
Why Manhood Doesn't Happen Naturally

Posted on [September 9, 2017](#)



In terms of human development, healthy masculinity is not natural. It doesn't just happen. It must be constructed. This is not the case with womanhood. Her biological make-up ensures the girl will more naturally grow into a healthy woman. As her body matures, internally and externally, it sends her and those around her an unmistakable message of what she is and what she is becoming. It moves her in a very particular direction with great force. Her family and community treat her differently because of it.

The boy's transition into manhood is not similarly pre-determined. It must be created with significant intentionality.

Manhood is a behavior that must be *taught*, an identity that must be *bestowed* by a boy's family and the larger community of men.

Why is this so?

The male nature doesn't naturally go in the direction society needs it to go in. It is more oriented toward extremes – lethargy and passivity, or aggression and sexual opportunism. Manhood must be crafted.

Margaret Mead is one of the early anthropologists to study the societal phenomenon of manhood.

She [observed](#) this necessity:

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. ...[E]very known human society rests firmly on the learned nurturing behavior of men.

She explains why this must be intentionally done generation after generation:

...[T]his behavior, being learned, is fragile and can disappear rather easily under social conditions that no longer teach it effectively.¹

It is the precise opposite for women. She must be ideologically and politically pressured, with great potency, to abandoned and ignore her children.

This brings us to the nub of the issue.

The most elemental destabilizing forces in every culture are unchecked male *sexuality* and *strength*. If a society does not find a way to bring these under control, society is impossible to sustain, and very bad things happen.

It is only when these two things are corralled that a healthy, safe and productive society can take shape and sustain itself. Only then can women and their children thrive. As Mead explained, there is no human culture that has sustained itself without doing this.

Now, what must be learned must be taught, and the more consequential it is, the greater intentionality it requires. Manhood can only really be taught and developed by older men, instructing and showing what is expected of the boy in order to become a part of the fraternity of good men. Mothers and girlfriends can influence this, to be sure, but they cannot deliver it. It is a transfer of ideals, behaviors, attitudes and beliefs from one generation of men to the next.

This is unarguably the first work of family formation and community sustainability as it affects industry and economics, criminality, health-care, education and every other essential part of any community. It is the work of human culture and well-being.

The primary question is how one generation of men accomplishes this in their service to the next generation of women, children and the society. And particularly, how we do it in today's culture with all its unique challenges?

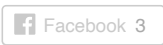
This question and its answer must become a national concern.

1. Margaret Mead, *Male and Female*, William Morrow & Co., 1968, p. 189, 192.

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