

# SPAM AGENDA, V1.0

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## **Abstract**

There is an asymmetry between the way men perceive women and the way women perceive men. My first insight into gender on the internet came when I would go through the spam that would arrive in my email folder everyday and delete it. While the contents made me giggle at times, it did rouse some questions, like: Do women feel sexually inadequate? How do we perceive members of the opposite sex? Why is there gender discrimination and rape and what are the effects of this offline threat when we are online? On the whole it seems that, online, the power relations and techniques of interaction between the genders resemble the traditional models which have prevailed in real life – men are driven by insecurity and women by caution.

## **Introduction**

This paper argues that there is an asymmetry between the way men perceive women and the way women perceive men, and that this difference in perception drives the ways that men and women behave towards each other on the Internet.

Briefly, men like to think women are like them, especially when it comes to sex. Men like to think women want sex with men as much as men want to have sex with women. Women are not so sure that men and women are similar, in this kind of way. In some ways this difference may lead to male insecurity, as sex can become a challenge to men – is she ‘satisfied’ or is she more sexual than they are, with the result that they have failed? Furthermore, men and women seem to organize themselves differently; men being more prone to elaborate hierarchy and aggressive public competition than women

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<sup>1</sup> B. Dorris has a PhD in something completely different. She lives in San Jose CA with her husband and plants. B. considers herself to be a scientist and knows her theories are right about the world, the universe and everything, but she is happy to be proven wrong. She has been studying gender all of her life but has only taken a serious interest in the subject after being asked by a female academic why more women weren't interested in alchemy. She was surprised by the question and wondered whether the academic asked the same question of the men she interviewed.

are. Women may even respond favourably to men who gain status in such displays. However, women also tend to be somewhat cautious of men they do not know, as men can be quite unpredictably violent. It can be an issue for women whether men might rape them or attack them, so as a result women tend to defer to the men and placate them. At the least women have to screen men all the time though to figure out which males are safe and which are not. However, this does not mean that power and insecurity plays out in any simple way, and this is made clear by spam.

## Spam

Stuff that will make male penises as long as pogo sticks and cause them to produce gallons of cum to impress their women, is the standard fare that fills my yahoo bulk folder as I perform my daily purge ritual. Spam is a big indicator that men feel the need to impress women and worry about how women will react to their penis size, or to their sexual performance. Let's look at some samples.

### **Separate yourself from other men<sup>2</sup>**

Your wife complains to headache each evening?

Your girlfriend says about "pressing business" too frequently?

Girls on beach don't pay any attention?

CHANGE IT!

Change half millimeter thickness of your wallet to additional inches of your tiger cub! Find "Pe~nis Growth Patch (TM)" on our site and stop think about "small size". From this point you will have one issue - select between brunette with nice tits and long-legged blonde!

Deeper, longer and more strongly!

### **With our Soft Cialis Tabs you will be able to chop the wood with your dick.**

For your wife's last b-day you gave her a vibrator because of your hopeless Erectile Dysfunction.

By taking our new Soft Cialis Tabs you are bound to give her the best sex ever instead of miserable "battery dick". <http://bestforeskin.info/ct/>

<sup>2</sup> These are all genuine spam emails, titles, contents and spelling mistakes, although web addresses have been altered. Bold headings are various spam titles/subject headers.

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You always wanted to use your penis as a billiards cue.  
Our Soft Cialis Tabs can help you fulfill your dreams.

**I felt it myself when my girlfriend had left me!**

Good Day to you! Cope with this forever and watch other men in helpless distress. You might have tried other products and failed - the last thing you need is Extra-Time, the no-failure solution. Many of us know the bitter feeling of not being able to deliver longer acts of mutual pleasure. Find what you need: <http://nalazky.com/gall/get/> Get the courage and performance you need to be the best man of her life.

**Wow, you used to ccum within 5 minutes!**

Dear client. Thousands of couples broke down because of them, making both parties unhappy. Extra-Time gives you not only extra time, but extra pleasure and extra confidence as well. Want to make your intercourse lasting and rewarding than ever before? Enter here: <http://dozycow.com/gal/get/> Gain the enormous sensual vibe in your relationships - no frustration!

[other email headings]

**Stronger ejaculation (watch where your aiming)**

**Ejaculate like a porn star**

**Cover her in it if you want**

**Tonight prove yourself to her**

**78% of women are disappointed with their partners' size**

**Impress her with your cum shot**

**Make every woman to Love You!**

**She will love you more than any other guy**

**Discounted big penis delivered to your door**

**Rock hard erections**

While reading this spam I get the impression men feel deeply inadequate about their sexuality and they have a strong need to impress – women. But wait a minute – men need to impress women – why? It is well known that men are the dominant gender in our society, so why does the dominant gender need to impress women? Surely the dominant gender does not have to prove anything to anyone, other than each other. Can there be a sense of sexual (or other) inadequacy in the dominant gender?

This insecurity is even more marked as, despite the rumors, I really doubt I have seen spam urging me to buy something to increase the size of my breasts, and I have been using the internet for the past 13 years or so. If I have seen such spam, it was a long time ago and certainly it was before I started doing the research for this article. And if I did see it, it left no impression upon me. I have asked men if they have seen such spam and all the men I have asked say they have. I have wondered whether the marketing of breast enlargement creams was really for the benefit of men, or the result of some kind of fantasy projection? Perhaps the reasoning goes something like: if breasts, which are generally much larger than the average penis, can be improved in size, then what would this product do for a man's penis? Or perhaps, men assume women have the same fears as men do – men are afraid their penises are too small and thus assume women fear their breasts are too small and that they receive similar spam. However, in general, women do not fear their breasts are too small and correspondingly there is no spam for breast enlargement treatments. In general, women are not insecure about the size of their breasts, once they leave their teens. Most women wanting breast implants are younger and small, and most commonly their boyfriends are not even in favor of it. According to one survey, women having implants said they were doing it for their own benefit, whether that is to impress other women or not, but it was not to impress or attract members of the opposite sex<sup>3</sup>. This implies that while women are confident about their gender, men are not so.

No one I know has said they have seen breast enlargement spam in a long while. So perhaps the people sending the spam hoped women would be as interested in increasing the size of their breasts as men are in increasing the size of their penis, but there was no market. Neither does it seem that women feel the need to impress men in bed like men feel they must impress women, so there is no market for products to enhance women's sexual potency.

Someone suggested to me that there is more male biased spam because most of the people using the internet are men. Historically this may have been true; however, recent figures suggest that almost equal numbers of both genders are using the internet now<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.implantforum.com/stats.html>> Those women having it done were mostly having reconstruction after mastectomies. [Editor note: all URLs accessed in 2007].

<sup>4</sup> In 2006, more women than men in the USA are using the internet: <<http://www.eloops.com/news-article/Gender-Plays-Role-In-Internet-Usage.html>> but there are more women than men in the USA.

Interestingly, there doesn't seem to be any kind of even distribution of gender biased spam while, in general, there is a large portion of non-gender specific spam such as: interest rates on mortgages and credit cards, buying an online degree, stock market tips and variations on the Nigerian fraud spam. All the gender specific spam, I have seen, is exclusively male oriented and focused on their sexual inadequacy.

Certainly, in real life, a lot of news space, both in women's magazine and in newspapers, is devoted to making women feel inadequate, whether it is their ability to orgasm, asking why they aren't home having kids, berating them for leaving the work force in droves to have children, asking whether they are good mothers, querying their weight or why they can't get dates and so on, but there isn't much suggesting they need to impress anyone, except perhaps their boss and other women. And the usual advice to women about getting dates is not to be so picky<sup>5</sup>. There is almost no suggestion in these magazines that women need to impress men. Indeed, the content of the magazines usually implies that issues around fashion and appearance are primarily directed at impressing other females.

I had a similar impression from some of my online experience at Lambda MOO<sup>6</sup>. In that place, women had to do little to make themselves attractive to men. I have even heard people there say that all women are assumed to be good looking online. This was so much the case that any efforts to make a point about attractiveness were counterproductive. If a woman did describe herself as pretty or good-looking she tended to become the subject of ridicule by other women and was usually considered to be a man posing as a woman in order to get involved in some role playing sex. It seems that women do best to describe themselves simply, if they are not to be considered to be men posing as women to get sex with men. Even if a woman gives a good looking photo of herself then it can be taken as suspicious, as it could be a picture of someone else. The catch is that appearance always matters when you move off line. There are always some expectations of how someone will look regardless of how slight of the acquaintance is.

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<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/10/science/10tier.html?ex=1185940800&en=33de79f417ce6380&ei=5070> and <[http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/women/relationships/article2019863.ece](http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/relationships/article2019863.ece)>

<sup>6</sup> I have been visiting Lambda MOO for about 12 years at the time of writing. For more information on the MOO see: <http://www.LambdaMOO.info/> and also <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LambdaMOO>>.

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If the relationship is critical, it is important to disabuse partners of their illusions relatively early on in the relationship.

### **Biology and Bodies**

This penis spam indicates to me that men have to keep proving that they are sexually capable, and that they think women judge capability by penis size or amount of cum. I have also seen male guests (but not standard characters) at Lambda set their descriptions to say that they have extraordinarily long penises that are constantly erect, presumably to attract sexual partners. We can see this kind of behaviour offline as well. The omnipresent phallic reminders, church spires, towers, the corporate uniform with the tie (reminding us of what it is pointing to), and the corporate headquarters building all say to me that men have to keep reminding us they are sexually capable of erections. But although erections may be frequent they are only ever transitory, even for 16 year old boys. After ejaculation the erection goes away. Even with the advent of Viagra, it might still only last for 4 hours<sup>7</sup>.

Male erection and ejaculation are the primary markers saying a male is sexually mature. He has secondary markers, like increased muscle development and more hair growth, his voice breaks, but essentially his body doesn't change much from that of a young boy's.

When a female enters puberty she develops breasts, and breasts are an ever present statement that the girl has become a sexually mature woman. Breasts are out there and no more needs to be said about a woman's maturity. While women also begin menstruating with puberty, menstruation is kept private.

Sexual maturity is important because in a way, our sexual maturity is why we are here. We are here to reproduce and it is probably the average person's only real chance of immortality. We as humans have only recently developed other ways of leaving our mark upon history, but for most of us it is still going to happen by reproducing.

Despite most people's life's meaning being determined by their body in this way, remembering that we are incarnate is something that is avoided in modern life. Children,

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<sup>7</sup> <<http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/index.cfm?id=341382007>>

the sick and the elderly are kept out of sight so the rest of us can pretty much forget about our mortality. This is also the case online. Even on MUD<sup>8</sup>s (which are generally places for gaming rather than socializing) or on Lambda MOO, you seldom see people acting as children. People also don't make characters that are inherently ill and there is little to no trace of characters who are deliberately old or decrepit in mainstream online venues. On MUDs, disease<sup>9</sup> and even death becomes unreal, as they generally can be cured by typing in a command; even if your character dies it comes back to life quickly with often minimal long term effects. Few body markers are used at Lambda. Guests and player characters can set their gender and give a description, which may or may not have anything to do with a body, and some classes or player characters will allow the character to create and wear clothing, but sickness, pain, food, bathrooms and sleeping are not represented. These can be role played but seldom are, unless it has something to do with role playing sex. Being disconnected from the MOO is referred to as being 'in real life' rather than asleep or dead. On the mailing list Cybermind there was more tendency to talk about sickness in people's offline lives, but this was generally not marked on the list, tended to be engaged in by women, and was still pretty rare. Indeed, this has resonances with off list life where it is one of those well known facts that men generally don't go to the doctors as often as women.

Men, in particular, seem to prefer being 'disembodied'. Thus, offline, there is what we might call, male bathroom etiquette where men do not speak to each other in a public toilet and choose which urinal to use based on maximum distance from where the other ones are occupied<sup>10</sup>. To me male bathroom etiquette is the absolute denial of the body.

As far as I can see, Women tend to have fewer problems with bodily functions, and with distance from each other than men and will quite happily chat with friends or strangers in bathrooms, and this may be the result of monthly reminders of the life cycle. Of course it could be said that women are in general more sociable and hence this is why they are more willing to talk. Furthermore, it would not cross a woman's mind to worry

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<sup>8</sup> MUDs are Multi User Dungeons and dragons. They are often text based games where people are rewarded by killing mobs with experience which can be used to make the players characters bigger. World of Warcraft is a graphical MUD. Typically very few women populate these games.

<sup>9</sup> Although it does seem that in places like World of Warcraft they were able to simulate the spreading of disease quite accurately, <<http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20050921-5337.html>>

<sup>10</sup> <[http://everything2.com/index.pl?node\\_id=123901](http://everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=123901)>, <<http://www.strangecosmos.com/content/item/107506.html>>

about whether another woman in the room would be attempting to pick her up, which may be a cause for some of the alarm men feel when using public toilets.

However there is one biological function that men enjoy and think about often, and that is sex. It is a commonplace of Western folklore that men often think about sex and it is said that at least half of men think about sex several times a day<sup>11</sup>. I think that women remind men of their mortality because women remind men of sex<sup>12</sup> and this can be threatening to them. At the same time ‘masculinity’ is confirmed in a heterosexual society by being able to command the admiration of women, so women can remind men of potential failure and loss of status.

## Violence

Sex leads us to violence and rape. It is important to understand how afraid women can be of men. Men are irrational and violent and unpredictable. It is men who commit the most violent crimes and murders<sup>13</sup>. Women are smaller and usually less strong than the men around them. Women constantly risk violence, and it is not always sure from whom it will come. Women are not safe in the home, or in their families. All women live in fear, at least some of the time, and this allows all men to feel dominant, and to take advantage of their dominance, even if they themselves would not use violence.

Wikipedia says

**Rape** is a form of assault where one individual forces another to have sexual intercourse against that person's will. Most experts believe the primary cause of rape is an aggressive desire to dominate the victim rather than an attempt to achieve sexual fulfillment.... It comes from the latin verb rapere to seize or take by force.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of this constant threat, women do not get over their fear of violence from men, even given the supposed safety of the internet. Online men can, and do, do things like stalk them, or carry long term grudges and disrupt a woman's life all over the net. The potential exists for violence to spill into a person's 'real life' and this cannot be ignored, as there are not likely to be many people who know both parties who could help give protection. This potential for violence is very much part of internet folklore,

<sup>11</sup> <<http://www.snopes.com/science/stats/thinksex.asp>>

<sup>12</sup> <[http://blogs.theage.com.au/lifestyle/allmenareliars/archives/2006/10/the\\_art\\_of\\_figh.html](http://blogs.theage.com.au/lifestyle/allmenareliars/archives/2006/10/the_art_of_figh.html)>

<sup>13</sup> <<http://www.thelizlibrary.org/liz/016.htm>> and  
<[http://www.fbi.gov/publications/bcs/bcs2006/bank\\_crime\\_2006.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/publications/bcs/bcs2006/bank_crime_2006.htm)>

<sup>14</sup> <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape>>



and I remember one guy telling me that I would never escape him. That freaked me out completely, but luckily nothing happened. I've heard similar remarks from other women online. As a result of this knowledge of, and fear of, unpredictable violence, women tend to be very cautious about engaging in relationships with males.

Online, women tend to be very nice to men, perhaps to placate the possible violence before it starts. This is something that is carried over from real life. Women are nicer to men than women are to each other<sup>15</sup>. I have several times tried the experiment of connecting as a guest and setting my gender to male to see what effects it had on people. The most notable was that women who had previously ignored me as a female were polite and chatty to me as a man. For some reason, no one ever expects a woman to be impersonating a male online, so it gave me easy credibility.

We can see this placating behaviour being manifested in an interesting exchange on the online mailing list, Cybermind, where a man asked what parallel gender spam women receive that is equivalent of the ones he received to increase the size of his penis, the question we started off with. One man responded to the original question with:

Actually, they also get breast enlargement ads, I'd imagine; although one would imagine they better get offers for the rearrangement of internal organs to make room for all these huge manhoods coming their way... I mean, at this rate, the ad taglines will be "YOU CAN'T SATISFY HER IF YOU CAN'T EXTEND AT LEAST TO HER STERNUM!"

I mean, doesn't the Law of Diminishing Returns kick in somewhere?

For that matter, forget penile enhancement, why don't they just make vaginas smaller? Sheesh.

Whatever his intention in this message, it seemed to me that women quickly went to the rescue to try to placate this angry sounding male. Perhaps he wanted to sound like his was already so big any enhancement would require the woman to be physically prepared for him. Women could feel his embarrassment and quickly changed the subject to discussions of techniques that women could use during sex to make sex more pleasurable for her partner, including African 'dry sex' in which the woman makes sex as pleasurable as possible for her partner with often excruciating and potentially fatal

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<sup>15</sup> <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/06/15/opinion/main2934136.shtml>>. It is women who organize the female genital mutilations to their daughters. <<http://www.nocirc.org/symposia/first/badawi.html>>

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consequences to herself<sup>16</sup>. This acted to distract the topic away from male inadequacy to ‘women have it worse’ which is safer.

Finally someone, I assume it was a male, says “have we considered how to improve the orgasms of women?” and the subject dropped. This was probably because men were at a loss to answer and women weren’t going to enlighten them. Good women never point out male’s inadequacies to their face.

However women tend to be much more gifted socially and can take advantage of this to combat some of their fears. Women learn how to hint, suggest, and reward. When a man does well, he gets sex, smiles, warmth. Women know how to stroke men’s egos as well as being able to discipline them. Women know how to entice men to do their bidding. Women know how to ask. Women have to prop up men’s egos all the time and make them feel good about themselves. They seem aware of the inadequacies of men to exercise some kind of power. For example, usually acting in private, on MUDs women can use more powerful men to get ‘experience points’, the stuff that makes their character more powerful. Similarly on MOOs women can use male wizards to try to get rid of people they don’t like. This was particularly true when ‘real women’ were rare. Women use their intelligence to control men who are much more powerful and stronger than them. My guess is that women don’t know they are using their intelligence to control men most of the time. It was just what they were trained to do when they were young by their mothers. The problem is that these kinds of indirect techniques do not work that easily in a group interaction.

Men rarely ever seem to relate to this fear that women have or figure this into their equations about how women work. Of course this is a generalization. It is possible that as men don’t fear women they assume women don’t fear men. This seems a common perception men have – that if they feel in a certain way about women, then women must feel the same way about men.

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<sup>16</sup> <<http://www.salon.com/health/sex/urge/world/1999/12/10/drysex/>> note the woman is using these things on herself.

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## Projection

I then wondered how rape and violence fit into this discussion given that a common defense of rapists is that the woman consented to intercourse<sup>17</sup>. I suspect that men want to think women are more eager for sex than they really are because of some projection going on in the mind of the male: that women think about sex like they do. So I looked at evidence suggesting that this kind of projection was commonplace. Clearly we can see politics is not immune to projection:

In 1988, George Bush said publicly that he had picked Dan Quayle as his running mate to appeal to women voters, yet Quayle had little record of involvement with issues that affect women. Bush indicated that he thought Quayle might appeal to women because he looked handsome like John F. Kennedy. .... It is a stereotypic notion that women somehow vote with their hearts or are not thoughtful about political issues<sup>18</sup>

From that article, it does seem that men think women evaluate men the same way men evaluate women – by how good looking they are.

One of the more interesting discussions I found on the internet, that is relevant to the topic, was about “Clover’s” arguments on ‘the Final Girl’ which raises some interesting issues about projection. The ‘Final Girl’ is the survivor and heroine of a slasher film. One of the points that Clover makes is the importance of what she calls ‘gender fluidity’. Clover defines this as the male audience being able to identify with the female heroine. No one participating in the discussion seemed to dispute the point that men can identify with women<sup>19</sup> and this is borne out by the fact that it seems to be commoner for males to impersonate females, both on- and offline, than the opposite. Male impersonation also tends to be sexual. This also displays the asymmetry in perceptions. At Lambda, men who set their gender to female tend to develop sexualized caricatures of women as their persona. For instance, their descriptions would say how pretty they are, or they discuss how sexually aroused they are. In public women do not generally indicate such things because if a man decides ‘she is asking for it’ the woman may get raped or harassed.

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<sup>17</sup> <<http://aic.gov.au/publications/aust-violence-2/scutt.pdf>>

<sup>18</sup> <<http://news-service.stanford.edu/pr/96/961030gendergap.html>>

<sup>19</sup> <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Final\\_Girl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Final_Girl)>

One of Clover's underlying messages is that today it is acceptable for a woman to adopt male characteristics. We commonly see that women can wear men's clothing and can do men's jobs. And if a woman is interested in cars, or something else traditionally 'masculine', then men usually think it is 'hot'. However, Clover points out it is not acceptable, and it is even fear provoking, for a man to adopt female characteristics<sup>20</sup>. She gives examples from movies, such as Norman Bates in *Psycho* and Jame Gumb in *The Silence of the Lambs*. On the whole, I agree with her that society completely rejects men acting as women<sup>21</sup>. It is completely unacceptable for men to dress as women and when men do jobs that typically belong to women, such as working in preschools, or as male nurses and male prostitutes, it is treated with suspicion, scorn or amusement and often seen as evidence that the man is not heterosexual. Despite the idea that many women online are really men, men seem more likely to be conscious of their 'real' gender because they always have to be on guard as to not appear feminine and live up to their exalted male-ness. Most men quickly deny the fact that they could be female or effeminate, whereas being a 'tomboy' is not such a big deal for a woman.

So, while Clover says that men adopting female characteristics in movies, demonstrates the effect of feminism on popular culture, I reject this. Serial murders who dress as women are rare in films – and what form of feminism is this anyway? Most murderers in movies and in real life are male, and Hollywood has to randomize what kind of serial murderer to use to keep their plots varied and interesting. For instance, there is nothing feminine about Early Grayce in *Kalifornia*, or the Boston Strangler or Jack the Ripper who have been the subject of several movies.

My personal experience is that women don't project nearly as much as males do. But why are men projecting? This had me perplexed for awhile until I found out that projection is a defense mechanism<sup>22</sup>. Men are defending against their inadequacies, and what is common in what we have discussed, is that men think women want sex as much as men do and perhaps it's unbearable to men, for them to think women do not want men as much as men want women. I now also wonder if because breasts are ever

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> The only place where I know it is acceptable for men to assume female characters is on MUDs. There are very few women and as a result some male players will create female characters to even out the gender imbalance. These players tend to be teenagers or very young adults.

<sup>22</sup> <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological\\_projection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_projection)>. While the wiki entry is incomplete, it seems to be clear that projection is a defence mechanism.

present, men must think women are gods and always ready for sex, because men think they are supposedly awesome when they have an erection. Perhaps the most telling defensive statement of all was from the famous psychologist Freud who ascribed penis envy to women<sup>23</sup>? Women do not envy men their penises. It seems more likely that through projection Freud thought women wanted a penis, because men secretly covert breasts and vaginas<sup>24</sup>. Perhaps the violent homosexual phobia often found in supposedly heterosexual men, speaks more deeply of the male desire for a vagina<sup>25</sup>.

## Hierarchy

It also seems to me that men are inherently hierarchical creatures, and this remains so on the Internet<sup>26</sup>. They need to know who the boss is. Once they have a boss, they will continue to obey that boss unless something happens to change the order. Let me quote an interview with PQ, a transgender person who I met online, who also points to the fear men have of being taken for female:

male culture is very hierarchical, very competitive, insanely so from my perspective. Men are often self-destructive in their attempts to prove toughness (or whatever). When I talk about men, I am speaking from my perspective only, I know that not all men are the way I generally characterize them, but I am looking at them as a group. I think men are the loneliest people on Earth because they feel like they are always in competition with all the other men. Look at them when they meet another man on a narrow sidewalk, the dominant male never gives way to the subordinate one, if they don't know who's dominant often times neither one will give way and they'll bang shoulders as they pass. I also think that men are more afraid than women. Women have the camaraderie of an underclass, we're all in this together, sort of<sup>27</sup>. Men are required to be the rugged

<sup>23</sup> <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penis\\_envy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penis_envy)>

<sup>24</sup> It has been suggested that what Freud was really trying to say was that women covert the power that men have that penises symbolize. Because men have the power to act and do things that women cannot. This may have been true but it is no longer as true as it was.

<sup>25</sup> “Since men’s female identification and envy of female sexual apparatus and functions seems to run counter to the system of social status... it must be kept hidden or denied. Some of the very rituals that supposedly enhance masculinity and contribute to masculine superiority turn out to be mainly a copying of female functions” Bruno Bettelheim *Symbolic wounds: Ruberty Rites and the Envious Male*, Free Press, NY, 1954: 237. In many societies, through “acts such as circumcision and subincision men try to acquire sexual apparatuses similar to that of women... penile blood-letting may thus represent male envy of menstruation” Michael Allen, *Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia*, Melbourne University Press, 1964: 16.

<sup>26</sup> <<http://news-service.stanford.edu/pr/96/961030gendergap.html>>

<sup>27</sup> I queried PQ on women’s camaraderie. And she said:

Many women have gone far out of their way to help me, not friends necessarily, but just women I happened to meet. Women in general seem to have a mother/child relationship with men in general, even women who really LIKE men still don't see men as being their equals in things like thoughtfulness, caring, nurturing, self-examination, self-control, self-

individualists, the lone wolf, it's not manly to ask for help or admit weakness to other men and it can even be dangerous. Weakness is seen as feminine and that's the worst thing a man can be... a woman can be respected for being a tomboy, but a sissy is always shamed and often beaten<sup>28</sup>.

I have worked in a lot of male-dominated environments and when a group of guys gets together they appear to organize themselves into a pecking order – I call it organizing themselves into penis/ball size i.e. from the most important/powerful man, right down to the least important man. Online, this exists as well, but it is slightly different because the least important man is literally invisible. Certainly the men at Lambda who were the most powerful men were the most aggressive, the loudest and possibly the most entertaining. These men got the most attention from women, possibly because they may provide woman identified with them, the most protection<sup>29</sup>. Given that he is likely to have many men looking up to him, then if she controls him through intimacy, then she becomes very powerful. If she can get him in her sphere of influence then her power and security increases.

However, this matter of visibility and dominance, also shows that the dominant gender is not the universally dominant gender. As implied above, this is poignantly obvious on online. The quiet, average men at Lambda got no attention from women when there were louder and more aggressive men in the room. They were ignored and hence invisible. It seems to be much easier to be heard if you are a woman at Lambda, than an 'invisible man'. On a Mailing List, it is harder to say what is going on, because 'invisible men' have nothing to mark the fact that they are there listening or present at all, they do not have an avatar marking them. However, all the women I talked to, and

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denial, or even rational thought in many arenas (unprotected sex, fighting, aggressive driving, self-care, budgeting, picking a good mate).

However what she says doesn't suggest any real organization, but rather women's networking and mothering.

<sup>28</sup> I have noticed when travelling and I've bumped into Canadians that if I've asked them if they are Americans they are really offended and insulted. But if you ask an American if they are Canadian they are puzzled and amazed you could be so silly. The same with New Zealanders and Australians and with Scots, who if asked they are English, might even punch you. However although Canadians were all gungho about not being American but if offered a job and a greencard they are ecstatic about coming to work here. Similarly there are plenty of New Zealanders in Australia and I suspect there are plenty of Scots in England.

So, could it be that the apparent male abhorrence for being female is like Canadians wishing to distance themselves from being considered American, and an acknowledgment of superiority?

<sup>29</sup> This is possibly why women like the bad boys. He is likely to have many men looking up to him and if she controls him, she becomes very powerful.

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such discussions were quite common, sounded more interested in the men who were highly visible, than in the men who were less visible.

My impression is that not only do women have less complex hierarchies but that most of the time women do not organise with groups of other women at all. However they do form networks with each other, especially when women go out with groups of other women. In this case the woman with the most influence may be she who knows the most other women, rather than she who has position in a dominance hierarchy. I know at least two women online who seem to collect people and who appear to have truly massive networks, however, they didn't try to foster contact between members of their networks, although might if asked. Therefore this 'female network' might be more readily seen as a series of connections to the woman herself as a centre, than to a web which connects many different women to each other. This kind of networking may explain the appeal of special interest groups/networks for women such as can be found on facebook, where you see groups of nursing mothers, or anorexic groups etc., or which display the number of friends/connections that woman has on her page – presumably this counts as a status item, or indicator of social connectedness (although this could apply to people of both genders). When women do meet in loose groups it seems they are primarily looking to discuss their experiences, or their problems, rather than compete for status, although that does happen of course. The only general competition I have noticed amongst women online has been over men; say to be the first to take a man's online virginity, or to monopolize his attention. Both of these factors may make it hard for women to stand up in competition with more organized men. In my experience female groups do not generally organize to challenge men, the women bitch about men but they are also building their bonds between each other. They may not necessarily be trying to take on men, but a single man is unlikely to rape a woman in a pack of females – even though I think packs of women are rarely visible online. However, you may not always be with friends, even online and therefore you might not want to be seen to be responsible for challenging, or 'provoking' men. Thus one woman I knew from Cybermind wanted me to play down the amount of power I had because she said men were used to being ontop and didn't want to be challenged by a woman.

Despite fear still being present, one advantage of being online in searching for relationships or friendships is that not only are you *relatively* safer with strangers, even

though you may still be nervous, but that being online allows women the ability to determine compatibility quickly – far quicker than if offline – because you have to think of things to do together, and this involves mental contact, and general compatibility of interests, and you have to be able to talk to each other in a relatively involved way. However, if you want someone who loves deep sea diving or skiing, for instance, then the internet may not be the best place for you to find such a partner.

### **Women Strike Back – Covertly?**

If the relations between men and women online seem to replicate the kinds of patterns of power that we see offline, then if women know how to cultivate men then they also know how to tear down the confidence of a man pretty quickly too. As we have seen spam indicates how fragile male confidence is and how it focuses on sex and connectedness to women. Women know how fragile a man's confidence is because we gave him that confidence in the first place. Suggesting that she could do something better, that she could do it better without him or laughing at him for being incompetent or impotent are all pretty quick ways of demolishing a man's ego. Apparently the worst that can be said of a male penis is that it is small, adding to a man's sexual insecurity<sup>30</sup>. Offline this might lead to the threat of violence, but online the woman is much more secure, even if still open to fear.

I have spent many hours talking with female friends about masculine weak spots and I am commonly told that pretty much the most fearsome thing for a male is the sound of female laughter. As we see in this article

"Using this laugh-production strategy may be in the female's best interest. Male strangers are potentially dangerous to females because of their somewhat greater physical size and ardent pursuit of sexual opportunities," [Bachorowski, an assistant professor of psychology at Vanderbilt university] said. "Men are also biased to interpret the friendly behavior of females as potentially being sexually tinged." A woman, however, can control the emotional stance of a male towards her by using laughter<sup>31</sup>

However women tend to be pretty guarded with their laughter because they invariably feel the need to protect men. Also tearing down a man's ego is also one of the surest ways of making him violent and unpredictable. Online at Lambda women will laugh at men who try too hard to get their attention, but they tend to do this behind their backs to

<sup>30</sup> <[http://blogs.theage.com.au/lifestyle/allmenareliars/archives/2007/07/pin\\_dick.html](http://blogs.theage.com.au/lifestyle/allmenareliars/archives/2007/07/pin_dick.html)>

<sup>31</sup> <[http://www.altpenis.com/penis\\_news/20000404061836data\\_trunc\\_sys.shtml](http://www.altpenis.com/penis_news/20000404061836data_trunc_sys.shtml)>



other women, as women tend to be nice to men in front of them. And we can certainly see that it could be said there is a need to protect men, and their egos.

## Futures

Men still have power as a result of historical legacy and they will likely retain it. They still earn more money, they still get better jobs, and they will still be violent. Women have to deal with this and there is obviously a possible set up for further friction. If most men are insecure about their relations with women and think that pleasing women is important, then they may both envy them and hate them. Similarly if women think men are both weak and aggressive and have to placate them, then they can be afraid of them and contemptuous of them.

Despite this current conflict which continues online, men and women seem designed to be different and need each other to survive. Men benefit by living in a society where women enjoy more power as well<sup>32</sup>. They enjoy more equality and have to suffer less in silence about being abused as children; the societies are less violent and better educated<sup>33</sup>. Children are better cared for and the future of the society is likely to be more prosperous.

Societies ran by women tend to be more equal<sup>34</sup>, such as the Musuo<sup>35</sup> and other matrilinear or matriloal societies. Although the Nair<sup>36</sup> prove that matrilinear societies do not have to be non-violent.

Societies where there is an imbalanced gender power as seen in religious fundamentalist cultures such as in Islam, the bible belt of the USA, the Hare Krishnas are repressive for both men and women, with bad education for both genders, and racism and intolerance becomes prevalent<sup>37</sup>. There is something wrong about the natural dominance of man if

<sup>32</sup> <[http://blogs.theage.com.au/lifestyle/allmenareliars/archives/2007/06/the\\_biggest\\_pro.html](http://blogs.theage.com.au/lifestyle/allmenareliars/archives/2007/06/the_biggest_pro.html)>

<sup>33</sup> <<http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?alias=female-tutors-best-for-bo>> young boys at least, learn better from women than they do from men. Perhaps it is because women tend to give more praise.

<sup>34</sup> <<http://www.second-congress-matriarchal-studies.com/opening.html>>

<sup>35</sup> <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosuo>>

<sup>36</sup> <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nair>>

<sup>37</sup> <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religiosity\\_and\\_intelligence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religiosity_and_intelligence)> all cited religions believe women are subject to men. See also <<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-11.html>> and <<http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2005/2005-11.html>>

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he needs it propped up by the State and religion. Surely the superiority of men should be natural rather than enforced?

Women need to take their power and, in many cases, it would seem that men would really like them too. It is clear that once a man marries, he usually accepts his wife's orders in the daily run of things. Women who get involved with married men know they'll never leave their wife. Men want or need women to give them purpose and direction. Women supply them with homes and if it wasn't for women, men would not have the power that they have. Men worship/idolize women so much that they may dress like them, identify with them, project onto them. The message that Clover's 'final girls' usually send is 'do not fuck with women', and men see this as hot.

In the model of society presented here, fame, money, and position are coveted by men so they can attract the best woman they can because these are things that attract women. Men who can attract the least number or no women are the lowest in the social hierarchy. They are irrelevant to society and are usually used as cannon fodder in warfare.

Further, women are capable of doing all the jobs that men can especially as society becomes technologically advanced. But men and women need each other. Men make women's lives easier and women give status to men and give birth to children. In the most patriarchal societies men pretend they do not need women, but they do.

The best run societies are those where women have the most power, as in the west. They have the best economies; the most technology and the best education. Men, indeed everyone, benefits when women have more power<sup>38</sup> and I think this is because men have to work harder to impress women when women have more power.

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<sup>38</sup> This is a theory that can easily be tested. The renaissance came to Britain when Elizabeth I was on the throne. Women enjoyed more equality in renaissance Florence.  
<[http://employees.oneonta.edu/farberas/ARTH/arth213/women\\_Ren\\_florence.html](http://employees.oneonta.edu/farberas/ARTH/arth213/women_Ren_florence.html)>