

speaker male or female? Who or what is he or she referring to? Is he joking or serious? Bring your notes to class to compare with others' observations. Do your findings bear out Kimmel's assertion that "Homophobia... is the animating fear of American guys' masculinity" (para. 24)?

## The Descent of Men

DAN KINDLON

Dan Kindlon's research on the psychology of adolescent girls has led him to conclude that the current generation of young women is "fundamentally different" from earlier generations — more highly motivated, self-confident, and independent. His book, *Alpha Girls* (2006), presents the results of his studies of these high achievers; in the following passage, he considers how the emergence of the alpha girl is likely to alter the roles of men both in the workplace and the home. Kindlon (b. 1953), a research psychologist and clinician who focuses on childhood and adolescent development, has taught child psychology at Harvard since 1985. His earlier books include *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* (1999), *Too Much of a Good Thing: Raising Children of Character in an Indulgent Age* (2001), and *Tough Times, Strong Children: Lessons from the Past for Your Child's Future* (2003).

There are more girls in college now than guys — which from my point of view is great!

— SAM, 18, freshman at UC Santa Cruz

When it comes to chimps, scientists have found that, as my daughters were fond of saying when they were in kindergarten, "girls rule and boys drool."

Researchers have observed that young female chimpanzees in the Gombe National Park in Tanzania are smarter than young male chimps, at least when it comes to learning how to fish for termites. Young female chimps watch carefully as their mothers select the right size stick to dip into the termite mound and quickly learn to imitate them. The young males, on the other hand, pay their mothers no mind. They are inattentive, rolling around in the dirt and generally slacking off. The young females start fishing for termites on their own at a much earlier age than the males — on average



"Ted's flamboyantly straight."

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over two years earlier — and they remain more proficient fishers as adults. The study's authors conclude that given "[a] similar disparity in the ability of young males and females has been demonstrated in human children, sex-based learning differences may therefore date back at least to the last common ancestor of chimpanzees and humans."<sup>1</sup>

This picture of young female chimps as focused, receptive learners fits well with our portrait of academically accomplished girls. I haven't spent much time discussing their male peers and the psychological challenges and difficulties they face, but boys are obviously part of the equation when it comes to understanding the alpha girl generation and its future impact on society.

As girls move into positions of power and prominence, what will happen to boys? Will their penchant for figuratively horsing around while their female peers master important life skills mean that they are going to become increasingly irrelevant? Are our boys headed in the direction of Johnny Lechner, who, at the age of twenty-nine, is still a college undergraduate and has spent his last twelve years as a frat boy?



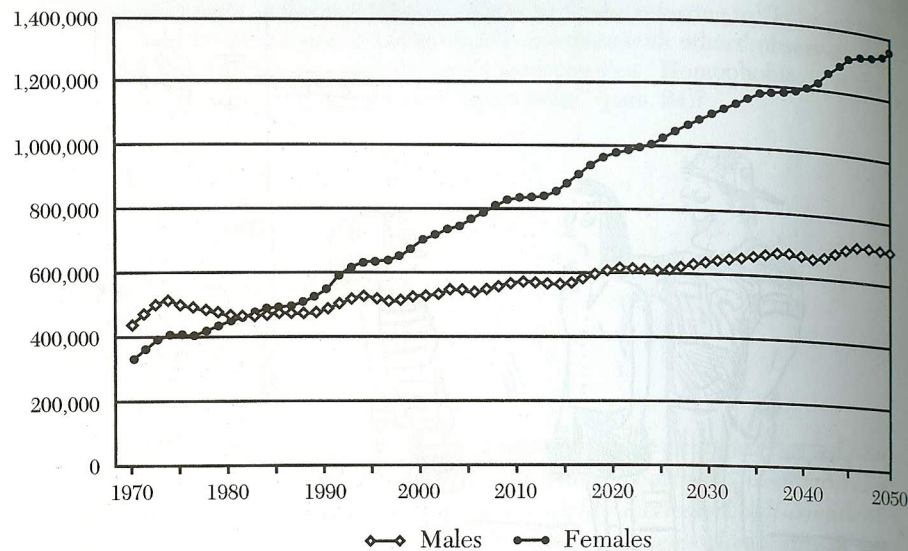


Figure 1 Number of bachelor's degrees awarded to males and females, projected to 2050.

Source data (1970–2003): U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>2</sup> Projected data (2004–2050).

Lechner has appeared on *Good Morning America* and *Letterman*. He has an agent at William Morris who is trying to get him television and book deals and product endorsements. His brand image, according to the *New York Times*, where his story made front page news, will be linked to his “record of debauchery . . . a roisterous college life of beer and merrymaking.” Fame, however, has come with a price. The *Times* quotes Lechner: “I’m really stressed out. All the money, the book deals, the agents. It’s crazy.”<sup>3</sup>

While not all our boys are doomed to careers as frat house party animals, it’s self-evident that as girls fill more of the challenging and desirable positions in the workforce, the opportunities and positions open to men will shrink. Not all the academic and occupational gains achieved by women in recent years have come at the expense of men — but some have.

In the case of college admissions, the more spots that are given to girls, the fewer will be available for boys.\* Similarly, if the board of directors at a Fortune 500 company is limited to ten members, if five are women, only

\*Some colleges and universities are starting to admit what has been known among admissions officers for years: that they sometimes use affirmative action standards in order to increase the number of male enrollees. See Britz, J.D. “To all the girls I’ve rejected,” *New York Times*, OP-ED, Thursday, March 23, 2006. [Kindlon’s note]

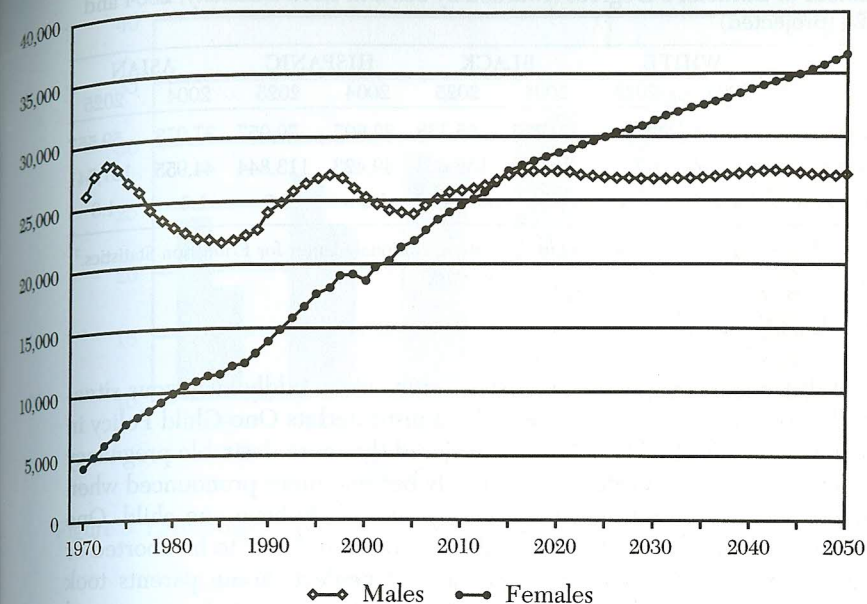


Figure 2 Number of doctorate degrees awarded to males and females, projected to 2050.

Source data (1970–2003): U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>4</sup> Projected data (2004–2050).

five can be men. There is no simple equation, however, that will tell us which sex will be better off following the kinds of gender role changes we can expect in the coming years.

As we start to look forward into the future, we see a number of significant trends. The first is the dominance of women in higher education. As we’ve noted, in 2005, nearly 59 percent of undergraduate degrees were granted to women. The degree gap is growing.<sup>5</sup> The chart [on page 620] (Figure 1) projects the changing sex-ratio in colleges into the next decade and beyond.

We see the same trend for advanced degrees. Over the next ten years, the number of degrees awarded in medicine, law, dentistry, and the theological professions is projected to increase 16 percent for men and 26 percent for women. For doctorate degrees (Ph.D.’s), the results are even more startling. As Figure 2 shows, in 2050, fewer men will receive Ph.D.’s than they did in 2000, while the number of doctorates awarded to women will continue to sharply rise. These degree-gap trends hold true across racial and ethnic groups. For the foreseeable future, white, black, Latina, and Asian women will all be receiving more college degrees than their male counterparts.<sup>6</sup>



Number of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, 2004 and 2025 (projected)

	WHITE		BLACK		HISPANIC		ASIAN	
	2004	2025	2004	2025	2004	2025	2004	2025
Males	405,409	438,492	39,256	65,338	32,697	70,057	37,073	59,557
Females	533,899	692,740	76,379	158,292	49,423	113,844	44,955	107,541
Ratio F:M	1.3	1.6	1.9	2.4	1.5	1.6	1.2	1.8

Source data (2004): U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>7</sup>

What are the implications of these trends? An oddly analogous situation has occurred in China. When China instituted its One-Child Policy in 1979, male babies had long been considered the more desirable pregnancy outcome in China, a preference that only became more pronounced when couples were told by the state that they could only have one child. One upshot of the policy was that girl babies were more likely to be aborted or become victims of infanticide and medical neglect. Some parents took advantage of a loophole in the law that allowed a couple to have a second child if their first was disabled or female.

As a result, the birth ratio in China began to change. As many as 1.3 boys were born for each girl in rural areas such as Qinghai province.<sup>8</sup> Now that the first members of the One-Child Policy generation are well into marriageable and childbearing age, there are around 80 million men, according to one source, who can't find partners.<sup>9</sup>

A similar trend is emerging — although reversed — in the U.S. when we look at the mating dance open to college graduates. The degree gap between men and women is similar to the birth ratio in Qinghai.

With each passing year the ratio of college-educated women to college-educated men will grow. There will be an increasing number of college-educated women who will not be able to marry or partner with a college-educated man (see Figure 3).

In a few years, the population of the United States will have more living women college graduates than men college graduates. This preponderance of women among the "educated class" will be an event that is unprecedented in human history and promises to have far-reaching implications. Women will begin to appear in greater numbers among the applicants for prestigious, highly paid jobs. A college degree currently yields nearly one million dollars more over the course of a working life than a high school degree. A Ph.D. is estimated to return \$1.5 million more, and professional degrees in medicine or law over \$2.5 million more in lifetime salary than a bachelor's degree.<sup>10</sup> To the extent that money is power, women who obtain advanced degrees and enter the workforce will have more of it than they have in the past.

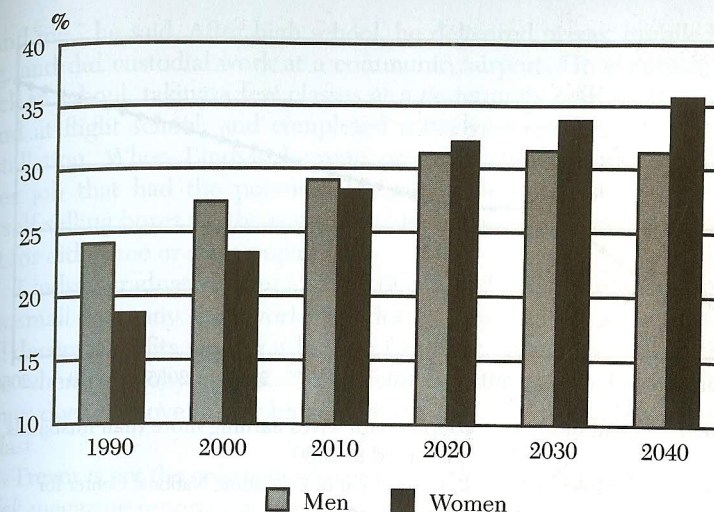


Figure 3 Percentage of U.S. population aged 25+ with a bachelor's degree or higher, projected to 2040.

Source data: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2003.<sup>11</sup>

Much of what motivated feminists in the 1960s and 1970s was a reaction to the relative powerlessness of American housewives in the 1950s. At the root of nearly all of the myriad meanings of power is the concept of control. If you have power, you have the ability to influence events rather than be influenced by them. To control rather than be controlled.

Women traditionally were dependent on their husbands for financial support; many of them had few, if any, job skills. But if the current trends in higher education continue, men are going to have to share or relinquish some of their power because their wives will control the proverbial purse strings.

One consequence of women moving into highly paid jobs is that more of the men they marry and bear children with will earn less than they do. One out of every four women today earns more than her husband; by 2050, it is projected that almost one in two will (see Figure 4).

Even if a married woman doesn't earn *more* than her husband, if she earns enough to live on or has the status and job skills that come from being better educated, she will have more control over her life. In cases of divorce or abandonment, she won't be at the mercy of her ex-husband's goodwill or a court's ability to enforce child support or alimony laws. Better education and higher earnings provide a financial safety net for women today that dependent housewives in the 1950s didn't have.

The distribution of power in a couple's relationship does not, however, have to be a battle. Many men are happy to share power. In the future, the following scenario will become more common. Jim Krawiecki, forty-seven,



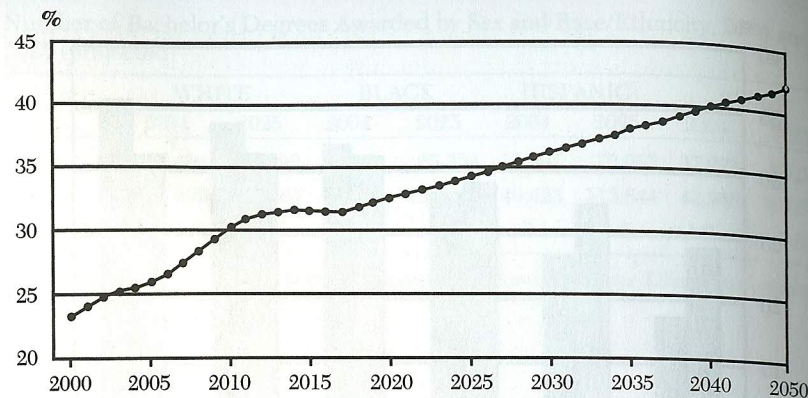


Figure 4 Percent of married couples with wives earning more than husbands, projected to 2050.

Source data (1990–2003): U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

and his younger wife, Carroll, work on the Needham, Massachusetts, police force. Carroll, a sergeant, is Jim's boss, a cause for mirth among his fellow patrolmen. Despite being a political conservative, not a traditionally feminist group, Jim says, "The easiest way to deal with it is just accept it." It was Jim who originally encouraged Carroll to quit waitressing, join the force, and take the tests necessary for promotion. Jim didn't want to climb the career ladder himself because of all the "paperwork."

The couple's first child is soon due. Carroll plans to return to work after her maternity leave. Her shift runs midnight to eight and Jim works days, so they'll divvy up child care.<sup>12</sup>

Jim and Carroll's story illustrates the degree to which gender roles are changing. Carroll is thriving in a non-traditional occupation for women, and her older, politically conservative husband, whom she outranks, not only accepts the situation, he helped create it.

Is Jim an anomaly? Will most men accept the eclipse of their traditional role as breadwinners? Or will there be a backlash against the emancipation of women fueled by wounded male pride? At least two important factors argue against backlash.

First, cultural trends suggest that men are less intent on wearing the pants in the family. In many cases, they do not feel threatened, demeaned, or emasculated by being married to a woman who is more successful than they are. Men are also more amenable to sharing household duties, particularly child care. In fact, young men hunger for more time with their kids. This is the case with Trevor, twenty-five, and his wife, Lindsay, who is pregnant with their first child. Trevor's adolescence was spent rolling around on the proverbial termite mound. Although he has a high IQ, he barely graduated from high school. "I couldn't stand school and my teachers couldn't

stand me," he said. After high school, he delivered pizzas, installed carpeting, and did custodial work at a community airport. He eventually drifted back to school, taking a few classes at a community college, then tried his hand at flight school, and completed a twelve-week course in car stereo installation. When Lindsay became pregnant, Trevor had recently left a sales job that had the potential for rapid advancement. "I couldn't see myself selling boxes for the rest of my life," he said. "It wasn't going to work out for either me or the company."

Lindsay graduated from a local college and became a middle manager at a small company. Her work provides the couple with a moderate salary and decent benefits. Trevor is looking forward to doing the bulk of the child care when the baby comes. "My wife makes more than I do. I hope she always does. I'd love to stay home with the kids. Are you kidding me, it'd be a blast."

Trevor is not the only man who wants to stay home with the kids. *Business Week* magazine reports that working men born between 1965 and 1979 now spend about 3.5 hours a day with their kids — the same amount as working women. Seventy percent of men said they would take a pay cut to spend more time with their family, and almost half would turn down a promotion if it meant less family time. The article states:

The shift in attitudes among male workers is evident to veteran staffers such as Betty Purkey, who manages work-life strategies at Texas Instruments. Not only are men, who make up seventy percent of the chipmaker's employee base, clamoring for more flexibility, but they frequently crowd into the company's classes for new parents. "They really want to spend more time with their families," marvels Purkey, who finds a pronounced difference among younger employees.<sup>13</sup>

Men are better suited in many ways to be contemporary homemakers. Start with the most robust biological differences between men and women — size and strength. One of the only aspects of contemporary urban and suburban life that requires physical strength is household tasks — carrying a baby and two bags of groceries in from the car, for example. Domestic duties are one of the few remaining areas in which men's physical strength is an advantage. In addition, many men are fascinated by gadgets, tools, and machinery; these men should love hanging around the house doing minor car repairs, fixing a leaky faucet, programming the VCR, installing an electric garage door opener — all jobs for a handyman!

The large majority of boys in our survey group said that they felt that working mothers were not detrimental to their children's development, and, more important, many boys wanted to participate in child rearing. Close to 25 percent said that they expected to be a stay-at-home parent at some point in their lives. . . .

In the coming world of the alpha generation, our sons will be forced to confront some of the core psychological attributes of traditional masculinity.



Modern boys will need to go through their own "inner metamorphosis" and make similar changes in their personal psychology to those that have been made by the daughters of the feminist revolution. In particular, boys will need to strike a better balance between separation and connection, dominance and submission. As their sisters have, boys will need to incorporate elements of both their fathers and their mothers into their personalities.

As Michael Thompson and I discussed in our 1999 book *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*,<sup>14</sup> the historical domination of men over women has come with a price. Boys have long been socialized not only to dominate and control others, especially women, but also to control themselves. They have been told that they have to control their "weaker" emotions. They have been pushed to be autonomous, to remain separate from others and self-sufficient. They have been taught never to ask for help.

Michael and I discussed the findings of the groundbreaking National Survey of Adolescent Males (NSAM). We were struck by the fact that boys who approved of more rigid gender roles were, in the survey's word, "hypermasculine" and at greater risk for a host of problems, including school suspension, date rape, and drug and alcohol use.<sup>15</sup> Boys who tend towards hypermasculinity also tend to be dominant in their relationships with girls. They are less likely to wear a condom during sex, for example.

In our sample, the boys with the most traditionally masculine attitudes were, similar to the NSAM findings, more likely to have had sex at an earlier age and to have more sexual partners. They were also more likely to have had sex in a non-monogamous "casual" relationship. They watch more hours of television and have more body image problems than boys with less traditionally masculine attitudes. On the flip side, they rated themselves as more dependable.

Unfortunately, boys don't have the abundance of positive media role models that girls have had in recent years. The hypermasculine male is still very much present on television. Studies by media watchdog groups find that men and boys on television rarely show signs of vulnerability, and almost three-quarters of young adult male characters use antisocial behaviors to solve problems.<sup>16</sup> A remarkable long-term study showed that boys who watched more violent television when they were in early elementary school were more likely as young adults to physically assault their spouses and respond to an insult with physical force. They were also three times as likely to have been convicted of a crime.<sup>17</sup>

In subtle and not-so-subtle ways, our culture gives boys the message that they should behave like the men they see on TV or else. In one recent television commercial, a hapless young man is crushed by a giant can of beer that falls from the sky when he displays feminine tendencies. "Men should act like men," the ad's announcer intones, giving fair warning to the boys in the audience. These are amusing commercials, but they push boys in unhealthy ways; they are part of an onslaught of media that is encouraging hypermasculinity.

When I speak to audiences about boys' psychology, I often ask parents to try to think of three male characters on television that they would like their son to emulate. Parents are surprised by how difficult this is. Male characters on prime-time television tend to be buffoons, while their female counterparts are increasingly clever and capable. . . .

When we look at the decline of men, it is easy to become alarmed. But perhaps the coming generations of feminized men may be happier than men of the past. The onus of running the world, the endless problems and headaches — let alpha women have a crack at them; we'll see if they can do better! It's clear that there is much room for improvement.

Perhaps in a world run by women, men will live longer, less stress-filled lives. They will cultivate hitherto underdeveloped aspects of their masculinity; they will allow the full flowering of the tenderer, nurturing aspects of being a "good provider." They will raise the kids and keep house. Men will reassert the role as their children's primary mentor and guide that they held in agrarian America.<sup>18</sup> They will finally fulfill the great hope that has been the dream behind all our wealth and technology — a society where we have the leisure to enjoy one another and appreciate the simple joy of being alive. Men will be able to drop some of the burden of maleness and become more loving. The alphas will provide — fishing for termites, bringing home the bacon — while men will have more of a chance to indulge themselves in sublimely pointless play.

#### Notes

1. Lonsdorf, E. V.; Eberly, L. E.; and Pusey, A. E. (2004) "Sex differences in learning in chimpanzees," *Nature* 428, pp. 715–716. [All notes are Kindlon's.]
2. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Earned Degrees Conferred, 1869–70 through 1964–65; Projections of Education Statistics to 2014; Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred" surveys, 1965–66 through 1985–86; and 1986–87 through 2002–03 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Completions Survey" (IPEDS-C:87–99), and Fall 2000 through Fall 2003.*
3. Dillon, S. "For one student, a college career becomes a career." *New York Times*, Thursday, November 10, 2005, A1, A22.
4. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred" surveys 1976–77 through 1984–85, and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Completions" surveys, 1986–87 through 1998–99, and Fall 2000 through Fall 2002 surveys.* (This table was prepared August 2003.)
5. See Table 247, *Digest of Educational Statistics, 2003*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education. Online source: [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d04/tables/dt04\\_247.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d04/tables/dt04_247.asp).
6. Source: U.S. Dept. of Education, NCES: *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Completions Survey," various years; and Earned Degrees Conferred Model.*
7. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). *The Condition of Education 2002 (NCES 2002–25)*, table 25–3 and previously unpublished tabulations for 2002–03 (December 2004). Data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey (CPS), March Supplement, 1971–2003.*
8. Hesketh, T.; Lu, L.; and Xing, Z. W. (1997) "Health in China: The one child family policy: the good, the bad, and the ugly," *British Medical Journal* 314, p. 1685. Many couples will choose to have a second child only if their first child is a girl.



9. See Hesketh, T.; Lu, L.; and Xing, Z. W. (2005) "The Effect of China's One-Child Family Policy after 25 Years," *New England Journal of Medicine* 353, pp. 1171-76. The one-child policy is not instituted in the same way across groups. For example, families in most rural areas are allowed to have a second child after an interval of 5 years. See also: Jones, S. Y: *The Descent of Men*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin (2003).

10. Source: Annual Demographic Survey, a Joint Project Between the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Bureau of the Census, 2004.

11. U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey 2003, Annual Demographic Supplements. Table F-22. Married-Couple Families with Wives' Earnings Greater Than Husbands' Earnings: 1981 to 2003.

12. Meade, L. K. "Baby makes three for partners in blue," *Boston Globe*, Thursday, January 5, 2006, W2, W3.

13. See "Hopping aboard the daddy track," *Business Week* magazine, November 8, 2004.

14. Kindlon, D. and Thompson, M. *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Lives of Boys*. New York: Ballantine (1999).

15. Pleck, J. F., et al. (1993), "Masculinity ideology: Its effect of adolescent males' heterosexual relationships," *Journal of Social Issues* 49, pp. 11-29.

16. See Children Now. *Boys to Men: Entertainment Media Messages About Masculinity*. Oakland, CA: Children Now (September 1999).

17. L. Rowell Huesmann, Jessica Moise-Titus, Cheryl-Lynn Podolski, and Leonard D. Eron of the University of Michigan, "Longitudinal Relations Between Children's Exposure to TV Violence and Their Aggressive and Violent Behavior in Young Adulthood: 1977-1992," *Developmental Psychology* 39, pp. 201-21.

18. See for example: LaRossa, R. *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1997).

## ENGAGING THE TEXT

1. How do you respond to Kindlon's repeated comparisons of boys to young chimps? What does this analogy suggest about the basis of male human behavior?
2. In the footnote on page 620, Kindlon mentions that because girls tend to outperform boys academically, some colleges now "use affirmative action standards in order to increase the number of male enrollees." Should gender be a consideration in admission decisions? Why or why not?
3. How and why are traditional gender roles changing, according to Kindlon? What potential benefits for men does he see in women's increasing levels of education and earning power?
4. Evaluate the evidence Kindlon offers to support his predictions about changing gender roles. Consider the studies he cites, the stories he tells, and the graphs he presents: What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

## EXPLORING CONNECTIONS

5. Compare Kindlon's depiction of masculinity to Michael Kimmel's (p. 608). Which do you find more accurate, more appealing, and why?
6. Role-play or write an imaginary conversation among Dan Kindlon, Jean Kilbourne, Joan Morgan, and Michael Kimmel about how conventional gender roles affect the relationships between women and men.

7. What's the source of the humor in the cartoon on page 619? Why isn't the kind of hypermasculinity that Kindlon describes, and that Ted appears to represent, considered a "flamboyant" display?

## EXTENDING THE CRITICAL CONTEXT

8. While Kindlon praises "the abundance of positive media role models" for girls, he suggests that images of men, especially on TV, encourage an unhealthy "hypermasculinity" (para. 33). Write an essay explaining why you agree or disagree with this assessment.

## The Death of Macho

REIHAN SALAM

*Was the recent global economic collapse caused by risk-taking, macho investment bankers run amok? Reihan Salam argues that "the cult of macho" in the financial industry was largely to blame. He also contends that public backlash against this type of Wall Street "penis competition" may hasten the demise of male dominance. Presently a Fellow at the New America Foundation, Salam (b. 1979) has worked for NBC News, the New York Times, The Atlantic, and The New Republic. He contributes regularly to Slate and the Weekly Standard, and edits a blog, The American Scene; with coauthor Ross Douthat, he wrote Grand New Party: How Conservatives Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream (2008).*

The era of male dominance is coming to an end. Seriously.

For years, the world has been witnessing a quiet but monumental shift of power from men to women. Today, the Great Recession has turned what was an evolutionary shift into a revolutionary one. The consequence will be not only a mortal blow to the macho men's club called finance capitalism that got the world into the current economic catastrophe; it will be a collective crisis for millions and millions of working men around the globe.

The death throes of macho are easy to find if you know where to look. Consider, to start, the almost unbelievably disproportionate impact that the current crisis is having on men — so much so that the recession is now known to some economists and the more plugged-in corners of the blogosphere