



Raising boys to be gentlemen

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By John Robson

People are rightly disgusted by university students at opposite ends of the country chanting about raping minors. But they're also baffled.

I mean, these kids have been subjected to relentlessly progressive education, particularly on the subject of gender, from enlightened sex ed to endless lectures about female empowerment and how girls can do anything and boys, well, not so much. How could they get to college and do this?

The snide answer is that modern schools are as lousy at teaching feminism as at teaching math. But there's more to it.

The world the sexual progressives made did teach these kids thoroughly. It just didn't teach them well.

Now you may blame a few bad apples for organizing these chants. But lots of people chanted them and only a few found them odd enough to report them.

In response, the *Ottawa Citizen* pressed the feminist panic button (pretty much stuck at "on" anyway) and blared "Rape culture pervasive: educators." Possibly an exaggeration. But our culture certainly is permeated by a coarse sexuality we're afraid to denounce for fear of being shunned as repressed, square or "heteronormative."

People sort of tut-tutted at former wholesome teen star Miley Cyrus romping in a plastic yellow bikini like a dog in heat at the MTV VMAs. But then she did a nude music video where she licked a hammer and it's a huge hit instead of career-ending vulgar smut. And when Canadian TV giant Alan Thicke was asked about his singer-son's role in Cyrus' MTV porn frolic, he replied coolly, "Personally I could have done without him humping Miley's Twerk."

If that's what's in the news, are you surprised college students lack decorum? And honestly, is that how you raised your kid?

Then there's this business about teens far short of college age "sexting," not just sending lewd "selfies" to kids they barely know but propositioning one another for hookups, where people basically have impersonal sex because they're bored, horny, lost and lonely. If there's no huge collective outcry at that, and no effective parental crackdown, where did you think they'd suddenly acquire a sense of decency in frosh week, of all places?

An Institute of Marriage and Family Canada publication recently cited a 2007 Globe and Mail editorial asking, with respect to Toronto gun violence, "Where are the fathers?" and concluded that "talk about fathers is as absent as fathers themselves."

Indeed. And when it comes to young people's appalling lack of standards, from dropping the f-bomb on the bus to wearing scary rags to obesity, one might ask with some justice, "Where are the parents?" But the issue with fathers goes beyond that.

All kinds of research suggests boys and girls with a father positively involved in their lives are less prone to depression, drug use, petty crime and early sexual activity. A father. Not a second mother. Sure, an extra pair of hands and eyes are always useful in raising kids, to say nothing of a spare temper. But I mean a father. A man. With positive male attributes.

Aaaah! There goes the feminist panic button again. Patriarchy! Don't you know that boys need to be more emotional, more sharing, less competitive? In short, girls. But it just ain't so.

What boys really need, for their sakes and the young women around them, is to be raised to be gentlemen. But that would never do.

It wouldn't do partly because we're all non-conformists now. Rebel hipsters, we dress casually, speak casually and think casually. But it also wouldn't do because the term is gender-specific (like asking women to be ladies). No one would ask a woman to act like a gentleman and therefore we can't ask men to.

Then we're shocked and baffled when they don't.

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