

In 2012 I organized a private symposium attended by nine world leaders in the fields of neuroscience, evolutionary biology, psychiatry, anthropology, medicine and psychology. There were no strict ground rules for the two days of debate, lectures, and spontaneous collaboration, but the participants knew that a major goal of the symposium was to help bring together, from the high perches of diverse research kingdoms, a rigorous status report on the state of scientific research on the male.

We covered conception and birth:

- Fetuses colonize their mother's body. Decades after a mother gives birth, she can still find her child's cells in her body. The male body is not similarly colonized by his children's cells.
- Mothers naturally miscarry more boys than girls.
- 240 males are conceived for every 100 female fetuses, yet by the time of birth the ratio is 1.5 to 1, male to female.
- Boys do much less well in utero, and even after birth they do much less well.
- They are more susceptible to infection, and their lungs are much weaker.
- They have such a pronounced propensity for developmental disability because, at birth, their brains are larger than female brains yet their metabolic rates are lower.
- Mothers control even the fat content of the breast milk they feed their newborns. They are able to adjust the fat content of their milk according to the sex of offspring. Their choice of which gender to favor varies by social class. On the upper end of the social class, mothers provide higher fat breast milk for the males; at the lower end of the social class, it's higher fat for the females than for the males.

We discussed, at length, the physiology of the weaker sex:

- Testosterone is not compatible with longevity.
- The tears of women lower the testosterone in males.
- Every single system in the body is different in males and females.
- Little girls start to speak sooner than boys because they have a greater density of cells in the temporal lobe at a young age.
- Males invest more in competitive sexual/reproductive activities earlier in life, and a side effect of that is they invest less in longevity-minded maintenance of their body.

- There is less self-preservation in “typical” male activities.
- From birth to old age, men die faster than women.
- Women’s brains work more symmetrically than men’s brains do. The corpus callosum, the tissue that connects the right and left hemisphere, is relatively larger in women’s brains.
- By the time a man is 40, heart disease becomes the chief cause of death. Coronary disease appears in men a full 15 years before it does in women.

We looked at genetics:

- From a geneticist’s standpoint, it might just be a tragedy to be born male.
- Males are the XY, females are the XX. The XY is the only chromosome pair that is not an actual pair. The XY is a pair that does not match.
- The fact that women have two X and men have one X means that the chromosome has evolved to be a female-benefitting gene. Over evolutionary time the X chromosome spends twice as much time in women as in men.
- In other words, the “cost” of the gene is twice as big in males as the benefit in females.
- The human mutation load is disproportionately born through males.

We looked closely at societal changes, and especially at the intersection of mind and body:

- The physical power of males has become, except in specialized fields, irrelevant.
- This irrelevance has changed the very concept of glory, of war, of protection, and of how societies move forward. Recent terrible “innovations” in terrorism and landmark breakthroughs in high tech are direct results of this change in the concept of male glory.
- The male’s neural processes want to do certain kinds of work, and the kinds of jobs that are now available in the changing worldwide economy less and less frequently engage those processes.
- The male brain does not bear up as well under chronic stress as the female brain does.