

The Foundation for Male Studies

Presentation to

Board of Directors of the American Sports Council

by

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Synopsis, 1

1. Introduction, 2
 2. Observations of Troubled Young Men, 2
 3. The Decline of Men, 3
 4. Title IX, 3
 5. Gender Differences and the Error of Small Numbers, 4
 6. Problems of Boys in School, 5
 7. Boys and Current Education, 5
 8. The Yonkers Model Charter School for Boys, 6
 9. No Field of Dreams—Yet, 6
 10. Current Challenges, 7
 11. Current Opportunities, 7
 12. Concluding Remarks, 8
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Synopsis

Millions of American boys and men now face an increasingly bleak future.

Over my 50 years of medical practice as a clinical psychiatrist, I have seen young men active in sports, and in the prime of life, die of drug overdoses. I have seen a steep decline in male capital not only in America, but across the globe, as foundations and governments pursue programs to benefit girls and women, to the exclusion of boys and men. I have seen Title IX legislation interpreted in a way that ignores basic biological gender differences—and that therefore distorts, rather than ensures, gender equity.

It is for these reasons that I established the Foundation for Male Studies, dedicated to the scientific study of the male. One of its primary aims is to establish an endowed Chair of Male Studies at a prominent university.

Another major Foundation interest is education, as boys are poorly served by our present educational systems. The Foundation's conceptual Yonkers Model Charter School for Boys shows what can be achieved in this area. However, neither the Chair of Male Studies nor the Model Charter School has yet been able to win foundation funding.

Public apathy, together with a lack of support by men in power, present major challenges to Male Studies. An additional challenge is presented by those who argue against any initiative for boys and men that does not also include girls and women.

But since everyone loves boys, I have tried to meet these challenges by proposing a nationwide "Run for Boys." In addition, the Foundation has created a Men's Issues Coalition Political Action Committee to provide muscular advocacy at the national level.

However, all of these Male Studies projects currently remain unfunded and unfulfilled. I hope that the American Sports Council and the Foundation can work together to build a new Field of Dreams for American boys and men, and thus restore gender equity to our nation.

1. Introduction

I was surprised and delighted to receive an invitation to speak to the Board of Directors of the American Sports Council (ASC) about the work of the Foundation for Male Studies. Mr. Pearson, thank you; it's a pleasure to be here.

Male Studies is the story of a journey of discovery—one that grew out of my experience as a physician, and my lifelong passion to promote personal growth as well as healing in every person I came in contact with. This journey led me to establish The Foundation for Male Studies for the scientific study of boys and men.

The Foundation initially developed a new approach to educating males—the Yonkers Model Charter School for Boys—and went on to promote a public-awareness campaign, “Run for Boys,” to defeat apathy and generate support. The Foundation has now created MICPAC, the Men’s Issues Coalition Political Action Committee, to provide muscular advocacy at the national level.

2. Observations of Troubled Young Men

I have been a physician specializing in psychiatry for the past 50 years. I have seen a lot over this time and have come in intimate contact with all manner of situations involving boys, men, and sports. But some of this contact has been deeply troubling. Let me give an example.

One of my patients, a sports coach in our local community, has seen six of the boys he coached from the age of four grow up and, in the fullness of their young adulthood, tragically die of drug overdoses. Five of them are:

- Greg Datino, Stepinac High School, active in hockey and football. Dead at 27.
- Peter Collins, Rye High School, hockey. Dead at 19.
- Corey Brown, Port Chester High School and the University of Albany, football. Dead at 22.
- Tom Toriano, Rye High School, lacrosse. Dead at 24.
- Eliot Meister, Rye High School, lacrosse and hockey. Dead at 21.

The coach’s own son was one of these. In our small community, we are a confused and grieving family as we try to understand what is going wrong with our young men.

And to this list, unfortunately, I must add a sixth name: that of my grandson, Alex Shuh, who died on February 29, 2016—one year ago this week—at the age of 19.

There are doubtless some of you here today who have also experienced this kind of sadness, as well as many other ASC members across the country.

3. The Decline of Men

These are strange times: everywhere we look, we see male human capital in decline.

In 2000, for example, the World Bank published a book entitled *The Other Half of Gender: Men's Issues in Development*, which presented scholarly research on the management of gender support around the world. In keeping with its central mission to guide worldwide economic development, the Bank called attention to an international problem centered on gender, demonstrating the effects of thousands of programs created to support women and girls in the absence of programs to support men and boys. The unintended consequences, the Bank concluded, have been a disconnection of men from communal life.

In particular, within communities where men and women had formerly worked together, that bond was broken, and the men were set adrift. While the women and children benefited in the short run, the distortion in the cohesiveness of the community ultimately detracted from the well-being of all, both men and women, over the long run and in the larger picture.

Over my 50 years as physician with deep roots in the community, I can testify myself to the changes in our families, our society, and our attitudes toward gender support. I can bear personal witness from my involvement with thousands of boys and girls, men, women, and families.

In 1967, I became a member of the National Organization for Women. In my medical practice, I sponsored and supported every female I met to be all they could be. In 1978, when my first child proved to be a daughter, you have to believe I wanted everything for her. In the gender climate of the time, I therefore gave her a name—Jarret—that would not immediately identify her as female on a job application.

Five years later, I gave a strong male name to my son: Ross. But in today's gender climate, I think he might get a better hearing if I had named him Megan or Mary Anne. And today, as a man and as an advocate for gender equity, I feel like Tom Brady, trailing midway through the third quarter of Super Bowl LI by a score of 28 to 3!

4. Title IX

These reflections lead us to ASC's thoughtful advocacy in support of a reinterpretation of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, which can be seen as both a mission and a metaphor.

The Foundation for Male Studies is, likewise, both a mission and a metaphor. The vision of the Foundation is:

“To promote the establishment of the scientific study of the male and maleness across our university system where it does not exist.”

“To create a new university level initiative that honors men’s worth by supporting educational, social and economic programs for the development of male human capital.”

The missions of ASC and the Foundation are clear:

- Restore equity to Title IX in a way that respects the unique place that sports and physical activity play in the development of the road from boyhood to a manhood of strength, character, and leadership.
- Restore an equity of academic resources to the other half of gender so that we can all know who we are, our place in society, and our role in the family; so that men can take their place in society as men of character, fathers in families, and as innovators and contributors in the economy of our country.

The metaphor is contained in the recognition by ASC and the Foundation that something is missing from our current approaches to honoring the needs of both our women and our men.

5. Gender Differences and the Error of Small Numbers

Current implementation of Title IX by the U.S. Department of Education, and the implementation of gender-equity programs within our universities more generally, both suffer from the error of small numbers. It goes like this: it happened once, it happened twice...so what can you expect?

We have been seeing the current drive toward gender “equality” for 60 years, give or take a few decades. Now place this timescale against the hundreds of thousands of years required for our evolution as a species. That comparison makes the fallacy of the small number—60 years—come alive.

When we look at the larger picture of our prolonged phase of development from child to adult, the longest of any known species, we see the absolute need for both dedicated caretakers and dedicated providers. Culturally we see that while many tasks are interchangeable, the basic requirements of care and support are not.

Women emerge from girlhood and have children. In many ways, their path is clearly defined by their biology, menarche to motherhood.

Men’s paths from boyhood to manhood, by contrast, have no such markers. And, although men may take on the caretaker role, they must primarily be providers and be prepared for that role by the cultivation of their skills and their strength. They must have healthy minds in healthy bodies.

6. Problems of Boys in School

Returning to my 50 years of exploration of minds and hearts, I have seen a change in the fabric of life for men and women.

I saw it when a mother with a troubled son and a troubled daughter came to me for help. When I sent her back to her community to seek assistance, I was startled by her report: "I found three programs for my daughter, but none for my son".

I saw it in my professional society, the American Psychiatric Association, where there was a standing committee for Women's Mental Health but nothing for men.

I saw it in the streams of boys that were brought to me for medication to help them with their "school problems" at a ratio of seven boys to one girl.

I saw it in my talks with educators who described boys as being behind grade levels, losing interest in school by the fourth grade, being educationally disadvantaged in such a way that graduation from high school for boys was falling off because of the year-by-year magnification of an educational deficit that starts in the primary grades.

I saw it in the erosion of college enrollment and completion by men, as noted by the Foundation's 2010 conference on the "Science of the Male," where it was reported that the current college ratio is 64 women for every 36 men, with a projected rise to 70/30 by 2020. And the ratios of women to men are even worse in the professions and in graduate programs.

7. Boys and Current Education

These observations and the search for actionable interventions rooted in scientific observations, a science of the male, rather than in the politics of gender, led to powerful partial explanations.

In a society where we learn to read in order to learn, boys are struggling to learn to read. There is a mismatch between boys' neurological and psychological development and the learning tasks they are given.

Boys are, on average, not reading-ready until they are 5 or 6 years old, but our educational systems are sponsoring literacy at age 3. The net effect, for many boys, is that by the time they are reading-ready, they are already behind, and stay behind.

And beyond that, educational material is not being presented to boys in ways that are congruent with their maleness, their need to move around, to create, and to integrate learning with physicality and instrumentality.

8. The Yonkers Model Charter School for Boys

Using these observations rooted in a study of maleness not found in any of our current schools of education, the Foundation therefore created a new paradigm: The Yonkers Model Charter School for Boys.

The Model Charter School for Boys identified an origin of the education gap and proposed new approaches that would begin to make inroads into the academic decline of males in such a way that new paradigms for teaching boys could become part of our schools of education across the country.

The Model was crafted to capture the boys, engage them at the earliest level, seize them where they are developmentally and then, by using the tools that best suit the male brain, catch them being good at learning.

This Model offered an outreach to boys that went beyond an educational “one size fits all” to capitalize on boys’ needs for active instructional styles, hands-on learning, inspirational teacher leadership by as many male teachers as possible or female teachers who understand boys, project-based learning, materials that intrigue boys (particularly technology and gaming) and increased kinesthetic movement.

9. No Field of Dreams—Yet

Over my 50 years of medical practice, I went from the National Organization for Women, to the Foundation for Male Studies, to the Yonkers Model Charter School for Boys. Along the way, I had a few burning phrases that I kept repeating in my mind:

“These are ideas whose time has come.”

Or, from the wonderful sports movie *Field of Dreams*, starring Kevin Costner, who was driven by the idea of building a baseball field:

“Build it and they will come.”

Ahh! But then life intrudes on dreams. The Foundation was established, and held conferences with first-tier academics; the school Model was built with the help of the head of a department of education at a major state university; and funding proposals were sent to 25 carefully selected foundations. But unlike the result in the *Field of Dreams*, they did not come.

10. Current Challenges

Male Studies has developed a cadre of devoted scholars and identified dozens of others around the world who are working on these questions—but primarily in isolation, and usually only after they have achieved tenure, to avoid damaging their careers.

It also emerged that the males at the top of the social pyramid of success were, for some reason, not coming forth to support the development of the lives and resources of the vast majority of men on the bottom. This was the reverse of the forces that drove the development of resources for women, where support could be gained from both men and women.

Difficulty became the mother of invention as I discovered that to propose a benefit for men and boys was almost immediately rebuffed with the zero-sum response, “Everything has always been about men,” as if doing anything for men and boys took something away from girls and women. In fact, around the world, there are foundations with thousands of programs for girls and women, but none for boys and men, as the World Bank study showed.

Over time, I realized these Male Studies projects needed to gain a public passion that was hard to obtain in the current cultural climate.

11. Current Opportunities

But hope remains: mothers of boys (the MOB), as well as fathers, recognize the problem. Everyone has a soft spot in their heart for boys. In response, I created the project, “A Run for Boys.” I had lapel pins made up: “Have Boys? Need Help?” And I created a website: www.runforboys.org.

I envision these events taking place in 100 cities across the country, with the proceeds going to the Yonkers Model School. They could be accompanied by additional educational and sports programs for boys sponsored by Rotary or Lions clubs, the Boy Scouts, or ASC.

In addition, Male Studies offers the opportunity to some visionary benefactor to achieve name recognition as a cultural pioneer by creating the first department at a major university dedicated to the “Science of the Male” through the [Donor’s Name Here] Chair of Male Studies.

Finally, as an ultimate act of bravado, hope, courage, maleness, and commitment—and still committed to the beliefs that these are “ideas whose time has come” and the imperative “build it and they will come”—the Foundation has created another vehicle to add muscularity to advocacy. This is the Men’s Issues Coalition Political Action Committee (MICPAC), a 501(c)(4) corporation able to accept donations that are not limited to charitable advocacy but that can be used for lobbying and support of political candidates.

12. Concluding Remarks

The Foundation for Male Studies is still looking for a way to establish the “scientific study of the male” as an academic discipline at the university level.

The Yonkers Model Charter School for Boys, an outgrowth of the Foundations’ research into the decline of male human capital, is still waiting to be launched.

The “Run for Boys,” as a national awareness and fund-raising vehicle is still to be run.

MICPAC, whose logo shows a big kilted Scotsman protecting an array of boys and girls, is still waiting to be used on behalf of all our hopes and dreams for more gender equity.

The American Sports Council and the Foundation for Male Studies could not be more aligned in their vision and mission: restoration of integrity to our educational systems with a sense of equity that honors the urgency of our need to support the other half of gender by recognizing the need for programs and policies that recognize that we are all in this together.

Thank you.