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Heterosexual Males: A Group Forgotten by the Profession of Social Work

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Social work literature has mainly focused upon females and gay males. A search was undertaken of general references to heterosexual males in published social-work authored articles and appearing in book reviews and publishers’ ads in two prominent social work journals during the last decade. The conclusion reached was that heterosexual males are seldom discussed and when they are discussed they are portrayed in a very biased manner. It is believed that social workers do not receive necessary preparation for understanding and working with heterosexual males, especially from minority and immigrant groups, who are facing emotional, physical, interpersonal, and family problems. A stereotypic view of heterosexual males is both unfair and untrue, and precludes necessary attention in the classroom and in practice to their normative needs and special problems.

“Social work has been a woman’s profession. The vast majority of social workers have been and are women” (Weick, 2000, p. 395). Indeed, this is true. However, social work clients are not only females. Despite this, social work literature is female-oriented and provides a negative view of heterosexual males. Such a conclusion has been reached by an antecedent exploratory effort that assessed the titles of articles, book reviews, and publishers’ ads appearing since 1990 in the National Association of Social Work (NASW) journal, Social Work, and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) publication, Journal of Social Work Education. When a title referred to male, female, or gender, the content of the book or journal article was assessed.

It was learned that when males are discussed they were, in the main, discussed as gays or if heterosexuals, discussed in negative
ways (such as abusers or absent fathers). Thus, it is believed that social work literature is biased and results in social work students and practitioners often being unaware of the various potential problems facing heterosexual males over their life cycle, such as interpersonal conflicts of adolescent boys, periods of transition to adulthood, fatherhood, marriage or divorce, aging, illness, immigration, widowerhood, employment, unemployment, and retirement, among many others. Social work practitioners may be unprepared to provide sensitive and effective interventions to assist such males facing both normative and unique problems. Included are culturally diverse groups of males, such as immigrants and refugees. The males of concern are not the criminals, abusers, or deviants one can read about in the newspaper. They, rather, are males who face normative developmental, familial, interpersonal and intergenerational, economic, spiritual, and emotional challenges; those who can benefit from social work involvement.

This article emanates not out of an anti-feminist, pro-masculine orientation; rather, it results from social work values mandating the equitable and non-discriminatory concern for any individual or group in need. Nor does this article challenge contentions made by critics of "androcentrist" knowledge. "The social sciences were developed for the most part by a homogeneous group of white, middle-class, Western men who pursued their search for knowledge by building on shared assumptions and observations" (Figueira-McDonough, 1998, p. 5). However, we ought not dismiss or overlook the needs of heterosexual males in contemporary society as a result of past power inequities. That would replace one past injustice with another in the present. For example, the Preface of a text on practice knowledge for females (Figueira-McDonought, Netting, & Nichols-Casebolt, 1998) states: "This is a book that grew out of a shared uneasiness about the invisibility of women at the core of the curriculum [and] the ‘afterthought’ given to women’s issues in our classes . . ." (p. xiii). One could make a similar statement with regard to heterosexual males in society. It is believed that lack of attention to heterosexual males minimizes their importance for social work students and practitioners.

The following provides a suggestive, not exhaustive, overview of findings from the survey of social work material on males
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and females published or reviewed in two influential and widely read social work journals. Addressed are examples of the predominant attention to female issues, the bias portrayal of males, normative problems of all males, special problems faced by males from minority and immigrant groups, and applied implications for the profession.

Social Work's Attention to Females

During the 1990s up to present, social work literature has been female-oriented, and articles and books have focused upon the needs, problems, and empowerment of female clients and patients. This attention on females is based, in part, upon a legitimate professional concern for powerless and victimized populations. However, the attention on female-related issues may also result from the large proportion of social workers who are female and the significant number of feminists (both female and male) in the profession.


While the NASW Press did not publish these books, they were reviewed or advertised in its journal. Over the past decade, the

The journal, *Social Work*, from 1990 to the present, published numerous articles on females, such as "Postmodern Feminist Theory and Social Work" (Sands & Nuccio, 1992), "Aging as a Feminist Issue" (Hartman, 1990), "The Feminine Ethic of Care and the Professionalization of Social Work" (Freedberg, 1993), "The Logic of Feminist Standpoint Theory for Social Work Research" (Swigonski, 1994), and "Gender Bias in Families and Its Clinical Implications for Women" (Atwood, 2001). The November 1992 Special Issue of the journal was entirely devoted to articles and reviews on women's issues.

Although seldom focusing on gender-related issues, the *Journal of Social Work Education* had published the article "A Continuum of Male Controls and Violence Against Women: A Teaching Model" (Stout, 1991). Another article was entitled "Coverage of Women's Issues in Social Work Journals: Are We Building an Adequate Knowledge Base?," in which Nichols-Casebolt, Krysik, and Hamilton (1994) reported on a study of social work journals published between 1982 and 1991. The authors concluded that although the proportion of articles devoted to women's issues had increased, the number was still low and did not cover the range of content on women. Books on women's issues that are described in the Books Received section of the journal include *Resources for Social and Economic Development: Women Participating in Global Changes: An International Collection* (Fernandez, Heycox, Hughes, & Wilkinson, 1998) and *Women's Science: Learning and Succeeding from the Margins* (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998).

The word "gender" is a general term that refers to sexual categories. Yet, within social work literature, the term has been applied mainly to females. The book *The Role of Gender in Practice Knowledge: Claiming Half the Human Experience* (Figueira-McDonough, Netting, & Nichols-Casebolt, 1998) focused on
females. Many articles on gender that appeared in *Social Work* had a decidedly female orientation. In a journal article, "Gender Differences in Attitudes toward Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drugs" (Kauffman, Silver, & Poulin, 1997), the conclusion reached was that programs only for women should be compared to those that serve both genders. This article included 56 cited references, 30 specifically pertaining to females (by title) and only one to males.

Articles in the *Journal of Social Work Education* that focused upon gender in curricula also had a female focus, such as "Women's Studies or Gender Studies: A Feminist Discussion" (Hyde & Bricker-Jenkins, 1995) and in "Gender-Sensitive Social Work Practice: A Model for Education," Norman and Wheeler (1996) made the case that psychological models of assessment and intervention are based upon male development models, and offered an alternate feminist model. In "Gender-Sensitive Curricula in Social Work Education: A National Study" (Knight, 1991), the point made was that while graduate social work programs include attention to domestic violence and sexism (against women), the topics of lesbianism, reproductive rights, and sexism in social work were not adequately addressed. The author concluded by stating "the presence of a strongly feminist faculty was associated with the degree to which an institution covered women's issues" (p. 145). De Lange (1995) wrote a fairly balanced article on cross-cultural issues as related to gender and communications in the journal; yet, there was an emphasis on women, as seen in the concluding sentence: "Using a cross-cultural prospective can help discourage stereotyping and finger pointing, and free the communication style of women from devaluation by both sexes" (p. 81).

Articles in social work journals on occasion have been criticized for their "androcentric" orientation. For example, Spano's book review (*Social Work*, 1995) of Levy's *Social Work Ethics on the Line* (1992) concluded with the following assessment: "A major shortcoming is that the book proceeds from a traditional, male-oriented conceptualization of ethics and ethical decision-making. . . . The majority of social workers and clients are women, and [many social workers] have questioned some of the basic assumptions underlying traditional ethical decision making in relation to gender bias" (p. 574). In the *NASW News* (September,
a letter to the editor took to task a male author who had pointed out the “injustice” in males always being portrayed as perpetrators of domestic violence and had suggested that males, too, could be victims. In addition to challenging the research findings on male victimization, the letter writer goes on to state that no one has suggested that males have it easy!

Terms and phrases have been coined giving a female orientation to general social work topics, such as ecofeminism, feminine reconstructionism, feminist research, ethical feminism, feminist social work, and feminist pedagogy. Finally, both NASW and the Council on Social Work Education have special committees on female issues, and there presently exists at least one social work journal devoted to women’s issues, Affilia, with another, Journal of Feminist Social Work, to be appearing soon.

It can, thus, be interpreted by social work students and practitioners that males have caused the need for females to reaffirm their personal and professional identity, and it might well appear that the profession is female-oriented and serving mainly females. Impressionistically, it seems as if social work education has included attention to the needs of female clients and patients in curricular content and course offerings. While professional attention to the particular needs of females (in social work courses and social work literature) is certainly essential, the lack of attention to heterosexual male clients and patients, or (if at all discussed) the biased portrayal of them, may result in an erroneous belief that their needs are less significant and social work involvement with them is less important.

The Portrayal of Heterosexual Males

Compared to the hundreds of title references to females in social work literature, over the past decade there has been a fraction (about 25) that focused upon males in the title, and about half of these focused upon gay men. From the review of topics associated with heterosexual males that were published in Social Work over the past decade, the majority dealt with males as abusers, HIV victims, prisoners, absent fathers, disengaged fathers, youths on probation, and the homeless. Few focused
upon multicultural backgrounds of heterosexual males, with the exception of individual articles on multicultural counseling with teenage fathers, non-resident Black fathers, Puerto Rican caregiving sons, and advocacy needs for African American men. Often discussions of males, even as criminals or deviants, failed to differentiate them by cultural backgrounds. Yet, as is true for females, male cohorts are more dissimilar than alike.

Of course, there are males who are gang members, who neglect their families and children, who abuse and victimize, who are AIDS victims, and who abuse alcohol or drugs. Yet, limiting the focus of males in social work literature to such populations reflects a stereotypical (and, in most cases, negative) picture of males for social work students and practitioners. Most males are not delinquent, neglectful, abusers, AIDS victims, or gay. Social work literature often fails to address the more normative needs of heterosexual males undergoing stress and challenges faced in their lives. Even in articles that compare male and female client populations, the characteristics of the male samples are less differentiated than female samples. The need to differentiate clients and patients by race, ethnicity, native or foreign born, social class, and age, among other considerations, is necessary for the understanding of problems and for the meeting the needs of males as well as females.

Psychologists, and their professional organizations, seem to be leading the way in attention to the problems of males. The *Handbook of Counseling and Psychotherapy with Men*, edited by Scher, Stevens, Good, and Eichenfield (1987), *A New Psychotherapy for Traditional Men* by Brooks (1998), and *Husband Focused Marital Therapy: An Approach to Dealing with Marital Distress* (Rugel, 1997) are among the few texts on professional intervention with men. The American Psychological Association established The Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity that seeks to challenge restrictive gender roles leading to negative consequences, harmful activities, unhealthy interactions, and oppression of others.

Among the limited social work material is an article on males by Lichtenberg (1995) in *The Encyclopedia of Social Work* who suggested that contemporary males are fearful of intimacy,
dependency, and vulnerability. The result can be psychosocial dysfunctioning including mental illness, alcoholism, and criminality. In the same publication, Chestang (1995) discussed the fact that “[Social] changes among men are not being accomplished without significant conflicts and challenges” (p. 1702). While some might respond with anger or denial, he states “others are beginning to seek professional help in coming to terms with their own fears and needs, turning to therapists and mentor/coaches, including professionally trained social workers, for assistance in finding more fulfilling and effective lives” (p. 1702). Not addressed is whether there are professionals with appropriate skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes for effective work with males.

In Social Work, there have been some articles that focus, in a positive way, on males. Among others have been “A Closer Look at Self-Image in Male Foster Care Adolescents” (Lyman & Bird, 1996), “The Effects of Nonresident Fathers Involvement on Single Black Mothers and Their Young Children” (Jackson, 1999), and “Lessons Learned About Working with Men: A Prison Memoir” (Sternbach, 2000) that extrapolated information on psychotherapy within prisons to such interventions with community populations. An article by O’Donnell (1999) focused upon the contributions to be made by African American fathers in kinship foster care placements.

The journal has also publicized books that address the needs of males: Reaching Up for Manhood: Transferring the Lives of Boys in America (Canada, 1999), Manhood in America: A Cultural History (Kimmel, 1995), and Diagnosis and Treatment of the Young Male Victim of Sexual Abuse (Breer, 1992). In an especially informative article in the Journal of Social Work Education, “Intimate Partner Violence: An HBSE Perspective,” Begun (1999) refrained from pointing a finger at males, and acknowledged that the dynamics of partner violence transcended stereotypes of the gender of perpetrator and victim. Two books that focus on social work practice with African American men were published in 1999: Social Work Practice with African American Men: The Invisible Presence by Rasheed and Rasheed (1999) and Working with African American Males: A Guide to Practice, edited by Davis (1999). These texts provide a positive, balanced, and applied approach to the problems of these males.
Challenges Facing Males

In addition to common human needs, males have particular social and health problems that necessitate special concern. While such attention has generally escaped social work literature, those from a wider sector of society have been aware of the special problems of males. Focusing upon school age adolescents, the NBC T.V. morning program, Today, on May 27, 1997, discussed the fact that professionals preoccupied with the self-concepts of adolescent girls have neglected attention to the needs of adolescent boys. The lead into the story referred to a "female culture" which is detrimental to males (and the term "boy bashing" was used to describe those who write about such "cultures"). A similar theme appeared in a February 22, 1999 article in U.S. News & World Report, entitled "Gender Wars Redux" (Leo, 1999), which suggested that, despite the popularity of the notion that "schools shortchange girls," the educational status of boys, not girls, is seen as the problem. "Boys as a group, particularly minority boys, are falling behind, getting lower grades, suffering more emotional difficulties, getting punished far more frequently, dropping out more often, and reading and writing at levels that are appalling by girls' standards" (Leo, p. 24). There are some who believe that males are emotionally abused and unfairly accused of problems not of their doing. For example, Thomas (1993), in the book Not Guilty: The Case in Defense of Men, suggested that men have become scapegoats for all that is wrong in society.

There are special health concerns and problems facing males in society. Prostate and testicular cancers, as well as non-gender specific types, have reached epidemic proportions for males. One in five men are expected to develop prostate cancer and, at age 75, males are dying at twice the rate as women. The cancer death rate for African American men is twice that for Caucasian men (The Men's Health Network, 2000). Robert Samuels, prostate cancer survivor and head of the National Prostate Cancer Coalition, stated that the mission of his group is not to detract from efforts for combating breast cancer or AIDS; yet, "Our issues, our lives, are at least equal. Not better, not worse, but equal" (quoted in Tampa Tribune, Jan. 2, 1997, p. 1).

In a study (Aging Today, 1991–92) of 300 doctors and 500 men over age 50, it was found that half of the men did not follow-up
on the warning signs of prostate or colorectal cancer as a result of their embarrassment, fear, and denial. More than half of the men did not ask their doctors about sexual dysfunction or depression, citing embarrassment as the main reason for their failure to discuss problems with a physician. It is suspected that males from culturally diverse backgrounds might be especially reluctant to seek professional advice on their health related concerns. *The New York Times* (February 17, 1999) ran a special section on Men's Health which advised males "Don't Take Your Medicine Like a Man" (Lipsyte, 1999), but do what women do: Inquire about one's health problems. Another article was entitled "Why Men Don't Last: Self-Destruction as a Way of Life" (Angier, 1999) which suggested that men's life styles jeopardize their survival.

One group of males often not thought about are military veterans who are victims of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including former POWs from World War II and Korean and Vietnam veterans. In study results presented at an American Psychological Association conference (*Aging Today*, 1991–92), it was reported that vets with PTSD are a larger group than generally believed. Events associated with the aging process (e.g., retirement, bereavement) can lead to delayed PTSD. Such problems have not received necessary attention by professionals.

Males have been found to be more likely than females to be victimized and murdered, to complete suicide attempts, to become substance abusers (alcohol, tobacco, and drugs), to be homeless, to be victims of work-related injuries and illness, to suffer heart attacks, to have fatal car accidents, and to have shorter life expectancies (Farrell, 1993). There appears to be a lack of concern about the emotional needs of such groups of men as divorced dads denied access to their children, fathers of children born out of wedlock, fathers of children with disabilities, and widowers, among others. As a result of workplace preferences often given to women and minority group members (of both sexes) in the name of "political correctness," Cose (1995) states, "[H]eterosexual White men . . . need sympathy" (p. 3). Such non-Hispanic groups of males are increasingly becoming members of a new minority group.

Although males are popularly depicted as abusers (of children and females), research has suggested that males are also likely
to be the victims of abuse. Steinmetz (1977–78) titled her article "The Battered Husband Syndrome" which gave rise to much discussion that continues today. Inattention to the possibility that there are heterosexual male victims of domestic violence sustains their portrayal as aggressors and denies them professional assistance and community resources. Koff (1997) discussed older men in long-term care facilities as being emotionally abused when the majority of residents and staff are women, and activities are female-oriented.

Literature on males as family caregivers has been increasing. While traditionally it has been females (such as wives or daughters) who have cared for dependent members of the family (i.e., children, specially-challenged relatives, dependent elderly parents), increasingly males are taking on such responsibilities (Kramer, 1997; Kramer & Lambert, 1999). There is ample evidence that male caregivers (i.e., husbands, sons) may experience similar levels of burden and depression as found for females; yet, these male caregivers are less likely to seek assistance or admit their adversities (Kaye & Applegate, 1997; Yee & Schultz, 1999). Professional understanding and concern, along with programmatic outreach, do not always exist.

While social work literature suggests that males have power and control in the family and in society, there are reasons to believe that males in contemporary society are beleaguered in their efforts to understand their roles in a changing society increasingly requiring gender equity in attitude and behavior. "[T]hey feel vulnerable, off balance, and in need of assistance to help them redefine their place in a newly confusing world. If this problem has a name, it is 'bewilderment'" (Cose, 1995, p. 2). Although females have been measured to have higher rates of depression, it is possible that the rates for males are grossly under-reported due to their being ashamed to admit their problems and to due to their under-utilization of community-based social and health services. Further, depressed males may turn to suicide and substance abuse; thus, resulting in lower rates reported for depression.

Problems Faced by Minority Group Males

There are special problems facing minority group males, both native and foreign born. Males from minority group backgrounds,
no less than such females, may face the frustrations from subtle and overt discrimination that impede their ability to provide for themselves and their families. The nature of one's upbringing (including family and culture) has profound implications on the quality and length of one's life. Consider the plight of many young African American or Hispanic males who are over-represented in prisons, detention centers, in probation and parole systems, and who are more likely to face violent death (Cose, 1995). Minority group males may be high risk for a number of adversities, such as prostate cancer, diabetes, violence, homelessness, and incarceration (Davis, 1999).

The introductory chapter of the book, Social Work Practice with African American Males, by Rasheed and Rasheed (1999), presented a summary of social statistics that beg for professional concern and social action. These realities are not a result of one's race or ethnicity, but rather are due to poverty, discrimination, and societal inequities in educational, social, and health care systems. Social work needs to focus upon both causes and consequences of such issues that "victimize" males (as they do females) from different minority group backgrounds, if not all from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Indeed, Allen-Meares and Burman (1995) sounded an appeal for widespread social work action on behalf of "endangered" African American men.

Immigrant males face unique problems. Gil and Vega (1996) have written about the acculturation stress among Cuban and Nicaraguan adolescent males and their families. The consequences of stress include a lack of family cohesion and low adolescent self-concepts. The problems of Caribbean male immigrants in the Miami Area have been discussed (Albertini, Kosberg, & Frederick, 1999) as resulting from a difficulty, or reluctance, to change one's gender-role attitudes and behavior from those found in traditional Caribbean cultures to those that stress gender equity found in the U.S. Additionally, often such males encounter racial prejudice, poor employment opportunities, and can become dependent upon the females in their family. Consequences have been found to result in marital and relationship problems (e.g., abuse, divorce), addictive behavior, criminality, and mental illness (Farrell, 1993).
Meeting the Needs of Males

Influenced by culture of upbringing, traditional male values often exemplify stoicism, independence, self-reliance, and strength. Males should not admit to having problems, should not show fear or sadness, and should not seek out assistance from others. Accordingly, there are significant challenges facing professionals who wish to assist males with their psychological, social, and interpersonal problems. Some males are reluctant to open their emotions in front of females, while others are resistant to verbalizing their concerns with other males. Many books have been written about cultural sensitivity or competence in social work practice (e.g., Cox & Ephross, 1998; Dana, Behn, & Honwa, 1992). Yet, seldom discussed are the needs of men from culturally diverse backgrounds with regard to the helping process. There are special considerations in the helping process that include attention to males’ help-seeking behavior, utilization of services, and the effectiveness of various forms of intervention.

Research findings and practice experience lead to the conclusion that males are less involved with health and social service systems. They are less likely to admit having problems, seek professional assistance, actively participate in interactive therapies, and remain in treatment programs (Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1996). Additionally, for members of minority groups, there can be a perception of social prejudice and suspicion of a service system believed to be representative of an unsympathetic and discriminatory society. For example, “Black clients may be uncommunicative, not because they cannot deal with their feelings, but because the context involves a representative of a traditional ‘White’ institution that they never had reason to trust” (McGoldrick & Giordano, 1996, p. 21).

Professionals working with persons from culturally diverse groups have known that a professional’s age and racial, religious, or ethnic background can influence the utilization, continuation, and effectiveness of interventions (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 1991). So, too, can the gender of the professional. To be sure, the professional’s competence is more important than gender; yet, gender is a consideration. For example, Baptiste, Hardy, and Lewis (1996) have suggested that inasmuch as Caribbean societies are
patriarchal, males coming from Caribbean countries are often uncomfortable with female professionals, regardless of their skills and experience. On the other hand, Brice-Baker (1996) suggests that "since the domain of females is considered to be the emotional well-being of the family, a female therapist could be accepted and have validity" (p. 94). Accordingly, disclosure by a male client or patient to a male professional could result in a "loss of face." The differences in findings suggest the need for research to better understand male reactions to the gender of professionals. But until such inquiry takes place, professionals would do well to assess the importance of gender and cultural background in the determination of whether they will be well received in the helping process.

It is possible that males are relatively unfamiliar with community services, especially more in-depth therapeutic interventions. Confusion and apprehension about professional interventions adds another stumbling block to the admission of a problem and desire to seek help. Peer groups have become increasingly popular in the U.S. for those with certain personal and/or social problems, or for those who care for them, but males have generally been unresponsive to such interventions (Barusch & Peak, 1997). Research has found that peer group-type interventions have generally reached and served a biased segment of the population: Those who are better-educated and affluent English-speaking whites. Yet, even among males with such backgrounds there has been found a reluctance to seek assistance (Davies, Priddy, & Tinklenberg, 1986; Barusch & Peak, 1997).

In a study undertaken in a group treatment program for substance abusers that included males and females from diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, it was found that males were inactive in the group and had high drop out rates (Kosberg & Dobson, 1993). Based upon limitations in speaking and understanding English, a lack of desire or inability to articulate feelings, and shyness around females, some males were especially reluctant to join or participate in the program that was predominated by females. Additionally, research is needed to explore if the characteristics of a group leader (including gender) can influence the rate of male participation in a program.
Implications for the Profession

To increase attention to the needs of any one underserved group, there should be an acknowledgement of the existence of the group's problems. For social work, educating students to the needs of heterosexual males, in general, and those from multicultural backgrounds, in particular, seems congruent with the profession's Code of Ethics and the goal of preparing social workers for a shrinking world and continuing immigration (Asamoah, Healy, & Mayadas, 1997).

Social work students need to be made aware of the common and unique needs of both native- and foreign-born heterosexual males. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) mandates attention to cultural diversity in each social work program's curriculum. The inclusion of gender-sensitive material is also mandated; yet, such material is mainly directed at female professionals, clients, and patients. The cloaking of female issues under a "gender-sensitive" caption seems a bit limiting, and male issues necessitate much greater attention in the classroom. Whether the lack of attention to heterosexual male issues results from a limited number of educational material on the topic or vice versa is not as important as the need to correct this lack of attention. Indeed, CSWE has a Commission on the Role and Status of Women and a Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expressions (formerly called the Commission on Gay Men and Lesbian Women) and NASW has a National Committee on Women's Issues. Organizational advocacy for the heterosexual male is missing.

This article advocates for increased attention to the needs of heterosexual males in social work education and training. Such a concern emanates not out of a "male power" perspective, but from the concern about the overlooked needs of a particular group. In addition to advocating for an awareness of the problems of heterosexual males, this article suggests that there are many considerations for social work practitioners, educators, researchers, and students, to better understand, reach, and serve such populations. Greater attention to the needs of all males in society, including those from minority groups, can be seen as an investment in the reduction of societal problems. The preponderance of male suicides, and their overall shorter lifespan, results in
prodigious consequences for their children, spouses or partners, and economic consequences for society. The extent of their alcoholism, drug use, depression, and other emotional problems also impede their interpersonal functioning and can result in crimes of omission and commission against others. Professionals should realize that preventive, as well as interventive, efforts will not only assist males, but their children, spouses, parents, and significant others as well.

Social work's commitment to gender equity, social justice, and the prevention of problems necessitates attention to the needs of heterosexual males, in addition to the needs of gays and females (whether lesbian or heterosexual). Such a commitment requires social work research, practice, and education to focus upon males; no more, but certainly no less, than females.

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