

“Are Men What They Used to Be?”

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Every study brings another assault on the masculinity of the American man. Men are thinking more like women, and women are filling the space vacated by declining masculinity, I have to wonder: Is it a shift in gender roles, or an easing of expectations?

A study of 5,000 American adults found that more men are interested in attachment and commitment, while more women wanted to preserve some of their independence in a relationship. Half of single men 21 to 35 wanted kids, where for women in that age group, the number was 46 percent.

There is the fear that America is becoming a less manly place. As we pine for the macho man and alpha male. Dr. Warren Farrell, author of *Father and Child Reunion*, points to the growing desire of dads to be a bigger part of their children's lives. A 2007 survey by the employment website Monster.com found that 70 percent of fathers would consider being a stay at home parent if money were no object. Almost 50 percent of dads of school aged children took paternity leave when their employer offered it.

Men are free to hug more, they help with homework, they listen more, and -- especially with daughters -- are part of their lives in ways long denied to fathers of earlier generations. Is it feminization that has brought fathers so far from the distant, silent providers of the past?

While some wail over the declining state of manhood implied by the statistics, there is also the very real possibility that men are evolving to becoming more fully-formed human beings free to find out what they can be. So here is the question: are men less masculine, or more liberated? Are they being feminized, or humanized?

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