

Greeting from your President of Division 51

Hello to my colleagues and friends. I hope you are enjoying the coming of Spring and the wonderful energy of the different colors, sounds and smells that accompany the change of seasons. While I can sense the subtle change of season here in Southern California, it parallels a sense of some subtle, yet powerful changes in our Division. We have new folks in leadership positions, many more women are active on the listserv discussions and graduate students are joining our division at a higher rate than ever before. We have plenty of wonderful traditions that will continue such as: the 4th annual APA sponsored Teaching the Psychology of Men Workshop, our division's journal the Psychology of Men and Masculinity (being recognized for having a high utilization ratio), our mid-year men's retreat and top notch programs at the upcoming APA conference in San Francisco. I am very proud to be a member and President of Division 51. The strength of our division is both in embracing our solid historical foundation and our ability/flexibility to be open to new ideas about the mission/vision of our division. The field of men's studies is changing significantly as the demographics of our researchers and the men we are studying are quite different than 10-15 years ago. The understanding of gender and what gendered behaviors and attitudes look like are dynamic because our media driven world. These challenges and great opportunities lay ahead for us as we navigate the changing seasons of our division.

Before I discuss my presidential column, I would like to pat a few backs of folks working behind the scenes. Chen Oren, our program chair for APA 2007 has done an outstanding job of selecting keynote speakers and programs for the conference. In addition he is working on a place to have our 2nd annual D35 and D51 joint social. It that is not enough he is finding a place for us to have our conference dinner. Sam Cochran has provided invaluable leadership in bringing our division's journal to an international level of prominence. Michele Harway, our fabulous treasure, deals with the details of keeping our assets in good shape. Neil Massoth, our council representative, keeps us well informed about some of the big pictures issues within APA. Mitch Hicks our newsletter editor has been quite persistent in convincing our members to contribute to our newsletter. Andy Smiler, our list serve moderator, working behind the scenes and coming up with ways to make the best use of our lists. Finally, Matt Genuchi, our website editor, is incredibly open to new ideas with his "can do" attitude. Thank you all for your efforts to keep our division prospering.

Now to my presidential column. I believe the "great debate" of our division has been feminism vs. male affirmation (pro-male). This debate like the process of other great debates: nature vs. nurture, Darwin vs. Creationism, Beatles vs. (well there is really not debate here), seems to get stuck on the extremes. I would like to stay away from the extremes because from my perspective it is not in the fringes of this debate that hold the essence of the possibilities. Our division (we are not alone) seems to thrive somewhat on the drama of the extremes. I would like to provide a different angle, one that accentuates the commonality and complementary nature of being both pro-feminist and male affirmative. I provide you some food for thought and my truth about a very complicated personal, philosophical and politically charged topic

Confessions of a Pro-Feminist/Pro-Male Division 51 President

Mark A. Stevens, Ph.D.

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Context is usually important. I am approaching my mid fifties. The connection of Feminism and Psychology was huge when I started graduate school in 1977. To a lesser degree the term men's issues was being tossed around in psychology and sociology academic circles and there were CR (consciousness raising) groups for men emerging on the scene. Folks such as Warren Farrell, Bob Brannon, Joe Pleck, and James Harrison just to name a few, were developing paradigms to understand men and masculinity. And yes there were heated debates about can one be both pro-feminist and pro-male. Context continued, I am white, Jewish, married and from a solid middle class background. Feminism had a gigantic influence on my development and understanding of who I am as a male. I began developing a personal and political understanding of how my own individual sexism and the collective sexism of men served to limit the potential of most men, including myself. Harry Brod described this phenomena best when he talked about the symbolism and restriction of men wearing ties as a uniform of male prestige. As clearly as I can remember Harry said something like this: "The tie, the symbol of male power, points to an organ we think too much with and also cuts off our circulation and ability to breathe fully."

I also found it useful to understand, through feminist writings, the function of male sexist attitudes and behaviors in terms of the harm it inflicts on so many women and the disconnect it can create between men and women. In the early and mid 80's I was involved in the "ending men's violence" campaign through the National Organization for Changing Men (now called the National Organization for Men Against Sexism). In 1985 I was on the first steering committee to help organize the BrotherPeace event, which was an international event to bring attention to the harm of male violence. Around the same time I was a participant in a wonderful leaderless men's group in Ohio and was also facilitating support groups for college men. Oh, one important fact not to be ignored—the birth of our daughter Jamie in 1981. Feminism in some very subtle and powerful ways gave me permission to be a "stay at home" dad when Jamie was born. Truth be told, economics was a factor. Jawai (my wife) was making more money than I was and it made sense for her to continue her job. What also factored into our decision was a sense that because of my familiarity and knowledge of feminism I had a choice to not be the "bread winner". And even more powerful was my strong desire to attach to my infant daughter on a deeper level than what was expected (taught) to me as a father- to- be.

Purposefully, I am juxtaposing ending men's violence, men's support groups and fathering as an example of how profoundly interdependent (from a personal and philosophical perspective) both pro-feminist and pro-male can be. We can not separate the two. So what does being a pro-feminist and pro-male mean to me?

Being pro-feminist means being aware (personally and politically) of the historical power dynamics that men have orchestrated through protecting our male privilege. Being pro-feminist means acknowledging the subtle and not so subtle ways I have objectified and treated women as less than because of their sex. Being pro-feminist means using my position of influence to speak out respectfully to other men about the behaviors and attitudes, both historically and currently, which promote harm and suffering of others. Being pro-feminist means taking a deep breath and trusting that I do not need as much power and privilege to enjoy my life. Being pro-feminist means finding opportunities to share the privileges that were granted me at birth. Being pro-feminist means supporting other men to examine how their relationship to power and control has restricted their capacity to be empathic to themselves and others. Being pro-feminist means to care deeply about all human suffering and find ways to make a difference.

Being pro-male is learning to love other men. It is acknowledging the wonderful strengths of masculinity and the incredible bonds that can blossom between men. Being pro-male is felt in the hugs and the high fives. It is felt in the appreciation for the sacrifices that men make to protect their family and country. Being pro-male is supporting men to enjoy and bond with their children. Being pro-male is being courageous enough to examine how homophobia restricts my relationships with other men and strong enough to take risks to deepen my relationships with men. Being pro-male is knowing that men who show their vulnerability through control and violence are hurting and crying on the inside. Being pro-male is providing resources for men, through individual and community interventions, to better value and desire more, a life with optimal health, meaningful relationships and choices.

In the last two paragraphs now substitute the word pro-male for pro-feminist and the word pro-feminist for pro-male. Really, go ahead and try it. I think it works. From my personal perspective being pro-feminist is also being pro-male and being pro-male is also being pro-feminist. Their philosophies can dance together, compliment each other and help make this world a safer and more enjoyable place to live. The members of Division 51 (that's you and me) have both the opportunity and privilege to learn the nuances of the dance and share our findings. The essence of this wonderful dance is not in the extremes. Thanks for reading and I welcome your comments and reactions.