

THE STATUS OF MEN IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

FIRST BIENNIAL REPORT
OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF MEN

<http://www.nh.gov/csm/>

NOVEMBER 1, 2005

CHARTER

The General Court recognizes that men are an important resource for families and children, and wishes to explore the causes and consequences of a variety of social, economic, and health problems facing men, and to have recommendations for relief made available to the public. Specifically, the General Court recognizes that fatherlessness is a severe social problem and that New Hampshire children who have a poor or non-existent relationship with their father are the largest users of a variety of state-funded services. In addition, men whose average life expectancy was formerly on a par with that of women are now dying 10 years sooner, with much higher rates of suicide and mortality from the 15 leading causes of diseases and accidents. Educationally, the General Court recognizes the need to address the relatively poor performance of boys in the areas of reading and comprehension and to increase the grade passage rate for boys while encouraging the pursuit of post-secondary degrees. The New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men was therefore created by the legislature to address and reverse the deteriorating status of men and boys in New Hampshire.

The Commission was enabled by passage of HB587-FN-A (Chapter 267:2, Laws of 2002, effective July, 1, 2002).

Membership consists of seven members appointed by the Governor:

- Joseph H. Mastromarino, MD, Chair
- Scott A. Garman, Secretary
- Alfred Lerandau
- Marshall D. Hickok
- Stephen H. Gorin
- Michael J. Geanoulis
- Larry Colby, Treasurer (*resigned, May 2005. No replacement has been appointed as of the date of this report, 1 November 2005*)

Duties of the Commission shall include but not be limited to:

- Examining issues and effects of cultural biases and stereotyping, beginning with childhood experiences and programs in public schools, and extending to include a study of male suicide and adult concerns such as family relations, promoting education and policies which bring fathers and children closer together.
- Studying health problems unique to men or which predominately affect men, and making appropriate recommendations.
- Promoting initiatives and programs that will enable men to develop career skills and continue their education so that they may become productive and responsible citizens.

The Commission, with this report, meets the legislative requirement to report its activities, findings, and recommendations for the general court and the administration pursuant to Chapter 19-I, on or before November 1, 2005.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN wishes to recognize the cooperation and expertise of the many specialists and state agencies who contributed to the substance of this report. Without their cooperation and assistance, this report would not have been possible.

Ann Larney, Office of the NH Attorney General
Thom Linehan, UNH Extension Services, Family Education
Chuck Rhoades, author of "A Study of Men and Their Health"
Rep. David A. Bickford
Gerard J. Boyle, former Chair of the Commission on the Status of Men
Lee Newman, Executive Director, SAFE-NH
Linda Sheldon, NH State Office of Information Technology
Dr. Murray A. Straus, PhD, Co-Director, Family Research Lab, UNH
Tom Andrew, MD, Chief Medical Examiner, State of New Hampshire
The Department of Education
The Department of Health & Human Services
 Office of Child Support Enforcement
 Bureau of Health Statistics and Data Management
 Youth Detention Center
The National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI)
The New Hampshire State Library
The Upham-Walker House

We are deeply grateful to the members of the public who took valuable time away from their personal obligations in order to bring us a better sense of the problems described herein.

We are especially indebted to our spouses, loved ones, families, and friends for their tolerance, support, suggestions, and advocacy during this period.

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

There are those who contend that men continue to enjoy marked advantages, and always have benefited from the initial patriarchal construction of western society. However, the predominant role of financial provider to the family, coupled with shifting demands of society, evolved to require that on average, men spend a significantly increasing amount of time in work activities (as compared to women in similar "full-time" jobs), and that they engage in considerably more demanding and dangerous career choices. Men respond as "doers" both as a result of societal conditioning and neurobiologic differences and tend to pursue their goals without the significant processing, forethought, discussion, and counseling that women tend to engage in. For better or worse, men have come to value tenaciousness of intent and singularity of purpose as opposed to the measured decision by consensus that women more frequently subscribe to. To imply that these multiple negative male outcomes are gender-specific denies the profound effect they have on our wives, our daughters, and society, both locally and globally.

That men would need help by way of a chartered Commission to improve their status seemed counterintuitive given the popular image of men as independent, self-sufficient survivors, able to overcome the most difficult of life's challenges on their own. Modern pressures, however, find men and their families experiencing significant difficulties due to evolving values, health problems, growing educational deficiencies, and new socio-economic family standards. This report calls attention to serious problems in the lives of New Hampshire men and boys that, prior to the establishment of this Commission, were "off of the radar screen" in terms of their negative impact on society.

- Boys continue to have inferior reading and comprehension scores and lower graduation rates. Men are much less likely to pursue secondary degrees and university graduate programs.
- The suicide rates for boys, young fathers, and older men range from four to ten times higher than that of women, depending on such factors as age, marital status, and emotional well-being. The general health of men is seen as in a serious crisis according to Dr. William Pollack of the Harvard Medical School Center for Men.
- Men, for a variety of reasons, continue to have problems keeping up with court-ordered child support payments in spite of, or possibly because of, well-intentioned federal mandates designed to improved family wellness.
- Fatherlessness, according to growing numbers of social thinkers, is among our most serious social problems. Fatherless children have a higher dependency on expensive state-funded services such as welfare, DCYF/Foster Care programs, child support enforcement, special education services, detention centers, etc. There appears to be a strong link between father absence and a wide variety of pathologies, including juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and educational failure. Children having a poor or non-existent relationship with their natural father have lower wellness levels in the areas of safety, health, education, and economic security.
- Men are often portrayed as the primary cause of domestic violence. However, the research reveals this problem as more complex than is commonly thought, and the subject will be

treated in detail in this report.

- For the reader's convenience, the Commission's **recommendations will appear in bold face** throughout the body of this report and the **Summary of Recommendations** section on page 33.

Commissioner Stephen Gorin would like it known that although he shares authorship of this document, he does not necessarily agree with some portions of the sections of this report dealing with Fatherhood Issues, Child Support, and Domestic Violence.

HISTORY

In 1998, House Bill 1377 was first introduced to the New Hampshire Legislature, asking for the establishment of a full Commission on the Status of Men (CSM). It failed to gain the approval of the House Finance Committee. The following year, the effort was repeated under House Bill 553. After a detailed inspection of preliminary evidence, including burgeoning male mortality, suicide, educational failure, and fatherless rates, the House was moved to share the sense of urgency of the bill's sponsor, Representative David Bickford, and recommended passage on June 23, 1999 by a vote of 210 to 76.

The Senate Executive Departments Committee then amended the bill. In the ensuing House/Senate committee of conference convened to iron out differences, it was agreed to create a Legislative Committee to Study the Status of Men (LCSSM) to review these alleged problems in further detail, make recommendations as necessary, and come back to the Legislature by February 15, 2001 with a full report. The bill passed the Legislature in this form and was signed into law by the Governor in June, 2000.

The duties of the LCSSM were threefold: To examine, study, and promote, as explained in the duties requirements of HB 553. The LCSSM noted with some alarm the rapidly deteriorating status of men in New Hampshire. This deterioration begins with the increasing rates of fatherlessness, includes marked and accelerating trends of sub-par reading scores, dropout rates, higher crime and incarceration rates, lower graduation rates, lower rates of enrollment in secondary and graduate degree programs, and progresses through the second highest child support rate in the nation, perceived negative disparities in the Family Court system, and perceived use of false or exaggerated claims of domestic violence in divorce cases to deprive men of their families, homes, and possessions without appropriate due process, lack of a legislative presence due to gross inequities of funding compared to women's programs, and culminates in significantly fewer programs geared towards preventive health services for men, a paucity of support groups for men in general, relative under-funding of health issues which affect primarily men, markedly higher suicide rates than women, and ultimately resulting in mortality rates that are higher than those of women beginning at birth and ending with a life span that is significantly less than women in New Hampshire.

Due to the overwhelming nature of the problems uncovered, the LCSSM could do little by

way of “promotion” or “prevention” because of time and resource constraints. The LCSSM could not, for example, explore causes and prevention for the heartbreak of suicide; nor could it promote higher levels of father involvement with their children or improve the education deficit of boys. Furthermore, many items on the list of topics the LCSSM hoped to examine were not readily available and recommended establishing a Commission on the Status of Men (CSM) to promote initiatives, programs, and further study.

Early in 2001, Representative David Bickford filed HB587-FN-A for the purpose of establishing a commission on the status of men (CSM) and appropriating \$69,561 to facilitate its duties. After passing the House, the Senate amended the bill months later by stripping its funding. HB587 and the unfunded Commission on the Status of Men became effective the following year on July 1, 2002.

Because of many delays in the membership nominations process, the Commission on the Status of Men was not able to hold its first meeting until October 31, 2003, over a year after it became effective under the law. In addition, the ability of the CSM to perform its prescribed duties pursuant to RSA-19I:4 is considerably compromised by lack of funding.

To facilitate the promotion of programs and to treat the problems described in this report, this Commission needs to be funded as originally intended under HB587 (2001). **This Commission, therefore, recommends that the state provide adequate funding to finance an Executive Director, support personnel, office, supplies, telephone, computer and other office equipment.**

MEN'S HEALTH

RSA 19-I charges the Commission on the Status of Men with “[s]tudying health problems unique to men or which predominantly affect men, and making appropriate recommendations.” The Commission has taken tentative steps to address these issues. Members of the Commission have met with a representative of the Men's Health Network (<http://www.menshealthnetwork.org>) and distributed some of the Network's literature. We expect to focus further on health issues during the next year.

Health issues remain a central concern for men in New Hampshire. In a study of New Hampshire men, Rhoades (2000) noted that due to gender roles, (i.e. “the attitudes, behaviors and expectations that American culture assigns to males and females”) many men find it difficult to acknowledge their own vulnerability and lack of knowledge and seek needed health care. A 2002 report by the Endowment for Health on “social and cultural barriers to accessing health and health care in New Hampshire” noted:

Mortality rates from all causes (cancer, diabetes, heart disease, injuries, suicide etc.) are significantly higher for men than women. A number of studies document a disparity between men and women's health status and health seeking behaviors. According to one

study, 70% of the uninsured men surveyed did not have a regular physician. Minority men are most likely to be uninsured and are at the highest risk. The study indicates that health care providers are missing opportunities to incorporate preventive care and anticipatory guidance in the illness or injury related visits most common among men. Additionally, screenings for prostate and colorectal cancers are not as well subsidized or funded as breast and cervical cancer screening for women. Other gender considerations include depression and suicidal ideation related to gender identification (especially in adolescents) and the issues of domestic and sexual violence. (http://www.endowmentforhealth.org/theme_social/resources_view.asp?K=4&T=P&R=M).

These issues are compounded by the reality that many men in New Hampshire do not have health insurance. In 2002-3, 12% of non-elderly New Hampshire men had no health insurance (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Studies show that the health of individuals without insurance "is worse than it would otherwise be if they were insured" and "providing health insurance to uninsured adults would result in improved health, including greater life expectancy" (IOM, 2002, p. 5).

Nationwide, approximately 9% more men will develop prostate cancer in 2005 than women will develop breast cancer. However, according to estimates by the American Cancer Society 2005 Surveillance Research (<http://www.pccnc.org/CAFF2005f4PWsecured.pdf>), this percentage of men in New Hampshire will be markedly increased to 29%, or over three times the national average! According to these projections for 2005, 890 women will be diagnosed in New Hampshire with breast cancer, whereas 1,150 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. New Hampshire is not alone in its lack of commitment or action: The federal government spends approximately seven times more on breast cancer research than on prostate cancer research (\$550 million versus \$80 million, in 1996 there was \$12,000 in research dollars spent for each death from breast cancer versus \$2,000 in research dollars for each death from prostate cancer www.prostateaction.org/resources). The causes of this disparity are manifold, but certainly New Hampshire lags at executive and legislative initiatives to guarantee that insurers provide coverage, and that the state provide programs for those men who are uninsured, for the appropriate screening tests for prostate cancer similar to the long-mandated coverage and programs specifically to screen for breast and other cancers that affect primarily women. In fact, the huge disparity may reflect the effectiveness of these early detection and screening programs for breast cancer which have been put in place by state government. This glaringly underlines the failure to make a similar investment in men's health. When the few bills attempting to correct the situation in New Hampshire have been defeated by the (predominantly male) legislature, the causes of the failure of that legislation are unclear, but the results are anything but: Men are suffering and dying needlessly in New Hampshire due to the inaction of good people who apparently have been led to believe that legislative activity designed to primarily benefit men is somehow not appropriate politically, financially, or otherwise. Every preventable death, male or female, lessens us as a society by virtue of our preceding lack of leadership, vision, commitment, and action. **The Commission recommends that the State of New Hampshire take steps to reduce the disparity between the investment in women's health issues and men's health issues, and**

to design programs concentrating on addressing in a gender-neutral manner those conditions and diseases with the highest incidence and the highest rates of morbidity and mortality.

Men in New Hampshire continue to kill themselves at much higher rates than their female counterparts. With a relatively small statewide population, it is difficult to document specific trends with accurate statistical significance. From a statistical standpoint, such small numbers skew widely the death rate for suicide. In 2001, the death rate of suicide in New Hampshire resulted in a ranking of number 17 of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia, whereas in 2002, the difference of 35 deaths from suicide caused the ranking to drop to number 39. This year may result in a smaller number of overall deaths from suicide in New Hampshire if the trend through mid-October continues (data from Dr Tom Andrew, Chief Medical Examiner). However, 85% of these deaths were male, a higher percentage than the national ratio of male suicides to overall suicides. The causes of the higher suicide rate for males are numerous, complex, and interdependent. **The Commission recommends that the State of New Hampshire provide further directed study and proactive intervention programs, including educational programs at the elementary school level directed at bolstering the self-esteem of boys and helping them develop increased coping skills and new approaches to personal and interpersonal conflict, coupled with increased prevention programs directed at those segments of our society most likely to succeed in committing suicide.**

Table A: Suicide in New Hampshire by Gender and Age, 2002-2005

AGE GROUP	2002	2002	2003	2003	2004	2004	2005	2005
	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	to date	to date
10 - 20	3	13	2	8	4	6	0	4
21 - 25	1	9	3	9	1	8	1	3
26 - 30	2	8	0	8	1	9	0	4
31 - 35	1	11	4	10	2	8	1	3
36 - 40	3	13	6	12	4	9	2	5
41 - 45	6	12	4	12	6	10	1	5
46 - 50	1	14	3	14	3	16	2	7
51 - 55	3	11	2	15	1	9	1	6
56 - 60	1	7	2	14	7	7	1	6
61 - 65	0	6	3	7	0	8	0	3
66 - 70	2	4	2	4	1	4	1	4
71 - 75	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	3
76 - 80	0	6	0	5	1	2	1	3
81 - 85	0	2	0	5	1	2	0	2
86 - 90	0	1	0	4	0	3	0	2
91 - 95	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1
	24	119	32	128	32	105	11	61
Total for the Year		143		160		137		72 to date
% Male Victims		83.20%		80.50%		76.60%		84.70%

FATHERHOOD ISSUES

Public Comments

The CSM meetings were open to the public for comment and discussion. Early on, fathers came forward to complain about abnormal relationships with their children and unfair treatment in family court. Many complained about child support guidelines that seemed inflated and did not allow them to live on their remaining income; lawyers who seemed uncaring; perceptions that lawyers were not effectively fighting for them; an inability to get redress for emotional and physical abuse inflicted on them and their children; misleading and inaccurate testimony being brought to the legislature by professional court advocates who had no regard for the importance of the father/child relationship; being made to feel like a criminal in the courtroom; judges avoiding or ignoring the negative impact of father absence on children; the need for men's support groups and counseling for men; perjury and false accusations being used as weapons to render fathers impotent in court; the manufacture of acrimony to secure custody; Guardian ad Litem who don't care about the father/child connection; the process of divorce being used as a money-making proposition (money going to lawyers and other members of the "divorce industry" that could have been used, instead, for the welfare of the children); the permanent nature of "temporary" orders; the misleading and inaccurate perception that domestic violence is primarily a male responsibility; insufficient services for male victims of domestic violence; and feelings of suicide as the ultimate solution.

Second wives, mothers, grandmothers, teachers, and girlfriends came forward to validate many of the complaints being brought by men. One second wife reported levels of stress so severe that both she and her disenfranchised husband were forced into the welfare system. A school nurse told us that most of the children to which she administers medication like Ritalin and Prozac come from homes where the connection with one of the parents (usually the father) was compromised.

The Status of Fathers

As women have had difficulty establishing their role as important contributors to the workplace, men have had difficulty establishing themselves as important nurturers for their families and children. While the status of fathers and fatherless rates in New Hampshire are difficult to quantify, this Commission finds little reason to hope that the problem is much improved over what it was in 2001, when the Legislative Committee to Study the Status of Men (LCSSM) discovered that the U.S. is the world's leader in fatherless families. Nationally, 40% - or about 24 million children - go to bed in homes absent their biological father on any given night (with the possible exception of every other weekend) according to the latest available data. (<http://www.nh.gov/csm/publications.html>)

The fatherless problem, along with its link to the pathology of dysfunctional and disadvantaged children, seems as an invisible elephant in the room. There seems to be

widespread casual regard to the notion that caring and involved fathers are ordinarily beneficial for the safety, health, economic security, education, and overall wellness of children.

In some places, fathers are even billed as villains to be avoided. In a public lecture entitled "Sexually Abusive Fathers," the University of New Hampshire's Family Research Lab (FRL) once produced a rightful attempt to get relief from the sexual abuse of children. However, it was noted by the speaker during the presentation that stepfathers or live-in boyfriends are six times more likely than natural fathers to commit such heinous acts. Children are typically best protected from sexual abuse, not by a father's absence, but by his presence. (David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, New York, Basic Books, 1995; See also the *Father Facts* Booklet available from <http://www.fatherhood.org>; and the *Garbage Generation* by Dan Amneus at <http://www.mugu.com>)

On May 19, 2005, Judge Edwin Kelly told the Child and Family Law Committee that sole custody rates for fathers are holding steady at about 10% for uncontested cases (15% for contested cases), while mother's custody rates hovered around 66% for uncontested cases (75% for contested cases). The balance, 24% and 10% respectively, were awarded joint custody. (http://www.nhcustody.org/NH_custody_statistics.htm) This may reflect a mindset that says fathers should be restricted to the breadwinner role while mothers should be restricted to the caretaking role.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, women are projected to comprise 47 percent of the total labor force in 2012 (as they did in 2003). There were 64.7 million employed women in the U.S. in 2004. Seventy-four percent worked full time, while the remaining 26 percent worked part time. (<http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm>) Given the plethora of evidence documenting the benefits of involved fathers with their children, and the present rate of female participation in the workforce, the custody imbalance between fathers and mothers seems difficult to justify. **This commission suggests that the Governor of New Hampshire issue a proclamation declaring that both parents are equally important for their children.**

The Importance of Fathers

Studies have conclusively shown that children who receive higher levels of attention and interaction with their natural fathers are healthier and better psychologically adjusted than children without fathers or with uninvolved fathers. Whether the outcome is cognitive development, sex-role development, or psycho-social development, children are better off when their relationship with their father is close and secure. (Lamb, M.E. *The Father's Role: Applied Perspectives*. New York: J. Wiley, 1986)

Fathers who were affectionate, spent time with their children, and had a positive attitude were more likely to have securely attached infants. (Cox, M.J., et.al. *Prediction of Infant-Father and Infant-Mother Attachment*. *Developmental Psychology* 28 (1992): 474-483.)

Children with involved fathers are more confident and less anxious when placed in

unfamiliar settings, better able to deal with frustration, better able to adapt to changing circumstances and breaks from their routine, and better able to gain a sense of independence and an identity outside the mother/child relationship. Father-child interaction has been shown to promote a child's physical well-being, perceptual abilities, and competency for relatedness with others, even at a young age. (Krampe and Fairweather. *Journal of Family Issues* 14.4, December 1993: 572-591)

Children whose fathers were highly involved in their schools were more likely to do well academically, to participate in extracurricular activities, and to enjoy school, and were less likely to have ever repeated a grade or been expelled compared to children whose fathers were less involved in these schools. This effect held for both two-parent and single-parent households, and was distinct and independent from the effect of mother involvement. (Source: Nord, Christine Windquist. *Students Do Better When Their Fathers Are Involved At School* NCES 98-121. Washington, D.C.: US DOE, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998)

Father involvement correlates with fewer behavior problems exhibited by their children. This finding holds after controlling for the level of maternal involvement. (Amato and Rivera. *Paternal Involvement and Children's Behavior Problems*. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999):375-384)

Fatherless children score lower on tests and have lower grade point averages. Family scholar Barbara Dafoe Whitehead says, "Even after controlling for race, income and religion, scholars find significant differences in educational attainment between children who grow up in intact families and children who do not." Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school. (US Health & Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics. *Survey on Child Health*. Washington, DC: GPO, 1993)

In a study of 75 toddlers it was found that children who were attached to their fathers were better problem-solvers than children who were not securely attached to their fathers. Children whose fathers spent a lot of time with them and who were sensitive to their needs were found to be better adapted than their peers whose fathers were not as involved. (Esterbrooks, M. Ann and Wendy Goldberg. *Toddler Development in the Family: Impact of Father Involvement and Parenting Characteristics*. *Child Development* 55 (1984): 740-752)

On the 25th of October, 2005, we were informed that of the 80 dysfunctional youths incarcerated at the New Hampshire Youth Development Center, 63 (or 79%) came from homes absent their biological father.

It would be impossible to give a complete accounting of the importance of caring fathers for children with this report. The serious student is simply encouraged to type "The Importance of Fathers" in any internet search engine. (See also the fourth edition of the *Father Facts* Booklet available at <http://www.fatherhood.org>; and the LCSSM report at <http://www.nh.gov/csm/publications.html>)

Researchers have discovered an undeniable connection between fatherlessness and a wide variety of pathological disadvantages accruing to children, yet modern court decrees, social policy, and even fathers themselves, reflect mindsets and attitudes that serve to disconnect natural fathers from their children. **This commission recommends that research on the father's role in child development, some of which is listed in the bibliography herewith, be given the widest possible publicity and attention.**

This commission should be funded to enable the production of Public Service Announcements and brochures designed to promote education and policies which would bring fathers and children closer together pursuant to RSA 19-I:4."

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Men came forward during our public meetings to allege unfair treatment in family court domestic violence proceedings, and to allege that unsubstantiated charges of domestic violence were being improperly used as tools to place them at a distinct disadvantage in civil matters before family court. This, and other testimony, led us to investigate the problem of domestic violence (DV) in greater detail.

A Marital Master explained to the Task Force on Family Law that the word on the street was that a woman can readily gain immediate possession of the children, home and other assets by filing an "emergency" ex-parte domestic violence petition, claiming to be in fear of her safety. The accused may then have an immediate restraining order placed against him on a "temporary" basis even though he may not have been given an immediate opportunity to be heard in his defense. This procedure, commonly referred to as the "silver bullet" because of its efficiency and effectiveness, is difficult to challenge and may represent a loophole in the family court system that is being exploited. Temporary orders, it seems, have a way of evolving into permanency because of the difficulty in proving perjury or one's own innocence, especially in those 50% of cases where the parties are mutual contributors to the problem; and because of crowded dockets, time and costs involved.

According to the NH Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, New Hampshire has seen anywhere from 4 to 7 thousand petitions for DV relief annually in recent years - the vast majority being filed against men. It is not unusual, since judges are prone to err on the side of caution, for DV ex-parte petitions to be granted immediately on the justification that an "emergency" exists. Court statistics on domestic violence have proved to be difficult to obtain, but one report from the Administration Office of the Courts, a 1999 study funded by the State Justice Institute, indicates that an overwhelming majority of such petitions are granted. In the Salem and Littleton jurisdictions, 98% and 100% of ex-parte DV petitions for restraint of the defendant were immediately granted in 1999, according to the report. These orders are often issued in the absence of the accused having an immediate opportunity to be heard in his defense.

In an effort to better understand the domestic violence problem, this commission invited Dr. Murray Straus, PhD, DV expert and co-founder of the Family Research Lab at the University of New Hampshire to speak to us. In brief, Dr. Straus told both the Men's Commission and the Task Force on Family Law (TFFL) that most domestic violence education and advocate training programs have unfairly referred to the perpetrator as "him" and the victim as "her" over the years, which constitutes a gender bias. Much of the education and dialogue, furthermore, has inappropriately discounted, dismissed, or denied the estimated one-third to one-half of all domestic violence victims who are male. Such stereotyping has had a negative impact on men's status with their families, and devalues the problem of abused men and children. Dr. Straus further indicated that female aggression rates - equal to or exceeding that of men - should be treated equally serious if only as a matter of safety for women, and that men stay in abusive relationships for many of the same reasons claimed by women. His presentation can be accessed at http://www.nh.gov/csm/dv_straus.html. See also Professor Fiebert's collection of DV research abstracts at <http://www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm>.

Efforts to get relief from the domestic violence problem have been unduly influenced by special interests who have successfully sold the problem as solely a responsibility of males over the years. The whole truth on this emotionally-charged dichotomy isn't being fully revealed. It's as if it didn't matter that there are male victims; and worse, that only males should be seen as aggressive because female assaults are not viewed as a problem. That in any case, only women shall get relief. The federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provides one such example of gender exclusiveness. As its title indicates, only women shall benefit from government intervention. No one was allowed to testify on behalf of male victims at any legislative hearing on VAWA enactment or renewal proceedings, so powerful is this bias against men.

One-sided reporting comes in many forms and can have long-lasting effects. As long ago as 1981, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz reported that 1.8 million women *and 2.0 million men* were assaulted by their partner. From that data, half-truths evolved like the one that appears on the website of the American Judges Association: "Every 15 seconds a woman is battered somewhere in the United States." (<http://aja.ncsc.dni.us/domviol/page2.html>) Nothing is ever published about the "real surprise" (to quote the researchers); the even shorter time span (14 seconds) between assaults by women on their partners, or the equal number of closed doors hiding the other half of the story. (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family*, Anchor Books, 1981)

Judges and criminal justice professionals, who ordinarily can be trusted to be impartial and unbiased arbiters of the truth, can be unwitting accomplices in the dissemination of DV half-truths and exaggerations. In the annual report of the NH Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee (DVFRC), for example, the DV problem is introduced in the overview with the statement: "between three and four million women are beaten by their husbands every year." Men were likewise implicated in the abuse and murder of children. Yet there are no references about the number of men or children assaulted or murdered by intimates in their overview. The DVFRC is chaired and administered by judges, criminal justice professionals, and others, who should be aware of the entire set of facts on such matters. A U.S. DOJ report, "Murder in Families," states

that women were over half of the defendants (55%) in the murder of their offspring; and a "2003 Child Maltreatment" report showed that a child is **twice** as likely to be abused by its mother than by its father: 40.8% of child abuse victims in 2003 were abused by mothers acting alone, while 18.8% of victims were abused by fathers acting alone.

(http://www.nhcustody.org/My_Homepage_Files/child_maltreatment.html and <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/mif.htm>)

An organization called RADAR (Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting) has identified 12 serious flaws with present domestic violence policy:

- Abuses the truth. A recent VAWA-funded report documented that 1.5% of women and 0.9% of men were physically or sexually assaulted by a partner in the previous year. The report further notes that one-fifth of these men - as well as two-fifths of the women - were injured as a result of the assault. (*Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence*, <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf>, p. iii-iv)
- Blatantly discriminates against men. Most DV programs violate men's constitutional right to equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment. None of the billions of VAWA dollars have been spent to help male victims of DV. Lee Newman, executive director of SAFE-NH, an experienced New Hampshire organization that provides services for DV victims regardless of gender, and who outreaches to male victims, has been denied funding by the state organization (NHCASDV) controlling such disbursement (including VAWA funding) for years even though he receives an estimated 12% of New Hampshire's crisis calls. **This commission recommends that Safe-NH's application for VAWA funding be reviewed by the Attorney General to determine the extent to which Safe-NH has been illegally denied funding and to determine the extent to which the services provided meet the requirements of the Violence Against Women Act.**
- Takes children away from their fathers. VAWA laws and the courts unwittingly encourage women to make questionable allegations of domestic violence on an "emergency" basis while petitioning for divorce and custody of the children. In New Hampshire, a father who has ever had a restraining order filed against him can easily be rendered ineligible for shared parenting duties and responsibilities of his children. In written testimony to the Child and Family Law Committee for HB351 (2003) hearings, a Marital Master states, in part: "Unfortunately, requests for ex-parte relief are based upon many circumstances, some of which are made only for the purpose of obtaining an advantage in litigation."
- Blurs the distinction between violent crime and verbal arguments. The National Research Council notes that "Rigorous inquiry into violence against women is precluded when scholars fail to distinguish among what constitutes an act of violence, abuse, or battering." (*Advancing the Federal Research Agenda on Violence Against Women*, <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10849.html>, p. 26)
- Allows uncritical use of restraining orders. Judges will typically issue restraining orders based only on the word of the alleged victim, without allowing the accused an immediate opportunity to present his or her side of the argument. And many state laws define "violence" so broadly as to allow restraining orders to be issued on the flimsiest pretext. In New Hampshire, the standard of evidence is "Upon a showing of immediate and

present danger of abuse,..." [RSA 173-B:4]. One judge told the Task Force on Family Law (TFFL) that he was confident he could discern the truth at ex-parte hearings in the defendant's absence by the demeanor of the plaintiff and that he was well educated on the problem of domestic violence. An attending prosecuting attorney, moreover, responded to a question about the NH Constitution, [Article 15, which provides that "No subject shall be held to answer for any crime or offense until the same is formally described to him...and to be fully heard in his defense"] by saying that Article 15 does not apply to subjects in civil matters. He further provided ex-parte justification by citing in *re: Jason*, a supreme court decision that allowed ex-parte testimony. (In *re: Jason* the court upheld ex-parte testimony on the trustworthiness of a policeman. It should be noted, however, that unlike domestic violence or civil proceedings, the policeman in *re: Jason* had no personal interest at stake in the outcome of the decision).

- Provides incentives for law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. Local authorities are encouraged to implement policies for mandatory reporting, mandatory arrest, and "no-drop" prosecutions. This Commission concurs with a Feminist Majority Foundation report recommending that domestic violence programs should abandon such rigid and unfair practices because they often end up harming families (*Safety & Justice for All: Examining the Relationship between the Women's Anti-Violence Movement and the Criminal Legal System*. http://www.ms.foundation.org/user-assets/PDF/Program/safety_justice.pdf, pp. 12-16)
- Federal laws pre-empt existing state law enforcement programs. New Hampshire currently has strong partner assault laws. The federal Violence of Crime Act already addresses the issue of domestic violence. VAWA spends \$1 billion a year to duplicate existing programs.
- Politicizes the judiciary. VAWA provides funding for judicial education which in practice can amount to prejudiced-loaded rants. In one training session in New Jersey, judges were instructed: "Your job is not to become concerned about all the constitutional rights of the man that you're violating as you grant a restraining order. Throw him out on the street, give him the clothes on his back and tell him, 'See ya' around.'" (<http://www.ejfi.org/DV/dv-10.htm>)
- Funds ideologically-based treatment programs. The National Academy of Sciences recently concluded that domestic violence programs are frequently "driven by ideology and stakeholder interests rather than by plausible theories and scientific evidence of cause." (*Advancing the Federal Research Agenda on Violence Against Women*, <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10849.html>, p. 6)
- VAWA represents an over-reaching of federal power and unwarranted government interference into the personal relationships of intimate partners. The Supreme Court has condemned parts of VAWA as representing federal intrusion into an area of law that falls squarely within the domain of the states (*United States v. Morrison*, 2000). (<http://www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/case/1261/>)
- Corrupts family violence research. Researchers often seek to bias the outcome of their research by interviewing only women, by slanting the wording of questions, or by selectively reporting research findings. Murray Straus, PhD, of the Family Research Lab at UNH, told the Task Force on Family Law that domestic violence researchers are known

to leave out material facts about assaultive women in their reports. (*The Controversy over Domestic Violence by Women: A Methodological, Theoretical, and Sociology of Science Analysis*. <http://www.menweb.org/straus21.htm>)

During the June, 2005 meeting of the Commission, the following resolution was passed regarding VAWA: "**The Commission on the Status of Men supports the renewal of the Violence Against Women Act only if it is made gender-neutral in language, intent, and application.**"

The September issue of *Psychology of Women Quarterly* published a special report on Female Violence Against Intimate Partners, spotlighting the possibility that present DV policy may be poorly conceived - serving to pour gasoline on fires that could be quenched with a more reasonable approach. (*Psychology of Women Quarterly*, September 2005 <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/toc/pwqu/29/3;jsessionid=caztNaNVav367wpbZy> See also **Appendix A** for abstract summaries of the articles.) The Commission supports and reaffirms conclusions reported by these DV researchers:

1. Women are just as likely as men to engage in physical aggression towards their intimate partners: "Directly relevant to the theme of this volume, the later research revealed that males and females reported equally high levels of direct aggression in interaction with romantic partners." (See Deborah South Richardson article)
2. DV is a problem in lesbian relationships, which refutes the "DV is how the patriarchy maintains power and control over women" theory. (See article by Kimberly F. Balsam and Dawn M. Szymanski)
3. DV is a complex social phenomenon which defies simplistic ideological explanations: "These results indicate that women's physical aggression toward male partners cannot be understood using a unitary explanation." (See the Nicola Graham-Kevan and John Archer article)

This collection could be helpful in convincing lawmakers and family courts that women can be equally aggressive as men; and that the removal of fathers in one-sided ex-parte proceedings might prove to be little more than a counterproductive exercise in control and a grievous miscarriage of justice.

CHILD SUPPORT

Problems with child support compliance persist for both male and female obligors. The reasons are varied and obscure: Flagrant irresponsibility, insufficient earnings; resentment that the system discourages the parent/child connection - or even alienates that connection; being estranged from one's own children (or not being properly attached to begin with); income-based guidelines and the widespread concern that money supposedly destined for the children ends up elsewhere; and feelings of misplaced responsibility. One disgruntled man expressed the latter by saying he adequately provided for his children prior to an unwanted divorce, but being ordered to

support his children - an act of love he had been doing voluntarily for years - compounded by a reduced role as "visitor" to his own children, was a crushing blow to his self esteem, initiative, and sense of responsibility. His position was that if the courts could see their way clear to take his children from where they were decently provided for to begin with, without just cause, then the courts should be held responsible for the support of his children.

According to the latest data from the NH Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE form 157, 2004), compliance rates for all accounts and for all obligors, male and female, remain mired around 65%. In other words, for every dollar obligor mothers and fathers were ordered to pay, an average of 65 cents was actually received by the obligee - a rate that has remained relatively constant over the years. Overall compliance rates have increased only slightly since the enactment of the 1985 Family Support Act, a federal law requiring most states to establish OCSE offices as a condition that qualified them to receive federal funding for social programs. In 1985, before the days of "deadbeat" posters, license revocations, and jail sentences, the compliance rates for all obligors with child support orders hovered around 60% for all accounts.

An increase of 5% in compliance rates over 20 years might be seen as statistically insignificant when viewed in the light of the millions spent for enforcement programs and the gradual increase of shared parenting arrangements and higher levels of father involvement. Stanford Braver's research found that when a parent *feels like* a parent to his or her child (a condition best facilitated by parental involvement and shared parenting), compliance rates can exceed 90%. Should expensive OCSE enforcement programs be credited with the 5% increase in compliance rates over 20 years? Or should the credit go, instead, to the courts' increased use of shared parenting arrangements in custody actions and higher rates of father involvement? Further study and more data is needed to answer these questions. (Braver, Sanford & O'Connell, Diane *Divorced Dads: Shattering the Myths*, NY: Tarcher/Putnam, 1998. See also **Appendix D - A Proposal to Estimate and Improve the Success of OCSE.**)

While there has been a significant increase in the percent of cases having child support orders because of OCSE initiatives, there has also been a corresponding increase in the number of children born to unwed parents. (<http://www.ncpa.org/pd/social/pd041801b.html>)

Present policy may be sending the wrong message to both independent-minded women who shun "oppressive" marriages in increasing numbers; and to men who are getting inappropriate messages about their role as fathers. While there has been a steady increase in the birthrate of children to adult single women over the past dozen years or more - government efforts to encourage father involvement, except to obtain social security numbers, is limited to enforcement of support that could be garnered by encouraging parents to work together for their children's needs. Marriage is seen as an oppressive risk to be avoided by growing numbers of women (and men). Gloria Steinem expressed this philosophy best using simplistic terms: "Women need men like fish need bicycles." Marriage, formerly held to be the best way to provide for the needs of children, seems less attractive for women having at their disposal government "family" support and enforcement services; and less attractive for men who wish to avoid the 50% odds of ending up as defendants in a divorce court that dispenses the gold mine, the

miners and the children in unfair proportions.

A more meaningful measure of OCSE collections effectiveness might be seen in terms of the absolute numbers of children in the system, and the total dollars collected per child. The NH OCSE caseload totaled slightly more than 23,000 in 1989, while in 2004, the figure stood at approximately 40,000 - about an 80% increase. In terms of absolute numbers, the problem of improperly supported children is actually far greater than 5% compliance rate increases can compensate for - and far greater than it might otherwise be under more traditional mating conditions - because of a near-doubling of the numbers of children in the system (who are not properly attached to both of their natural parents). The measure of collections in terms of inflation-adjusted dollars per child over the years could not be obtained as of this date, but if the empirical evidence is any indication, the results will prove disappointing here, as well.

Braver formally rediscovered what we all should have known to begin with: Parents have a natural inclination to support their children in a meaningful and caring way with the important caveat that they feel like parents to their children - that they are involved with their children. The millions spent on support enforcement might have been better spent on programs that encourage mothers and fathers to be more careful about the way they bring children into the world, and to encourage intimate involvement of both the mother and the father with their children when they do. **This Commission recommends that the state sponsor and promote educational programs that teach young men and women about the need for children to have two caring natural parents meaningfully involved in their lives, with an emphasis on the indispensable role of the father in child development.**

OCSE should consider modifying its policy of enforcing only the support portion of family court decrees to include the parenting aspects of those decrees as well. And the state should finance this Commission so that it may conduct a detailed study of the causes of the child support arrearage problem.

THE TASK FORCE ON FAMILY LAW

A representative from the Commission on the Status of Men was assigned to a seat on the Task Force on Family Law (TFFL) in September, 2003. A year earlier, the legislature had created the Task Force effective May, 2002. Its duties included developing proposals for a non-adversarial system for families undergoing a divorce and other family matters. The final report can be accessed at <http://www.nhbar.org/pdfs/FamLawTFRep04CL.pdf>.

The TFFL made many valuable recommendations for such things as parenting plans, modified court procedures, alternative dispute resolutions, and language changes in the law. It appears that the TFFL might have made significant progress in neutralizing the win-lose atmosphere in family courts that otherwise worsens an already difficult scenario. If its recommendations are followed, family courts may evolve into a win-win system that facilitates

communication, compromise, and recognition that both parents are equally important for their children.

For many disenfranchised male veterans of the family courts, however, it seems that most of the problems they faced will remain unchanged. Of primary concern is the fear that the suggested improvements will be trumped by "manufactured acrimony" and "silver bullet" restraining orders now being issued, literally, by the thousands - many on one-sided testimony. Men are wondering, with considerable suspicion, how lawyers and other officers of the court, many of whom have traditionally relied on adversarial proceedings and a winning reputation to attract clients and income, will work in good faith to reduce the hostilities associated with custody actions going forward.

Many men remain worried that a bias against them as parents will still exist in spite of TFFL recommendations for mediation and parenting plans. They worry that women will still be able to secure control of the children by reacting with hostility toward shared parenting proposals, and then petitioning for "emergency" restraining orders to neutralize the possibility of shared parenting. One member expressed such concerns best by saying: "I feel pain for the fathers who lose their children in family court, but I'd fight like a wildcat to keep from losing mine." That the TFFL purposefully avoided the topic of shared parenting rights and responsibilities did nothing to alleviate these fears.

The VAWA-funded NH Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (CASDV) provided testimony that was shown to be false (after the vote) about "joint custody being repealed as unworkable" (in some states), and made the unsubstantiated charge that "80% of men who seek shared parenting fit the profile of a batterer," which may have contributed to the TFFLs refusal to look at or report on the benefits of equal custody for children, in spite of a legislative intent to review such matters. It was also stated on numerous occasions during TFFL meetings that shared parenting and mediation should not be considered "if the parents cannot get along". An attempt to redress the vacuum in the debate over shared parenting by way of a minority expression for the TFFL report was rejected by a majority of TFFL members present. The TFFL minutes twice reflect the fact that its report shall not include a minority expression. These challenges, in addition to others rooted in gender bias against fathers, resulted in a senate rejection of HB61 (2005), a bill that would have provided for continuing the TFFL.

Minority Expression

It is reported, with some disappointment, that the TFFL was in disagreement with the following resolution passed by this Commission on September 29, 2004:

"The New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men finds and declares that it should be the public policy of this state that frequent and continuing contact between minor children and both parents, if the parents have separated or dissolved their marriage, is ordinarily beneficial to the children. This Commission also finds that it is in the public interest as well as to children and families to encourage parents to share the rights and

responsibility of child rearing. This Commission recommends that a rebuttable presumption of joint physical custody should be supported and encouraged."

The following minority expressions were also rejected by the TFFL. This Commission feels that these items should be included in any dialogue over the best interests of children and continuing parent-child relationships. The starting point in any child custody action should be that both parents are *equally* important for their children until *clear and convincing evidence* proves otherwise. (Historically, the starting point has been reversed: i.e, parents begin by fighting for sole custody).

1. **Parenting time should be "Maximized"**. The parties should anticipate, in a custody action absent a parent's inability to maximize their parenting time, that those administering or supervising domestic cases (i.e., family court) will make every effort to maximize the time parents have with their children to avoid rendering either of the parties a loser in the action, and to maximize the likelihood that children will have both natural parents involved in a meaningful way. The highest and best form of maximized time, while not always possible, is an equitable split in the time each parent has with the children. Children want, love, and need two parents.
2. **Child support guidelines should be based on child costs**. This Commission recognizes the contribution to acrimony inherent in New Hampshire's income-based child support guidelines and recommends that child support guidelines be based on child costs - not on the income of either parent; and that alimony, where necessary, be treated as a separate line item.
3. **Absent fault grounds, the financial burden of family breakdown should be shared equally by the parties**. Since a family that splits inherits a significant reduction in living standards because of the need for dual accommodations, etc, the parties should be advised that higher participation in the workplace by *both* parties may be required if living standards are to be maintained.
4. **Judges and prosecutors should attend educational conferences on domestic violence structured to avoid the present gender bias that ignores or downplays domestic violence by women against both men and children**. Another serious source of acrimony in domestic relations can be traced to domestic violence policy and education. Much of the literature and protocols on DV have inaccurately introduced the problem as the responsibility of males over the past dozen years, or more. Judges and prosecutors are attending DV conferences, the agenda for which is being controlled by an unbalanced view of the problem by leaving out critical information and perspectives about domestic violence against men and children. This has resulted in thousands of men being unfairly forced out of their homes annually on one-sided testimony in "emergency" civil proceedings.
5. **Properly trained Case Evaluators should screen each domestic violence case with the goal of arriving at possible alternative solutions**. According to Linda Mills, author of *Insult to Injury*, many women regret losing control when the criminal justice system gets involved. Present policy blurs the distinction between a common verbal disagreement and

a physical assault. Any possibility for reconciliation and counseling evaporates under such conditions. Mills also states, as did Dr. Murray Straus who spoke to us, that in fully half of all DV incidents, both parties are mutual contributors to the problem, and that in many of these cases, neutral evaluation might influence a more meaningful outcome through counseling, third-party communications, and compromise. Dr. Straus further stated that the issuance of restraining orders on one-sided testimony during the restructuring of the family is unwise.

6. **Evidentiary standards and procedure should be reviewed and revised in domestic violence cases.** Testimony from involved interested parties should not be held as trustworthy at so-called "emergency" ex parte hearings. Orders (temporary or permanent) should not be issued against any defendant without first affording him or her immediate opportunity to respond. Men, and fathers who care about the relationship with their children, are being ordered from their homes and children, literally by the thousands, at "emergency" DV hearings in which restraining orders are petitioned for by women with secondary gain who claim to be in fear of physical harm. The testimony is often held as trustworthy in the absence of the defendant, who is most often a man unaware of the proceeding, and has no immediate opportunity to testify on his own behalf, or face his accuser. Present policy is unfair, counterproductive, and inflammatory. RSA 173:B, and any other chapter so written, should be modified by removing such sentences as, "Upon a showing of immediate and present danger of abuse.... with or without notice to the defendant," and replacing it with, "Upon a showing of clear and convincing evidence that abuse has occurred, or is about to occur....no order should be issued without first hearing from the defendant."
7. **All Domestic Violence protocols and state-sponsored reports should be modified to change references about male assault rates to include also the female assault rates.** The literature should portray the fact that domestic violence is a two-way street.

PATERNITY FRAUD AND CERTIFICATES OF BIRTH

Paternity Fraud is a growing concern for men and children everywhere. It can spawn considerable grief for the men who may or may not be emotionally attached to a child they later discover was fathered by another; and possibly unsettling for children who may discover the false nature of their paternity. Such problems can become grievously complicated as in the case of the Auburn, Maine man who was denied parenting time by the state to a child on which DNA tests proved was fathered by another man, yet was still ordered by the state to pay child support. (http://www.seacoastonline.com/news/special/may/4_24special.htm, Auburn man ordered to pay support for child that's not his, Portsmouth Herald, April 24, 2005.)

Paternity fraud is defined as the wrong man being named by the mother as the father of her child for purposes of deceit. It is noteworthy that there is no such thing as "maternity fraud" and that this is an issue that exclusively exists as a problem that men may face.

Paternity fraud is a growing problem for both men who should have a higher level of

confidence on the paternity of their children, and for the children who need a reliable history of both parents for the maintenance of their physical and emotional health. The Blood Bank Association, and Lee Newman, administrator of Safe-NH, report that just under 30% of paternity tests proved negative for fathers who were fingered to be the sire of their girlfriend's child. Carnell Smith, a paternity fraud expert who administers <http://www.paternityfraud.com>, reports that slightly more than 30% of the cases he sampled proved negative. Smith strongly advises young men not to sign paternity statements until DNA testing proves positive for them. (<http://www.expertclick.com/search/outsideurl.cfm?groupID=6854>)

This Commission has on its agenda, "Certificates of Birth." It will be exploring the possibility of recommending changes in the birth certificate laws under RSA 5-C:11 that may increase the likelihood of children knowing who their fathers are, of reducing the odds of children not having their legitimate fathers named on their birth certificates, and to enhance the possibility that natural fathers and children may be brought closer together.

EDUCATION

The status of boys and young men in education has been attracting increased attention by education experts in recent years. This surprises many people, who may have heard that schools "shortchange" girls and assumed that boys were doing just fine. In fact, while many people became aware of the fact that girls were behind boys in math and science education, an even wider gender gap remained hidden; that of reading and writing skills, where boys are the ones at a stark disadvantage.

The low educational status of males is especially disturbing given how little has been done to recognize and equip them to better succeed in their schooling. Gender inequities are immediately seen from prekindergarten and continue through postsecondary education. As educational success has become increasingly critical in an information-driven society, the consequences of leaving males behind continue to worsen.

Early Childhood Education

The challenges that boys face in school can be traced back as early as prekindergarten. A 2005 Yale University report showed that nationally, boys are 4.5 times more likely than girls to be expelled from prekindergarten programs. Also noteworthy in this study is the observation that "The increased likelihood of boys to be expelled over girls was similar across all ethnicities, except for African-Americans, where boys accounted for 91.4% of the expulsions." (*Prekindergarteners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*. Walter S. Gilliam, PhD, Yale University Child Study Center. May 2005 Report.)

Reading Scores

Reading scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) demonstrate that in New Hampshire, male students are significantly behind females in this fundamental skill, and that this gap worsens over time. Using the most recent data (2005), we see that the percentage gap between boys and girls who are below the Basic reading level jumps from five points in Grade 4 to ten points in Grade 8. The percentage of boys who are reading below the Proficient level jumps from 65% to 69% between Grade 4 and Grade 8, while for girls this value decreases by one percentage point (from 57% to 56%).

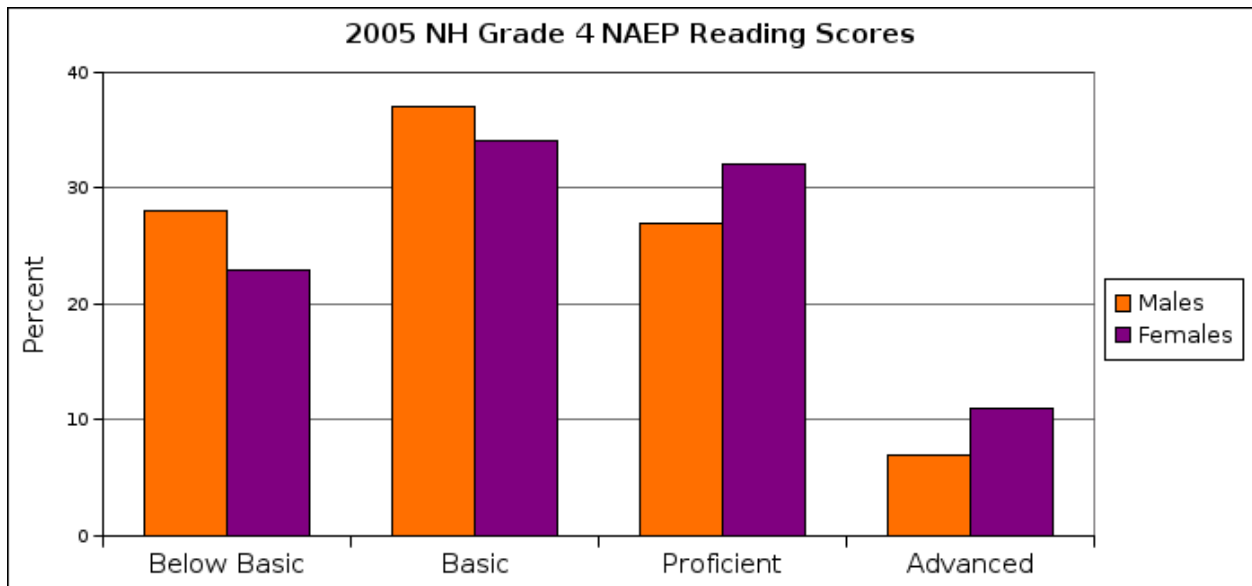


Table 1E: New Hampshire Grade 4 NAEP Reading Scores, 2005

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Below Basic</i>	<i>Basic</i>	<i>Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
Males	28%	37%	27%	7%
Females	23%	34%	32%	11%

Source: The Nation's Report Card, National Assessment of Educational Progress

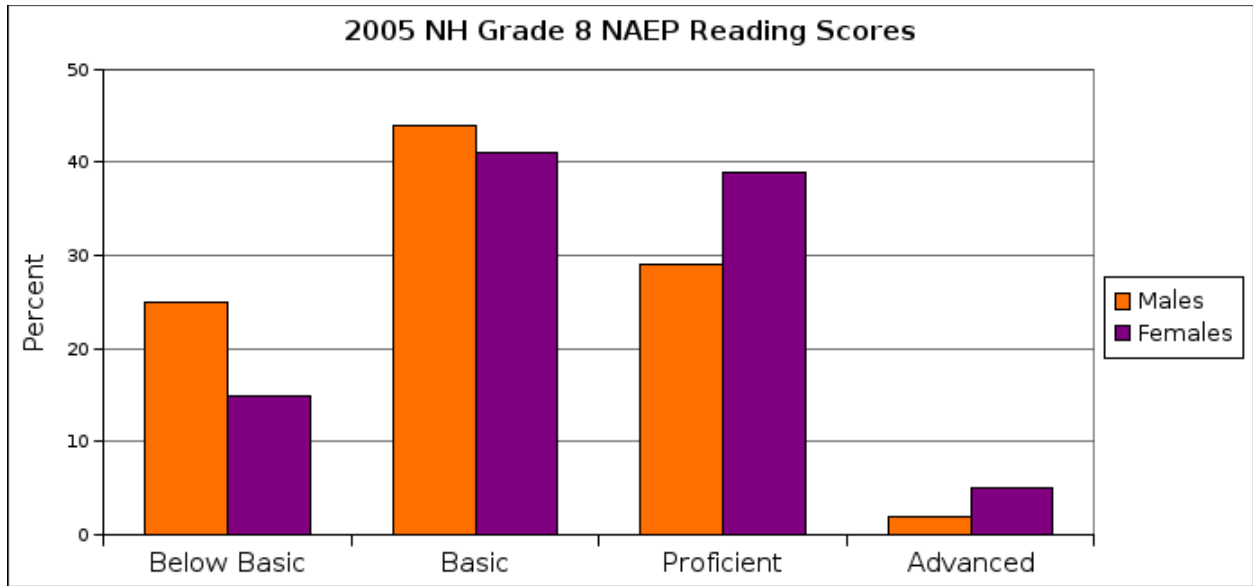


Table 2E: New Hampshire Grade 8 NAEP Reading Scores, 2005

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Below Basic</i>	<i>Basic</i>	<i>Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
Males	25%	44%	29%	2%
Females	15%	41%	39%	5%

Source: The Nation's Report Card, National Assessment of Educational Progress

Mathematics Scores

The 2005 NAEP scores in Mathematics for New Hampshire students demonstrate that the math gap between boys and girls is much smaller than the reading gap.

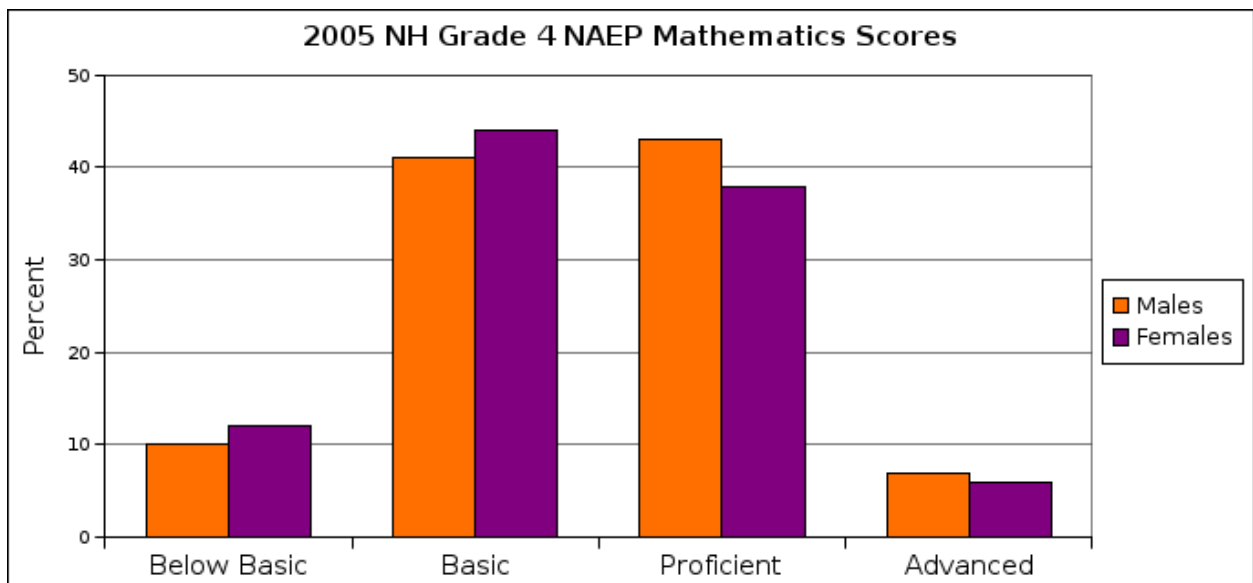


Table 3E: New Hampshire Grade 4 Mathematics Scores, 2005

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Below Basic</i>	<i>Basic</i>	<i>Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
Males	10%	41%	43%	7%
Females	12%	44%	38%	6%

Source: The Nation's Report Card, National Assessment of Educational Progress

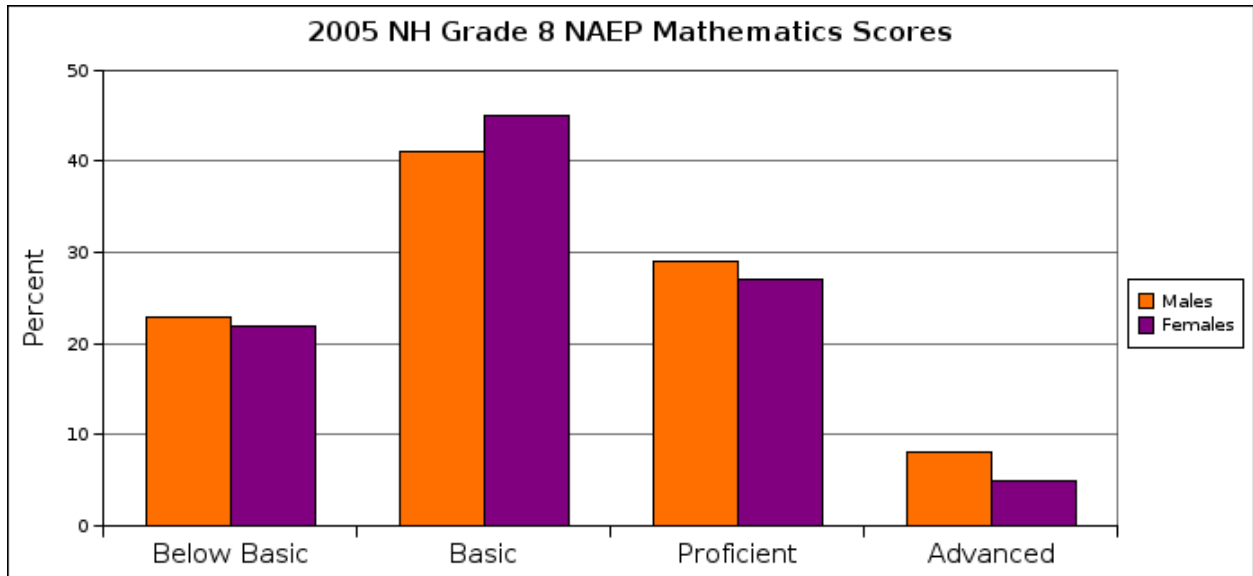


Table 4E: New Hampshire Grade 8 Mathematics Scores, 2005

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Below Basic</i>	<i>Basic</i>	<i>Proficient</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
Males	23%	41%	29%	8%
Females	22%	45%	27%	5%

Source: The Nation's Report Card, National Assessment of Educational Progress

Teachers

Another trend many educators are concerned about is the disproportionately low number of male teachers in public schools. The National Education Association reports that nationally, 1 in 5 public school teachers are men. In public elementary schools, this ratio is 1 in 9. The number of male teachers has been dropping consistently since approximately 1981, when 33% of public school teachers were men. (*Status of the American Public School Teacher*, National Education Association 2001 Report.) In 2003, the NEA reported that "the number of male teachers now stands at a 40-year low." (*Male Teacher Fact Sheet*, 2003. National Education Association. <http://www.nea.org/teachershortage/03malefactsheet.html>) **This Commission agrees with the NEA's recommendations for increasing the number of male teachers:**

- **Raising teacher salaries.** "States with the highest salaries tend to have the highest

proportion of male teachers."

- **Focus recruitment efforts during high school.** "Initiatives to identify prospective teachers early in their academic careers have proved successful. Secondary school surveys, career counseling, and college prep courses can help boost enrollment."
- **Encourage current teachers to promote teaching as a career to their male students.** "NEA asked the nation's teachers to select, from a list of options, the principal reason they originally decided to become a teacher. The influence of a teacher in elementary or secondary school was the 4th most frequently chosen reason (32 percent). Most notably, teachers under 30 gave this reason with greater frequency than did teachers over 30 (39% vs. 31%)."

(The above quotes are from: *Male Teacher Fact Sheet*, 2003. National Education Association. <http://www.nea.org/teachershortage/03malefactsheet.html>)

Secondary Education

The New Hampshire Partnership for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education Research (NH PAPER) surveyed high school seniors from 56 public and eight private high schools in the state regarding their future plans after completing high school. The 2004 survey found that young women (67%) were much more likely to plan to attend a 4-year college after graduating than young men (55%). For students who did not plan to continue their education after high school, 58% said that they had made this decision in the 11th or 12th grade (21% and 37%, respectively). Also noteworthy in this report is the finding that "female public high school seniors reported significantly higher grade point averages in English, foreign languages, arts and music, business studies and computer studies than did male public school seniors. Male public school seniors did not report higher grade point averages than female seniors in any subject." (*Measuring Aspirations and Participation*, 2004 Survey. New Hampshire Partnership for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education Research. <http://www.nhpaper.org>)

Young men also do not make it through secondary education at the same rate as young women. The U.S. Department of Education reports that in 2001 the high school dropout rate is higher for men (12.2%) than women (9.3%). (5E) An even greater gender disparity exists when looking at Hispanic men and women (31.6% vs. 22.1%). (*Digest of Education Statistics*, 2002. U.S. Department of Education)

Postsecondary Education

Male students are a minority on college and university campuses in New Hampshire, as well as nationally. Women began outnumbering men in postsecondary education by the mid-1970s, and this trend has continued to this day, where women make up approximately 60% of all undergraduate students. The following data shows that this trend also exists at the University of New Hampshire:

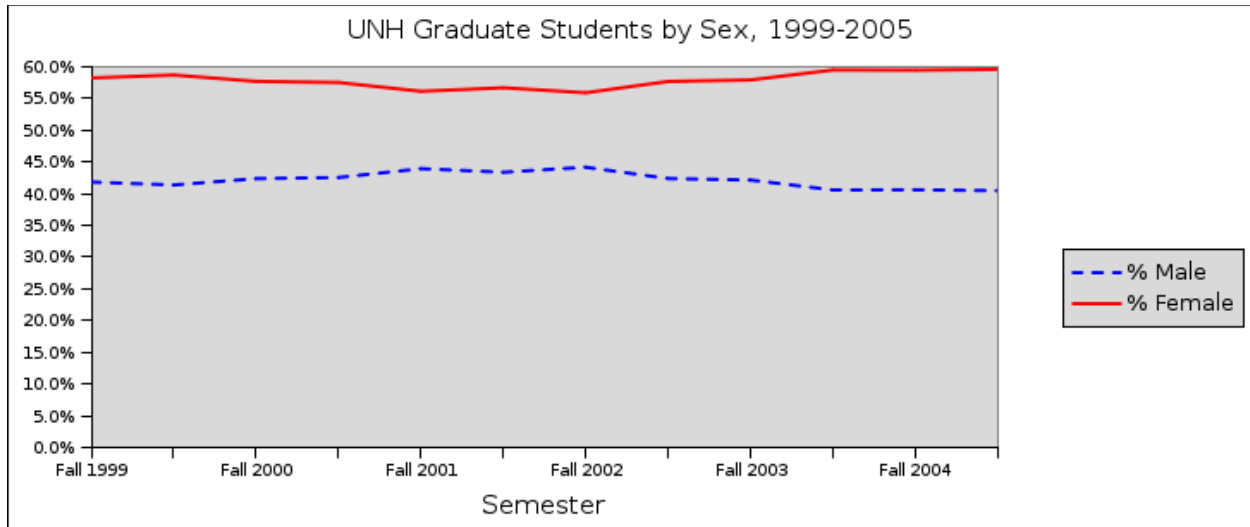


Table 5E: UNH, Durham - Graduate Students by Sex, 1999-2005

Semester	Total	Male	Percent Male	Female	Percent Female
Fall 1999	1746	730	41.8%	1016	58.2%
Spring 2000	1734	717	41.3%	1017	58.7%
Fall 2000	2078	880	42.3%	1198	57.7%
Spring 2001	2020	859	42.5%	1161	57.5%
Fall 2001	2004	880	43.9%	1124	56.1%
Spring 2002	2009	871	43.4%	1138	56.6%
Fall 2002	2159	953	44.1%	1206	55.9%
Spring 2003	2134	904	42.4%	1230	57.6%
Fall 2003	2324	979	42.1%	1345	57.9%
Spring 2004	2310	937	40.6%	1373	59.4%
Fall 2004	2407	977	40.6%	1430	59.4%
Spring 2005	2368	958	40.5%	1410	59.5%

Source: University of New Hampshire Institutional Research

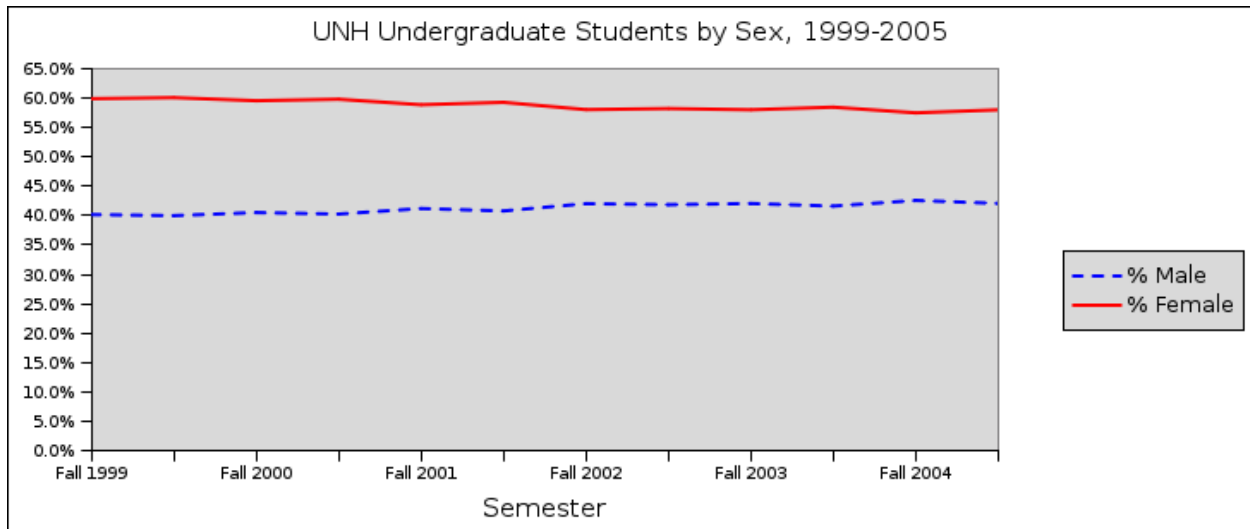


Table 6E: UNH, Durham - Undergraduate Students by Sex, 1999-2005

Semester	Total	Male	Percent Male	Female	Percent Female
Fall 1999	9741	3911	40.1%	5830	59.9%
Spring 2000	9331	3730	40.0%	5601	60.0%
Fall 2000	9722	3937	40.5%	5785	59.5%
Spring 2001	9311	3747	40.2%	5564	59.8%
Fall 2001	9893	4074	41.2%	5819	58.8%
Spring 2002	9504	3875	40.8%	5629	59.2%
Fall 2002	10350	4348	42.0%	6002	58.0%
Spring 2003	10002	4184	41.8%	5818	58.2%
Fall 2003	10408	4375	42.0%	6033	58.0%
Spring 2004	10011	4164	41.6%	5847	58.4%
Fall 2004	10470	4456	42.6%	6014	57.4%
Spring 2005	10007	4208	42.1%	5799	57.9%

Source: University of New Hampshire Institutional Research

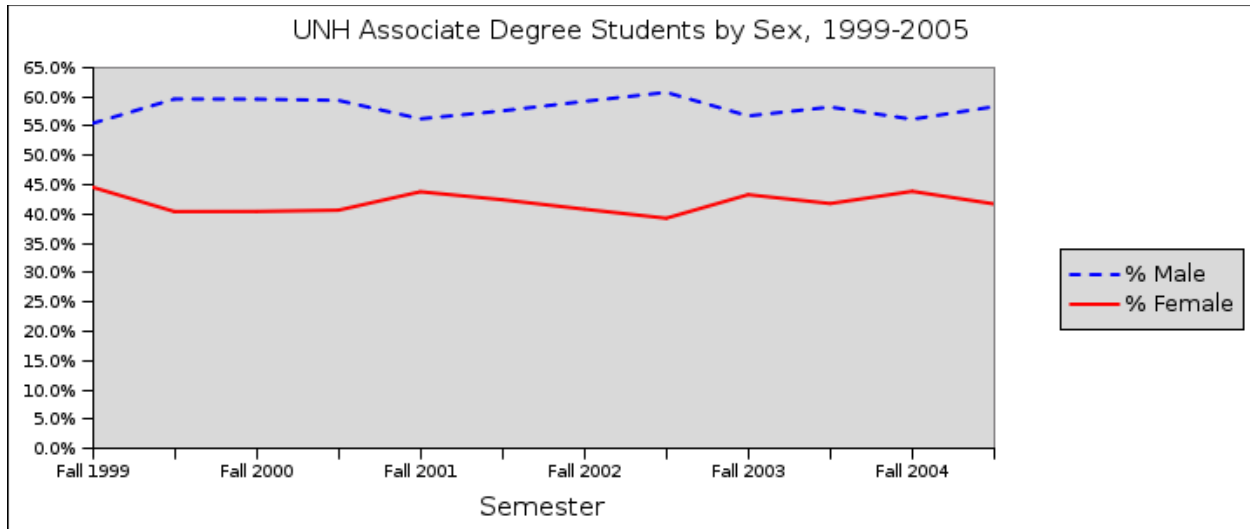


Table 7E: UNH, Durham - Associate Degree Students by Sex, 1999-2005

Semester	Total	Male	Percent Male	Female	Percent Female
Fall 1999	478	265	55.4%	213	44.6%
Spring 2000	443	264	59.6%	179	40.4%
Fall 2000	517	308	59.6%	209	40.4%
Spring 2001	470	279	59.4%	191	40.6%
Fall 2001	507	285	56.2%	222	43.8%
Spring 2002	462	266	57.6%	196	42.4%
Fall 2002	517	306	59.2%	211	40.8%
Spring 2003	466	283	60.7%	183	39.3%
Fall 2003	529	300	56.7%	229	43.3%
Spring 2004	462	269	58.2%	193	41.8%
Fall 2004	472	265	56.1%	207	43.9%
Spring 2005	422	246	58.3%	176	41.7%

Source: University of New Hampshire Institutional Research

Education Conclusions

The data presented in this report show that a serious educational problem exists for boys and young men in New Hampshire. The ability to read and write well is one of the most fundamental life-skills, and one that boys are disproportionately doing poorly at. This needs to be remedied. When the fact that girls were lagging behind boys in the areas of math and science education became well-known, many educational programs specifically targeted at girls in these academic areas arose to help boost involvement and achievement. These programs were extremely successful. **Creating additional education programs tailored to the needs of boys in the areas of reading and writing** would be an obvious first step.

The reasons behind the low enrollment levels of young men in colleges and universities are not well understood. Certainly, improving the overall academic achievement of boys earlier on in education will increase the number of college-bound secondary students. **Resources such as the NH PAPER survey should be expanded to cover an accurate sampling of all high school students in the state, and focus on identifying the reasons why male students are deciding to forgo higher education.**

Finally, it is a recommendation of this Commission that awareness of the problems boys face in our schools become a greater focus in the education community and the public. Many educators see the problems that boys face on a daily basis, but do not have enough support from the general public to take stronger actions to help correct these inequities.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission on the Status of Men recommends and suggests that:

- **The state provides adequate funding to finance an Executive Director, support personnel, office, supplies, telephone, computer and other office equipment.**
- **The State of New Hampshire take steps to reduce the disparity between the investment in women's health issues and men's health issues, and to design programs concentrating on addressing in a gender-neutral manner those conditions and diseases with the highest incidence and the highest rates of morbidity and mortality.**
- **The State of New Hampshire provide further directed study and proactive intervention programs, including educational programs at the elementary school level directed at bolstering the self-esteem of boys and helping them develop increased coping skills and new approaches to personal and interpersonal conflict, coupled with increased prevention programs directed at those segments of our society most likely to succeed in committing suicide.**
- **Educational programs be promoted that teach young men and women about the**

need for children to have two caring natural parents meaningfully involved in their lives, with an emphasis on the role of the father in child development.

- **The Office of Child Support Enforcement modify its policy of enforcing only the financial support portion of family court decrees to include the parenting aspects of those decrees, as well.**
- **Research on the father's role in child development be given the widest possible publicity and attention.**
- **The Governor of New Hampshire issue a proclamation declaring that both natural parents are equally important for their children.**
- **It should be the public policy of this state that frequent and continuing contact between minor children and both parents, if the parents have separated or dissolved their marriage, is ordinarily beneficial to the children. This commission also finds that it is in the public interest as well as to children and families to encourage parents to share the rights and responsibility of child rearing; and that a rebuttable presumption of joint physical custody be supported and encouraged.**
- **Parenting time should be "maximized".**
- **Child support guidelines should be based on child costs.**
- **OCSE should consider modifying its policy of enforcing only the support portion of family court decrees to include the parenting aspects of those decrees as well.**
- **Absent fault grounds, the financial burden of family breakdown should be shared by the parties on an equal basis.**
- **Judges, prosecutors and other court personnel should attend educational conferences on domestic violence (DV) structured to avoid the present gender bias that ignores or discounts domestic violence by women against both men and children.**
- **Properly trained Case Evaluators should screen each domestic violence case with the goal of arriving at mutually agreeable solutions in an atmosphere of communication and compromise.**
- **Evidentiary standards and procedure should be reviewed and revised in domestic violence cases.**
- **State-sponsored reports and protocols on domestic violence should be modified to change references about male assault rates to include also the female assault rates.**
- **Safe-NH's application for state and VAWA funding be reviewed by the Attorney General to determine the extent to which Safe-NH has been illegally denied funding and to determine the extent to which the services provided meet the requirements of the Violence Against Women Act.**
- **The number of male public school teachers should be increased by raising teacher salaries, promoting male teacher recruitment in high schools, and encouraging current teachers to take an active role in recruiting young men as teachers.**
- **Create additional education programs tailored to the needs of boys in the areas of reading and writing.**

- **Resources such as the NH PAPER survey should be expanded to cover an accurate sampling of all high school students in the state, and focus on identifying the reasons why male students are deciding to forgo higher education.**
- **Awareness of the problems boys face in our schools should become a greater focus in the education community and the public.**
- **Funding be provided this commission to finance an executive director, supplies, telephone, office and computer equipment; and to enable the production of brochures and public service announcements designed to improve and promote health, education and policies which would bring fathers and children closer together pursuant to RSA 19-I:4.**

APPENDIX A

Summary Abstracts of Articles from the Fall issue of the Psychology of Women

FEMALE VIOLENCE AGAINST INTIMATE PARTNERS: AN INTRODUCTION - Irene Hanson Frieze

This special issue addresses some of the contradictions found in the research literature on intimate partner violence. Much of this work is concerned with the problems of severely battered women. However, other research indicates that women can be just as violent as their partners. Articles in this issue begin to explore some of the ways that women express intimate partner violence and argue that there is more than one type of partner violence. Motives and other correlates of violence are examined and future research directions are outlined.

THE MYTH OF FEMALE PASSIVITY: THIRTY YEARS OF REVELATIONS ABOUT FEMALE AGGRESSION - Deborah South Richardson

This article reviews an extensive program of research that has examined gender differences in aggressive behavior. Early research in the aggression laboratory that was designed to explain why females were non aggressive actually revealed that females did respond to provocation and that they could not accurately be depicted as passive individuals. Subsequent studies that examined both indirect and direct aggression revealed that women were at least as likely as men to employ indirect aggressive strategies and that the nature of relationship is a better determinant of aggressive action than gender. Directly relevant to the theme of this volume, the later research revealed that males and females reported equally high levels of direct aggression in interaction with romantic partners.

COURTSHIP BEHAVIORS, RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE, AND BREAKUP PERSISTENCE IN COLLEGE MEN AND WOMEN - Stacey L. Williams, Irene Hanson Frieze

This study assessed college men's (n= 85) and women's (n= 215) courtship persistence behaviors (approach, surveillance, intimidation, mild aggression), which have been linked to stalking, and examined their relations to initial courtship interest, relationship development, and future violence and persistence, while also exploring the role of gender in these relations. Findings showed individuals performed surveillance when initially more interested than the other. Whereas approach behaviors were positively associated with relationship establishment, surveillance and intimidation were negatively associated. As predicted, results showed continuity in persistence and violence over the course of dating relationships. For both genders, courtship mild aggression predicted relationship violence, and persistence behaviors predicted similar persistence at breakup. Early behaviors may foreshadow violence and stalking-related behaviors in both men and women.

RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN WOMEN'S SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS: THE ROLE OF MINORITY STRESS - Kimberly F. Balsam, Dawn M. Szymanski

Despite a large body of literature addressing relationship quality and domestic violence in women's same-sex relationships, few studies have empirically examined how stress specific to living as a lesbian or bisexual woman might correlate with these relationship variables. Degree of outness, internalized homophobia, lifetime and recent experiences of discrimination, butch/femme identity, relationship quality, and lifetime and recent experiences of domestic violence were assessed in a sample of 272 predominantly European American lesbian and bisexual women. Lesbian and bisexual women were found to be comparable on most relationship variables. In bivariate analyses, minority stress variables (internalized homophobia and discrimination) were associated with lower relationship quality and both domestic violence perpetration and victimization. Outness and butch/femme identity were largely unrelated to relationship variables. Path analysis revealed that relationship quality fully mediated the relationship between internalized homophobia and recent domestic violence.

INVESTIGATING THREE EXPLANATIONS OF WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIP AGGRESSION - Nicola Graham-Kevan and John Archer

This study investigated explanations of women's partner aggression in a sample of 358 women. Women completed measures of physical aggression, control, and fear. Three explanations of women's partner aggression were explored: (a) that its use is associated with fear, (b) that it is reciprocal, and (c) that it is coercive. Each explanation received partial support, with multivariate analysis showing that collectively they explained significant proportions of the variance in women's self-reported use of physical aggression toward their male partners. These results indicate that women's physical aggression toward male partners cannot be understood using a unitary explanation.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY COLLEGE WOMEN WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A HISTORY OF VICTIMIZATION - Kelly N. Graves, Stacy M. Sechrist, Jacquelyn W. White¹, and Matthew J. Paradise

Using a longitudinal design, the current study explored intimate partner violence perpetration among 1,300 college women within the context of one's history of physical and sexual victimization across 4 years of college. Structural equation modeling indicated that sexual victimization does not predict concurrent use of women's intimate partner violence but does predict subsequent use of women's intimate partner violence during the later years of college. In contrast, physical victimization is associated positively with concurrent use of women's intimate partner violence but is negatively associated with subsequent use of women's intimate partner violence for women. Furthermore, the negative relationship of victimization to subsequent perpetration primarily is due to those with high levels of victimization histories. The present study provides the first model of intimate partner violence within the context of victimization history using longitudinal data. The findings indicate that women's intimate partner violence

perpetration is not context-free, but rather is influenced by their own physical and sexual victimization histories.

PRECURSORS AND CORRELATES OF WOMEN'S VIOLENCE: CHILD ABUSE TRAUMATIZATION, VICTIMIZATION OF WOMEN, AVOIDANCE COPING, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS - Tami P. Sullivan, Katharine J. Meese, Suzanne C. Swan¹, Carolyn M. Mazure, and David L. Snow

Path modeling assessed (a) the influence of child abuse traumatization on women's use of violence and their experiences of being victimized, (b) the association of these three variables to depressive and post traumatic stress symptoms, and (c) the indirect pathways from women using violence and their being victimized to psychological symptoms through avoidance coping. Among 108 primarily African American women recruited from the community who used violence with a male partner, women's use of violence, but not their experiences of being victimized, was predicted by child abuse traumatization. Women's use of violence did not directly or indirectly predict symptomatology. In contrast, child abuse traumatization and women's experiences of being victimized were predictive of both depressive and post traumatic stress symptoms, and being victimized also was related indirectly to depressive symptoms through avoidance coping.

RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE AMONG ADOLESCENT MOTHERS: FREQUENCY, DYADIC NATURE, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION AND MENTAL HEALTH - Stephanie Milan and Jessica Lewis, Kathleen Ethier, Trace Kershaw and Jeannette R. Ickovics

This article examines whether the frequency, dyadic nature, and potential implications of relationship violence differ in parenting ($n=163$) and nulliparous (i.e., never given birth; $n=165$) adolescent females from low-income, urban communities. We found the frequency and dyadic nature of violence did not differ between parental status groups. Over half of the adolescents in both groups reported relationship violence in the past year, with female-enacted violence more common than male-enacted violence. However, significant group differences emerged in the relationship between violence and subsequent relationship dissolution and mental health. Higher levels of female-enacted violence predicted relationship dissolution among nulliparous adolescents but predicted increases in depression in parenting adolescents. Findings highlight the need for violence prevention programs tailored specifically to the developmental and contextual needs of adolescent mothers.

AN INVESTMENT MODEL ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP STABILITY AMONG WOMEN COURT-MANDATED TO VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS - Deborah L. Rhatigan, Todd M. Moore, Gregory L. Stuart

This investigation examined relationship stability among 60 women court-mandated to violence interventions by applying a general model (i.e., Rusbult's 1980 Investment Model) to predict intentions to leave current relationships. As in past research, results showed that Investment

Model predictions were supported such that court-mandated women who reported lesser relationship satisfaction, greater alternatives, and fewer investments in current relationships endorsed lower levels of commitment and greater intentions to leave those relationships. Secondary analyses showed that court-mandated women's violence perpetration and experiences of being victimized were minimally related to model factors or women's intentions to leave. Taken together, results of this study provide additional evidence that general models should be used to predict relationship termination decisions among women involved in violent relationships, and violence experiences alone do not affect that decision.

A POSTMODERN APPROACH TO WOMEN'S USE OF VIOLENCE: DEVELOPING MULTIPLE AND COMPLEX CONCEPTUALIZATIONS - Maureen C. McHugh, Nichole A. Livingston, and Amy Ford

We review the research on intimate partner abuse and, in particular, the articles in this issue, from within a feminist and postmodern framework. Research on women's use of violence is reviewed in terms of how researchers have constructed and measured violence and have conceptualized intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender. What and how we measure determines what we find (McHugh & Cosgrove, 2005). We call for new conceptualizations of intimate violence and for more complex constructions of gender. We offer a postmodern perspective on gender and IPV arguing that interpersonal violence always involves gender, that approach and method influence results, and that men and women use violence in both similar and different ways.

APPENDIX B

CHILDREN LIKELY TO BE BETTER ADJUSTED IN JOINT VS SOLE CUSTODY
ARRANGEMENTS IN MOST CASES, ACCORDING TO REVIEW OF RESEARCH
American Psychological Association

March 24, 2002

<http://www.apa.org/releases/custody2.html>

Living Situation Not As Influential As Time Spent With Parent

WASHINGTON - Children from divorced families who either live with both parents at different times or spend certain amounts of time with each parent are better adjusted in most cases than children who live and interact with just one parent, according to new research on custody arrangements and children's adjustment.

Psychologist Robert Bauserman, Ph.D., of AIDS Administration/Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in Baltimore, Maryland conducted a meta-analysis of 33 studies between 1982 to 1999 that examined 1,846 sole-custody and 814 joint-custody children. The studies compared child adjustment in joint physical or joint legal custody with sole-custody settings and 251 intact families. Joint custody was defined as either physical custody - where a child spends equal or substantial amounts of time with both parents or shared legal custody - where a child lives with primarily one parent but both parents are involved in all aspects of the child's life. This article will appear in the March issue of the Journal of Family Psychology, published by the American Psychological Association (APA).

Children in joint custody arrangements had less behavior and emotional problems, had higher self-esteem, better family relations and school performance than children in sole custody arrangements. And these children were as well-adjusted as intact family children on the same measures, said Bauserman, "probably because joint custody provides the child with an opportunity to have ongoing contact with both parents."

These findings indicate that children do not actually need to be in a joint physical custody to show better adjustment but just need to spend substantial time with both parents, especially with their fathers, said Bauserman. Also, joint custody couples reported less conflict, possibly because both parents could participate in their children's lives equally and not spend the time arguing over childcare decisions. Unfortunately a perception exists that joint custody is more harmful because it exposes children to ongoing parental conflict. In fact, the studies in this review found that sole-custody parents reported higher levels of conflict.

It is important to recognize that the results do not support joint custody in all situations. When one parent is abusive or neglectful or has a serious mental or physical health problem, sole-custody with the other parent would clearly be preferable, said Bauserman. The judges, lawyers,

social workers, psychologists and other professionals involved in divorce counseling and litigation should be aware of these findings to make informed decisions of what environment is best for a child in a custody situation.

Furthermore, to address the question of how much the parents' emotional health compared with the custody arrangement influenced the children's adjustment, Bauserman explained that custody arrangement seemed to have more influence. By statistically controlling for past parental conflict (which indicates parental maladjustment), the joint custody children still were significantly better adjusted. This result was also found in other studies cited in Bauserman's review. More primary research is needed, said Bauserman, "on the past and current adjustment of joint custody and sole custody parents before this question can be completely answered." Article:

"Child Adjustment in Joint-Custody Versus Sole-Custody Arrangements: A Meta-Analytic Review," Robert Bauserman, Ph.D., AIDS Administration/Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Journal of Family Psychology , Vol 16, No. 1.

Full text of the article is available from the APA Public Affairs Office or at <http://www.apaorg/journals/releases/fam16191.pdf>

Robert Bauserman, PhD, can be reached by telephone at 410-767-4322

APPENDIX C

Paternal Involvement and Children's Health: A Longitudinal Study

Kathleen A. Foley, University of Pennsylvania and Frank F. Furstenberg, University of Pennsylvania

CONCLUSIONS

Whereas previous studies have had difficulty demonstrating that fathers matter to the well being of their children, our results provide strong evidence that fathers do, in fact, count for important measures of physical and mental health. Both male and female children who felt close to a father in adolescence were significantly more likely to report better physical and mental health outcomes at age 27 net of their physical and mental health when they were teenagers. In addition, we found that losing a close father relationship between early childhood and adolescence had significant negative implications for both physical and mental health. Our lack of significant findings for depression at age 27 in light of earlier positive findings at age 20 (Furstenberg and Harris 1993) suggests that the beneficial effects of having a close father diminish over time for depression.

The fact that we were able to demonstrate statistically significant benefits of father closeness on several children's physical and mental health in adulthood, despite our small sample, points to the advantages of using longitudinal data. First, we include data on all types of fathers, including surrogate, step and non-residential fathers as opposed to just biological fathers. Second, we asked the children themselves to rate their relationship with their fathers rather than relying on mother reports. Not only may mother's reports be an inaccurate reflection of the child's feelings, but they may also be influenced by the mother's own opinion of and relationship with the father. Thus, future studies may benefit from asking children directly about their relationships with their biological father and other father figures who may or may not be co-resident with the child.

Our inability to find a significant effect of paternal contact on children's physical and mental health should not be overlooked. While there is some evidence that more paternal involvement is better than less involvement for mental health in adulthood, we found no evidence that resident fathers mattered more than non-resident fathers. Given the small percentage of low income inner city children who have long term residential fathers (Coley 1999), this finding is good news. In conjunction with our results showing the advantages of close paternal relationships, this finding implies that close, loving fathers, whether they be residential or not, matter for their children's later well being.

While it is unwise to read too much into these rather preliminary results, it seems clear that one way public policy can help inner city children is to assist fathers in staying involved with their children throughout adolescence. Reporting on preliminary findings from the Fragile Families Study, McLanahan (1999) suggests that public policy take advantage of the window of opportunity present at the time of a child's birth to keep enthusiastic fathers active in their

children's lives. The results of our study here second that notion.

APPENDIX D

A PROPOSAL TO ESTIMATE AND IMPROVE THE SUCCESS OF THE OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Reports sent to the public on the effectiveness of child support enforcement programs have traditionally relied on two factors: (A) total dollars collected year to year, and (B) a ratio of dollars collected divided by the dollars spent to administer and enforce collections (State of New Hampshire Child Support Services, Performance Audit Report, 1995). These methods of analysis may send a false sense of effectiveness because total caseloads and dollars ordered rise in tandem with dollars collected, and the administrative ratio is difficult to interpret in terms of success (i.e., how many child support dollars would still be collectible in the absence of any administrative costs).

Factors A & B do not show the complete picture. NH Compliance rates consistently remain mired at less than 65% for all accounts and all obligors, even as totals collected rise--hardly significant when compared with rates that hovered at around 60% for all accounts way back in 1985, or the 90% compliance rates for involved parents (Braver, 1998). When viewed in terms of absolute numbers of children involved, the poverty problem for children is even worse because a 5% increase in compliance cannot compensate for, say, an 80% increase in the numbers of children in the system.

The key to the proper support of children, in both economic and overall wellness--as S. Braver reports in *Divorced Dads: Shattering the Myths*, 1998-- is greater attention to the parental involvement factor for both divorced and never married parents. But more data is needed, as prescribed below, to better define the problem and the need:

I. An in-depth accounting of the listed items to have a better handle on success/failure of enforcement programs:

- a) Total amounts ordered yr to yr since 1986 for all accounts.
- b) Total amounts collected yr to yr since 1986 for all accounts.
- c) Percent total success rates yr to yr for all accounts in terms of both dollars collected and obligors in full compliance.
- d) Dollars collected in terms of dollars collected per child for all accounts yr to yr since 1986. (Nominal & inflation adjusted)
- e) Total arrearages for all accounts accumulative yr to yr since 1986 and present overall arrearage total.
- f) An assessment on the extent to which support enforcement officers conducted investigations and enforcement pertaining to visitation as prescribed by occupational job description code 8945-17.
- g) Total cases and total children yr to yr to discover the problem in terms of absolute

numbers of children in the system.

- h) Total dollars yr to yr that were charged off as noncollectable and overall total of noncollectable dollars.

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