I think on a lot of levels, too many men and institutions have been telling other men and themselves what \*men\* are all about, and that they should spend their efforts enforcing these views instead of remembering what \*is\* whole and good about em.

Frankly, for so many men, it seems their real response to modern reality is to sulk and dress like slobs and wonder why women don't come to \*them,\* or else to radicalize and see where blind dominance behavior gets them. :)

We can really do better, but more of the same is not the answer. It's a bit of a crisis for a reason. And that reason is not so you can roll it back.

Males, (And not just the 'alpha types' of your competitive presumptions and models) need better.

And it's happening. Some things you can't dictate.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | MARCH 30, 2008 3:28 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

Men is a stereo type Now??? There are six genders???

What monuments to selfishness you have established.

POSTED BY: GARYD | MARCH 30, 2008 2:56 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

What's wrong with simply raising boys to be adults? "Making them into men" implies forcing them into stereotypes that almost surely will not fit all of them.

POSTED BY: ANDREA | MARCH 30, 2008 2:02 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

Helping boys become men and girls become women sounds like a real good idea. Is it? What do you have for homosexual and asexual boys and girls? What you helping them become besides the object of discrimination.

There are 6 readily identifiable genders, male, female, males with female sex drives, females with male sex drives, males with no sex drive at all and females with no sex drive at all. Deciding what's good for all while limiting all to 2 out of 6 is 33.33% and a failing grade.

Aren't all 6 genders God's children? Maybe "male and female God made them" needs to be updated? They got that wrong. What else did they get wrong?

Denying the existence of 4 out of 6 genders makes sexism a given for those who get their facts from the Bible. If religion is going to address sexism then the Bible, other sacred scriptures for other folks must be discarded first. Otherwise religion will always hinder and never help end sexism.

POSTED BY: BGONE | MARCH 30, 2008 12:38 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

Ash your ignorance is showing. Ten to twenty percent of Baptist churches in the south are African American. There isn't a Fundamentalist church on TV that doesn't have at least a few people of color sitting in the pews.

What you say might have been true fifty years ago but it no longer is.

POSTED BY: GARYD | MARCH 30, 2008 2:12 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

GaryD,

Christian fundamentalism, not affirmative action, is the primary reason race remains a contentious issue in the USA. Fundamentalism is institutionalized racism's direct descendant. The death of legal segregation was the birth of the separatist fundamentalist education system. These Christian madrasas pour tens of thousands of ignorant, hate-filled, and poorly socialized race-baiters such as yourself into adult society every year. You and your ilk will be the death of American freedom.

POSTED BY: ASH | MARCH 29, 2008 8:20 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

superiority of god.

how to develop the brain and mentality of mankind(male and female) to understand the superiority of god over his creation?

misunderstanding the superiority of god over his creation is the root of every raceism,is the root of every deviationism,is the root of every evilism.

god is one ,no son,no daughter none but his uniqueness superiority over his creation.

misunderstanding the superiority of god over his creation misled mankind to glorify and superiority false gods and false ideologys .

please work on glorify the creator not the creation.

POSTED BY: MO | MARCH 29, 2008 11:46 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

That sir is arguably the Best column you have written here to date.

Neither of these issues are something that the government with it's tendency towards one size fits all solutions and pounding square pegs into round holes can ever fully address.

How much of black under performance on standardized tests is attributable to entrenched racism and how much of it is attributable to pathologies within the ghetto culture itself? How much of the discord between the sexes is the result of Ultra feminist teachings that would SEEM to indicate that we'd all be better off if boys were stripped of their sperm and killed shortly after entering puberty?

On my part I believe that the chief reason race is still a problem in this country lies primarily at the feet of the various affirmative action programs which now do little more than secure a steady stream of intellectually vacuous recruits for cheesy outfits like the Nation of Islam and the KKK and their various allied organizations.

POSTED BY: GARYD | MARCH 29, 2008 11:22 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

---

The comments to this entry are closed.