



Book Review

**"Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say:
Destroying Myths, Creating Love"**
By Warren Farrell, Ph.D.

by Trish Wilson

Warren Farrell was in a fabulous position to help men address and change masculinity when he wrote his new book, "Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say: Destroying Myths, Creating Love." He could have used this book to help men to rewrite the masculine role in a manner that is much healthier and much more rewarding than the manner in which it exists today. However, that is not what he has done. Contrary to the book's subtitle, it has neither destroyed myths nor created love. It has not charted new territory that could ease communication between the sexes. Rather, it has perpetuated existing myths, and created excuses.

This book is divided into three parts. Part I deals with learning to both give and especially receive criticism in a kind and gentle manner. Even though it is written in gender-neutral terms, it appears to be aimed primarily at women. Farrell claims that Part II "does more than give us examples of myths that create anger towards men -- it makes us aware of what we need to ask before we can determine whether or not we are being told the whole truth when we hear the news." He further claims that Part III "allows us to see the results of that anger in the form of man bashing, and the biases of the institutions that disseminate it..." Despite his claims, Parts II and III consist of popular myths perpetrated by the men's and fathers' rights movements.

Part I foreshadows Parts II and III in ways that Farrell may have neither been aware nor had intended. The kind and gentle methods he recommends be used when engaging in criticism are tossed aside in Parts II and III as he fiercely criticizes the feminist movement for allegedly creating a hostile cultural atmosphere for men. The personal definitely becomes the political when he blames feminism for his own professional and publishing difficulties.

The public needs to be made aware that claims made in this book are tired anti-feminist propaganda as well as a bad case of sour grapes on Farrell's part. This review will focus on his most vocal claims: (1) The Lace Curtain - an alleged tendency for most major institutions to interpret gender issues from only a feminist perspective, or from a combination of feminist and female perspectives, (2) male bashing is a direct result of feminist influence, (3) men are equal partners when it comes to housework and childrearing, and (4) men and women are equally abusive.

There is very little, if anything, in this book that is new. I've read similar, and in some cases, identical, accounts from various anti-feminists in books, on the Internet, and in various newspaper and magazine articles. Farrell has reiterated the same claims regarding men, housework, and employment that he has made in his previously-published books. He had declined invitation to comment for this review.

WARREN FARRELL: FEMINIST?!?

He divides the feminist movement into three categories: "victim feminism," which he claims focuses on how men and society systematically view women as second-class citizens and incapable; "competitive feminism," which he claims says women have it worse than men; and "empowerment feminism," which he claims encourages a woman to develop all her potential without regard to gender.

Of course, Farrell considers himself an "empowerment feminist." This handy little trick denies feminism its own voice. It also employs a well-worn anti-feminist position that every feminist has heard at one time or another: that women have already won back the rights that have been taken from them, so there is no need for the old movement any longer. It's time to move on; to become "empowered." The further implication is that feminism needs to stop working for women's rights, and begin focusing on the needs of others -- namely, men.

Interestingly, he refers to "victim feminism" and "competitive feminism" as two forms of feminism that he feared. Not disagreed with or disliked. Feared. He had inadvertently shown how threatened he feels by the cultural changes feminism has affected and continues to affect.

In his bio, as well as his other publications, Farrell frequently includes the statement that he "is the only man ever to have been elected three times to the board of the National Organization for Women." The quote gives the impression that he sat on the national board of N.O.W. He didn't. He sat on the board of the small New York City chapter of N.O.W. well over twenty years ago, which is a far cry from sitting on the national board in Washington, D. C.

Rarely, if ever, does he mention his current and very active memberships on the boards of men's and fathers' rights groups. He is on the advisory board of Fathers Rights and Equality Exchange. He is also on the Board of Directors of the National Congress for Fathers and Children and the Children's Rights Council. These groups do not focus on child welfare or on improving relations between the sexes. They concentrate on lowering or eliminating child support. They claim that the vast majority of allegations of domestic violence and child abuse made by women are malicious lies designed to give the women an upper hand in court. They seek forms of child custody that benefit only men such as mandatory joint custody in all custody cases, regardless of research which has shown that joint custody has proven to be detrimental to children's welfare.

THE MOTHER OF ALL EXCUSES: THE LACE CURTAIN

The Lace Curtain is a term coined by Nicholas Davidson, author of the book "The Failure of Feminism." Davidson, and Farrell after him, are of the opinion that it is "the tendency of most major institutions to interpret gender issues from only a feminist perspective, or from a combination of feminist and female perspectives. As we look closely at the anger, it is apparent what women are angry about and what we can do about it so our children don't inherit it." So much for the statement in Part I about therapists who "[guide] people to to be sensitive in the way they criticize." Farrell insists that an invisible feminist barrier has been constructed, supposedly preventing those who criticize the feminist movement from getting their books published, from obtaining lucrative positions in academe, from having their views heard on the Internet, and from getting guest appearances on TV and radio talk shows. It's been has been compared by men's movement activists to the glass ceiling. Farrell compares it to the Iron Curtain's shutting out of opinions considered a threat to Communism.

The Lace Curtain smacks of paranoia. If an issue even slightly appears to be a case of men's issues not being allowed to be heard, it is automatically assumed that the culprit is the Lace Curtain, even though a proper journalistic investigation would clearly show that the assumption has no basis in reality. It could also be that the media, government, educational institutions, and publishers are waking up to the outright misogyny and

free-floating rage that many of these previously-published spokesmen for the men's movement have kept hidden until recently.

One incident Farrell has placed under the Lace Curtain category vividly illustrates that he does not properly investigate claims mailed to him. An America Online subscriber had written to him, claiming that feminists run AOL, and that AOL actively discriminates against men by disallowing any men's issues discussion online. It appears that Farrell had taken this e-mail at face value, and merely passed on the news without looking into its accuracy. He had stated that the men's issues discussions included "active dialogue" and "men expressing themselves." Did he actually read those discussions? The Men's Center, where these "discussions" had taken place, was never particularly busy. Most of the folders sat empty for days or even weeks at a time. These "discussions" consisted primarily of a tiny number of men's rights supporters who engaged in ad hominum attacks against feminism and homosexuality, especially when feminists were debating them. The atmosphere was, of course, very contentious all around. The subscriber who had contacted him displays palpable hostility in his writings. He used epithets such as "feminazi psychodyke," "estrogenic jihad," "homo anal males," and "homo anal sex as the perversion it so obviously is" (referring to feminists and homosexuals). I know this because I had debated with men's rights advocates in those folders for several years. Does Farrell support arrogant, hostile, misogynistic, and homophobic rantings coming from those who claim to speak for the rights of men? In addition, the shutdown of some men's discussion folders had nothing to do with either feminism or men's rights. AOL had completely reorganized several years ago. Contrary to what Farrell had written, subscribers were notified of the imminent shut-down of the old forums, including the Men's Center. The Communities forum, where these discussions had originally existed, was eliminated to make room for the larger, more extensive forums that are so popular on AOL today. There are plenty of folders all over AOL where men may discuss men's health, divorce and custody, and the masculine role. Men's Health is one forum where men may discuss their issues. This forum was not mentioned in the book. It's ironic that Farrell blasts men's issues being discussed in TalkWomen's "Feminist Views" area, because he insists that women hear what men have to say. Maybe he wants women to hear what men say as long as he approves of the forum in which they hear it.

Jack Kammer, identified by Farrell as "balanced and articulate," is cited as another Lace Curtain casualty because he is unable to get his latest book published. It's true that his can't get it published, but it is not due to an alleged Lace Curtain. Even though Kammer identifies himself as "pretty much a regular fellow who believes we should have as much happiness, joy, freedom, fairness, and dignity in our lives as women have in theirs," his latest book is an unbridled bundle of misogyny that no decent publisher would want to touch. So far, none has. He has placed the book on the Internet so that anyone may download it free of charge. In a letter forwarded to a men's/fathers' rights mailing list, Kammer had written that "Warren Farrell tried to get his publisher to take it, but still no luck..."

What "balanced and articulate" material did Kammer write?

Entitled "If Men Have All The Power, How Come Women Make The Rules -- and other radical thoughts for men who want more fairness from women," it combines Kammer's foul-tempered opinions about women, domestic violence, rape, "pheminism," divorce, fatherhood, employment, and a host of other complaints with quotes from men's and women's rights advocates and media personalities. It is a hodge-podge of malice that seems to have been slapped together in a haphazard manner over a very short period of time. Kammer identifies "pheminism" as "a term combining "phony" and "feminism" to denote the idea that "equal rights for women" is the same thing as "more and special rights for women." He writes that "[w]omen's power is difficult to see and measure. But we be better get a grip on it. As long as women can pretend they don't have power, we can't call them on how they use -- and misuse -- it. And they get to keep what they have all to themselves."

Kammer's book is similar in content to Farrell's. The main difference is the bitter and

enraged tone which permeates Kammer's book.

Rage directed towards women pours forth, increasing in intensity as the reader turns the pages. In a passage that illustrates exactly what men's rights advocates mean when they state that women, particularly feminists, seek special rights for women, Kammer identifies "The Foundation of Female Power: Women's Superiority Complex" in this manner: "Though they deny it as much as they can, women know they have a lot of power over us. One way they rationalize it is by believing they're better than we are. Since women think they're better, they think they have the right -- even the sacred duty -- to keep us under their control, and to get for themselves what they want." He also wrote that "[t]he women's movement has helped men examine our attitudes of superiority over women. Now women need to look at how they think they're superior to us." The women's movement may have helped Kammer examine his attitude, but it certainly did not help him to change it. Kammer's opinion that "[w]omen get a lot of power just out of the fact that they expect and demand special and preferential treatment" does not mean that special and preferential is the type of treatment that women want.

Freudian phallicism and envy is evident in his claim that "[w]omen's power is the opposite of monumental. It's like wall-to-wall carpeting, or a snowfall, everywhere and unavoidable, not concentrated in a few narrow, vertical monuments, like men's." Sitting next to these astounding statements is a photograph of a snowbound car on a street in Washington, D. C. The snow covers everything. Dwarfed in the background, looking like an ineffective penis, is the Washington Monument. If Freud were alive, he'd have a grand old time analyzing that page.

He admitted that "[men] kept women out of the male domain by using laws and rules to bar them." He complained that women have erected barriers of "lace and pink ribbons" (a Lace Curtain?) that allegedly keep men out.

Kammer excuses the degradation and violent acts directed at women in pornography when he writes that "[e]rotica does not glorify our sexual domination of women. It expresses our wish that women didn't have sexual domination over us." He also denounced date rape as "...defined in a way that can make only the man guilty. Guidelines on campuses require the man to have explicit consent prior to penetration. Why don't they require the woman to have explicit consent prior to envelopment?" He condemns abused women, as well as hints at the Men and Women Are Equally Abusive myth, in his claim that, "[w]hen women do it it's called Self-Defense or Battered Woman Syndrome. When men do it it's called Blaming the Victim or Domestic Violence -- for which there is never an excuse."

In an incredibly woman-hating statement, he wrote that "[w]e need to be more selective about whom we have sex with. A woman should give an erection at least three times before he gives it to her once."

Did Farrell tried to find a publisher for this swill, as claims Kammer?

Other examples of Kammer's "balanced and articulate" banter:

"Women get away with more bad behavior than we do because our mischief tends to rise abruptly for all the world to see. Women's mischief hugs the terrain like a low-level bomber undetected by radar."

"Women's sexual law of supply and demand; the demand is hot, the supply is frozen."

The National Organization for Women is referred to as "NOWWW" -- "National Organization for Whatever Women Want, American culture since the 1970's."

"If, as they claim, women dress to impress other women, not to attract men, we (sic) have a lot of lesbian hookers in America's cities."

"Are we supposed to believe that women get breast implants for other women, too?"

"Women say they wear jewelry and makeup to "please" men. Yeah, and a fisherman puts a spinner on his hook to "please" the fish."

"Women define sexism. And they didn't define it to refer to anything they ever think or say or do."

Kammer read Farrell's book before it had been released. He recommends it on page 121. He identifies the Lace Curtain as the "[r]efusal of media gatekeepers to acknowledge ideas and data that challenge pheminist ideology and statistics." His statements regarding why men don't talk are in sync with what Farrell has written, but his tone is in-your-face and hostile. The similarities between the Kammer section on why men don't talk, and Farrell's entire book, are worthy of inclusion in this review. Kammer complains that men don't talk because "women don't listen," and that men have "learned that women would rather not hear what we have to say." He's wrong. Judging from what he and other men's and fathers' rights advocates have written, women are definitely listening to what they are saying. They are not buying it. When Kammer complains that women keep men quiet by "subtly threatening" them with words such as "misogynist, woman-hater, sexist, chauvinist, misfit, troublemaker, loser, weirdo, whiner, jerk," they are not referring to most men. They refer specifically to those who voice masculinist men's rights opinions who have earned those titles by their own personal histories, including criminal records, and their own statements and publications. Kammer's book is full of statements that have earned him those titles. He has two orders (not suggestions) regarding getting men to talk. One: "Don't just snap your fingers and say, "Open up." Two: "If "men don't talk" there needs to be a new rule: we get to talk and say what's on our minds without fear of being attacked or ridiculed. Women get to listen without fear that just listening signifies their acceptance of what we're saying." His position is clear: *You women better shut up and listen. I don't care whether or not you accept what I say.* These kinds of demands make one wonder about the condition of Kammer's personal relationships with women.

Farrell mentions that Kammer has been "... unsuccessful in getting his next book published" on page 230. If he had read the book and tried to help him find a publisher, as Kammer claims, it becomes clear that Farrell's self-described hope of this book, that men will express themselves without fear and that women will discover who men are, is smoke and mirrors. Anyone who would agree with the animosity displayed in Kammer's book does not have healthy communication between the sexes in mind.

THE LACE CURTAIN II: WARREN FARRELL'S FEMINIST HAIR SHIRT

Many of Farrell's suggestions regarding women giving and accepting criticism in Part I, which I will address below, seem to be how he wished the feminist movement that he claims unfairly abandoned him had treated him. He claims that as long as he wrote from the feminist perspective, his views were welcome. However, the moment he questioned the feminist perspective, he believes he collided face-first with the Lace Curtain. Suddenly, he writes, the feminist movement began to treat him with disdain. He's voiced these complaints in previously published articles and books. Gloria Steinem went from being his friend to no longer returning his phone calls. The New York Times, which had previously published his writings, suddenly lost interest. He believes that The Today Show never invited him back because he began articulating men's perspectives. He dwells on repeated postponements of a scheduled appearance on the Donahue show when one of the producers had stated that no big-name feminist contacted would agree to appear on the show with him.

He had complained about a "Lace-Curtain censorship experience" involving the publication of this book. His original editor from Simon & Schuster had retired, and that person was replaced by an editor who had rejected his manuscript. Her primary concerns involved the chapters on children of divorce, domestic violence, and housework. His reaction was visceral: "When I received the rejection letter my brain gave way to a stomach that had lost its bearing. I suddenly deepened my empathy for the men from whom I receive calls reporting false allegations." Simon & Schuster turned down this

book. It is very unusual for an published author to be rejected by a publisher with whom he or she had established a relationship. This book was finally picked up by Penguin Putnam, Inc. Farrell should have heeded the advice of his Simon & Schuster editor. Studies mentioned later in this review have thoroughly discredited his claims regarding children of divorce, domestic violence, and housework. His conspiracy theory of a feminist cabal which silences the male point of view is not the issue here. Credible source material is.

A major reason Farrell may have been shunned by the feminist movement is not mentioned in this book. The feminist publication 'off our backs' reported on this issue in 1983. Once this issue is clarified it will become very clear why he has neglected to discuss it.

In the December, 1977 issue of "Penthouse," Farrell was quoted in Philip Nobile's article "Incest: The Last Taboo. Previously Suppressed Material from the Original Kinsey Interviews Tells Us That Incest is Prevalent and Often Positive." In this article, Farrell made many statements in obvious support of incest. The article included the statement, "[w]hen I get my most glowing positive cases, 6 out of 200," says Farrell, "the incest is part of the family's open, sensual style of life, wherein sex is an outgrowth of warmth and affection. It is more likely that the father has good sex with his wife, and his wife is likely to know and approve -- and in one or two cases to join in." In addition, Farrell was quoted in this manner: "... [M]illions of people who are now refraining from touching, holding, and genitally caressing their children, when that is really part of a caring, loving expression, are repressing the sexuality of a lot of children and themselves. ... [T]housands of people in therapy for incest are being told, in essence, that their lives have been ruined by incest. In fact, their lives have not generally been affected as much by the incest as by the overall atmosphere. ..."

And he claims to be clueless as to why feminists no longer wish to contact him.

PART I: HOW WOMEN MAY COMMUNICATE WITH MEN ON WARREN FARRELL'S TERMS

Even though it is presented in gender-neutral terms, Part I is aimed primarily at women. This section has a strong feel of pop-psychology to it; full of feel-goodisms and vague advice. The vagueness is not surprising, since Farrell's Ph.D. is in political science, not psychology. What he has written is not therapeutic. It is political.

He cites University of Washington professor of psychologist John Gottman as an expert in the psychology of relationships. Gottman's research has indicated that gentleness, compassion, and physiological soothing of partners are key ingredients that enable marriages to succeed. He found that anger itself is not a destructive emotion in marriages. However, four processes that he has dubbed "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" are destructive: criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and "stonewalling." He also believes that the popular Active Listening model ["I understand that you mean thus and such..."] should be abandoned because he has found that this method does not work when couples are in conflict, contrary to trendy opinion.

Even though Farrell praises Gottman, his recommendations contradict Gottman's findings. He includes exercises that follow the Active Listening model. He focuses on women both giving and especially receiving criticism to the omission of the other Three Horsemen. He also completely ignores Gottman's most interesting finding: men who are accepting of influence from their wives are winding up in happy, stable marriages. Gottman said: "Getting a husband to share power with his wife, by accepting some of the demands she makes, is critical in helping to resolve conflict." Such a finding is in direct opposition to the man who had written that "male power" is a myth.

Farrell's suggestions regarding communication between couples place all the energy on the woman, which is in keeping with a popular, very old view that women are the emotional and moral gatekeepers in marriage. The Reverend Billy Sunday had preached

this view from his pulpit during the 19th century. David Blankenhorn had given this view credence in his book "Fatherless America." Not only does Farrell assign women to this gatekeeping role, he admits on page 9 that he has placed more emphasis on hearing personal criticism from than on giving it. Not only is the woman responsible for the moral and emotional health of the marriage, her opinions are rendered less important than that of her husband.

PARTS II AND III: REPEATING ANTI-FEMINIST MYTHS WILL NOT MAKE THEM TRUE

All of his suggestions in Part I regarding the proper and helpful way to criticize are discarded in Parts I and III. There is no evidence of the vagueness of Part I in the other two parts of this book. When it comes to criticizing feminism, he does not mince words.

MALE BASHING IS A DIRECT RESULT OF FEMINIST INFLUENCE

Farrell described negative depictions of men in the media, such as those found in television and film, novels, greeting cards, and comics. This criticism falls flat when it is noted that many of these programs were conceived, written, published, produced, and directed by men. He insisted that there is a causal link between man-hating and feminism. As an example, he criticized Valerie Solanas, author of the S.C.U.M Manifesto, and the founder and sole member of the Society for Cutting Up Men. He did not note that the only reason Solanas became so well known is precisely because she shot Andy Warhol. She shot him after he had ridiculed her. He did not help to her achieve the stardom to which she had aspired. No publisher had any interest in her Manifesto before she shot Warhol. It was published only after she shot him because of the notoriety of her act. It had circulated via underground channels, and quickly faded away. It never became a feminist movement, as anti-feminists claim. Warhol had always been the focal point, not Solanas. The shooting had nothing to do with feminism. It had everything to do with the culture of celebrity in which we live; that same culture of celebrity in which Solanas had sought recognition. Ironically, if it weren't for Warhol, Solanas would never have experience her fifteen minutes of fame. Farrell's meager solutions -- they took up only about a page and a half of this chapter, which is a sharp contrast to the fifty-odd pages he devoted to media criticism -- focused on what women and girls could do to erase man-hating commentary rather than seeing these kinds of negative media depictions as part of a larger, cultural phenomenon that both sexes should confront.

He voiced a popular men's movement opinion that men's health issues are not as important as women's health issues. Some men and men's health groups complain that too much funding goes to women's breast cancer prevention and research. They'd like to see more funding go towards prostate cancer prevention and research. However, many men had given much support and praise to the release of the impotence drug Viagra. This drug has been misused in a recreational fashion. Media publicity for Viagra has reduced male sexuality to the isolated functioning of one body part. Men had voluntarily given sexual performance priority over male health, including the one issue that concerns many men and men's health groups -- prostate cancer. Stockholders, pharmaceuticals, advertising companies, and the health care community stand to make much more money from drugs like Viagra than they ever will from pouring money into prostate cancer research. Men need to change what they don't like about masculinity from the core of the role itself. They should not blame feminists for something that is their responsibility to directly confront. Farrell could have galvanized men into restructuring the masculine role in a responsible fashion regarding an issue as serious as prostate cancer, but instead he has chosen to lay the blame for the lack of medical attention on feminism.

HOUSEWORK AND CHILDCARE

Contrary to the belief that women take on the bulk of childrearing and housekeeping, Farrell claims that men have been doing more than their fair share, particularly a "Male Second Shift," in reference to Arlie Hochschild's book, "The Second Shift." In a telling passage, Farrell had written that "married women have almost two more hours of leisure

time per week than their husbands. Mothers with children five and older have one hour more of free time per week. To my surprise, *mothers* with preschool children averaged three hours more per week of *free time* than dads with preschool children."

It sounds as if mom has a few extra hours per week to read a book, visit her friends, or catch a movie than has dad, doesn't it? Farrell cited the article "Up Close and Personal," written by John P. Robinson, for "American Demographics." [Vol. 11, No. 11, November 1989] as his source. Robinson included the following in his definition of "leisure time:" time to eat, sleep, groom, take care of personal medical care, and other personal care, as well as the travel related to those activities." Many mothers will be surprised to discover that the time they use to sleep, eat, drive to the doctor, and use the toilet is considered "leisure time." This important detail had been relegated to the footnotes.

Farrell cites a long list of stereotypically male chores in his "Second Shift, Male Style." Some men, at least, those with a healthy sense of themselves, may be insulted by the triviality of this list. It has an undertone of resentment, and a slight hint of danger similar to his claims about the dangers inherent in stereotypically male jobs. There is also an air of vicarious excitement to some of the items, as if the man is Indiana Jones scaling a steep ruin in Macchu Picchu, rather than your average Joe trying to maintain his balance while shoveling snow off the roof. Some of the items have an alarmist tone that makes the entire list seem to be all the more absurd because he sounds deadly serious. He may have been aware of the outrageous nature of his descriptions when he described "taking out the garbage" as "real men take out the garbage because, you see, it's in their genes to know how to use the garbage can cover as a shield should anything happen in that journey from the castle to the street."

His first category is "activities most likely to break and arm, leg, or neck or to crack a skull," such as house painting, cleaning the outside of windows, and building treehouses for the children. He wrote that shoveling wet snow off a roof to avoid roof damage resulted in "many men slipping off the roof every winter. A man who falls off a roof or ladder is lucky if he breaks only an arm; some men, though, are paralyzed for life, or killed; others find shoveling snow off a roof leads to problems that gets them classified in one of the next two categories." Those categories are "activities most likely to trigger heart attacks" and "activities most likely to cause lower back problems and hernia operations." Activities most likely to trigger heart attacks included shoveling snow (assuming that falling off the roof covered in the first category didn't paralyze or kill him); pushing a car that is out of gas off a crowded street; and "playing tag, soccer, or basketball with the kids for a "little too long" while trying to teach the children that a parent can be a playmate too." A child reading his statement about dad playing with the kids a "little too long" may wonder if he or she should feel guilty if dad keels over from exhaustion, angina, or muscle cramps while playing touch football with them.

Under "activities most likely to cause lower back problems and hernia operations," he includes moving furniture or "twisting his back as he juggles a heavy suitcase into the back seat of a two-door car." In another category, "Bodyguard at home and in public places," he identifies part of this duty in an apprehensive manner as "who usually checks it out in the middle of the night when you and your partner are awakened by a noise that sounds like someone has just broken into your home, and you know they could have a gun."

Many of the items on this list are voluntary or are not done on a daily basis. No man is required to dispose of deceased pets or vermin, read the business or financial pages, swat flies, step on roaches, or squish spiders. Yes, he really included those last three items. Sandbagging in the event of a storm, purchasing computers, and washing the car are not done on a daily basis. One of the items was downright hilarious: "programming the VCR." There are entire households of men and women in which NO ONE can program the VCR. The main characters in the film "City Slickers" had a big argument over programming the VCR because one of the guys could not figure out how to do it to save his life.

Some of the items are more fun than work: gift-giving related to romance; camping; and barbecuing (talk about a stereotypical entry). Other items on the list are not only not required of men, but families frequently hire contractors to take on those tasks, such as building a deck, carpentry, remodeling, and building fences. Many of the items do not comfortably fall under the "Male Second Shift" header because both sexes frequently take them on, such as wiping up a child's vomit when carsick on a vacation, and cleaning up after the dog. Sometimes these activities are taken on as a family unit, such as preparing dinner when company's visiting, purchasing a Christmas tree, or putting up Christmas lights and displays.

Other items on his list were troublesome. He placed "driving" under the "male" category "...when both are exhausted or have had a bit too much to drink" without noting that *no one* should be driving under the influence of alcohol.

His entry, "disciplining of kids. 'Wait until your daddy comes home,'" was based on myth. According to "Fathers, Infants, and Toddlers," by Yogman, Cooley, Kindlon and "Fatherhood Today: Mens Changing Role In the Family," by Bronstein and Cowan, "contrary to popular belief, fathers are not the main disciplinarians of their children; mothers are, particularly in the early years."

The most telling admission by Farrell was one that he probably did not intend to make. The statements he had written regarding fathers and childcare focused primarily on "fun" activities fathers tend to do with children, rather than the nuts and bolts work that mothers have always done. He had inadvertently admitted this viewpoint when he described playing sports with children as "trying to teach the children that a parent can be a playmate too." His category "coaching-as-childcare" also hinted at the truth. If it were truly childcare, Farrell would not have had to qualify it as "coaching-as-childcare." It is a fun activity dads may engage in with their children. In fact, according to Tanfer and Mott's "The Meaning of Fatherhood, [THE MEANING OF FATHERHOOD Koray Tanfer, Battelle Memorial Institute; Frank Mott, Ohio State University; Prepared for NICHD Workshop "Improving Data on Male Fertility and Family Formation" at the Urban Institute, Washington, D.C., January 16-17, 1997], "[t]o be sure, there has been a change in the meaning of fatherhood, as reflected in both the attitude and the behavior of fathers, largely as a result of a general shift in less gender-specific family roles (Thornton and Freedman, 1983; Stein, 1984). But, Pleck (1985) and others, who have done extensive research on this question, have concluded that most of these changes have been relatively modest."

Fathers do very little childcare, especially when the children are very young. Tanfer and Mott also found that "[f]athers spend substantially more time in domestic and child care activities in households when mothers are employed, but men still fall far short of assuming an equal load. More interestingly, men in families with young children do less than those in households with no children or with older children."

>From the same study: "Lamb et al. (1987) distinguish three different aspects of paternal involvement in child rearing: availability, representing the lowest level of involvement; interaction, an intermediate level of involvement, and responsibility, the highest level of involvement. National level data indicate that while there has been a slight increase in the level of involvement, as late as at the end of the 1980s, paternal involvement in childrearing has remained dismally low (Lye, 1991). Fathers are available only a few hours a day, and certainly much less (roughly one-third to one-half as long) than are mothers; fathers rarely assume responsibility; and, fathers spend very little time interacting with their children, especially if they are girls."

According to Deutsch [The College Street Journal, Mount Holyoke College, citing Francine M. Deutsch, "Husbands At Home.,"], "Despite the presence of some "equal sharer" couples, Deutsch's study echoes others in finding that most husbands do relatively little domestic labor of any kind compared with their wives. Scholars estimate that no more than 20 percent of dual-income couples share domestic work equally."

"Modern women spend about the same amount of time per day in primary care of all their children compared with their counterparts in the 1920s," wrote Susan Lang, citing Bryant and Zick in "Child Rearing Time By Parents: A Report of Research in Progress" [Journal of Family & Economic Issues, Vol. 17, (1996)]. The study continues: "Modern women, however, spend twice as much time per child on primary child care, primarily because they have fewer children and are better educated than mothers in the 1920s. Looking at fathers, the researchers found that in 1985 dads spent about 26 minutes a day in primary child care, up from 21 minutes in 1975, or an increase of about one-fourth. (Information on fathers is not available from the 1920s.)"

It's ironic that a man who has rightly observed the restrictive nature of the masculine gender role in this culture has reinforced it with his "Male Second Shift" list. He asks "what percentage of the time do you vs. your partner do these chores," when he should have asked "why do some men continue to consider much of what is on this list tasks assigned to husbands alone when there is evidence to the contrary?"

DIVORCE, CHILD SUPPORT, AND CHILDREN OF DIVORCE

Beginning on page 62, Farrell complains about financial support women are awarded after divorce, stating that "no laws have given men emotional support after divorce." He grossly misrepresents the nature of alimony and child support. Neither are, as he insinuates, a continuation of the financial responsibilities of men in the context of a marriage. He expounds upon this mistaken belief with the astounding statement that "women are not required to continue their obligation to their exes in the form of homemaking or nurturing." According to the FindLaw Legal Dictionary, alimony, which is awarded in less than 15% of all divorces, is "allowance made to one spouse by the other for support pending or after legal separation or divorce." It may be viewed as severance pay. In most states, both parent's incomes are taken into account when child support is configured. The Pennsylvania Support rules define child support as "average marginal expenditures on children for food, housing, transportation, clothing, and other miscellaneous items that are needed by children and provided by their parents." In no way should divorced women provide homemaking and nurturing to their ex-husbands as compensation for alimony and child support!

On the same page, he repeats a popular men's movement myth that there is a causal link between children raised by single family homes (read "single and divorced mother homes"), and a variety of social ills such as lower math and science test scores and high youth crime rates. This data blames the single mother alone as the cause of these problems. However, correlation does not equal causation. According to Robert Hughes, Jr., of the Department of Family Relations and Human Development at the Ohio State University, in his course "Children & Divorce, An Internet Inservice Experience for Professionals," "most children in divorced families do not need help, but more children in this group than in intact families are likely to need help." Factors cited in the paper that contribute to difficulties children of divorce experience are parental loss, economic loss, more life stress (extreme, often negative changes in living conditions), poor parental adjustment (applies to both parents), lack of parental competence (applies to both parents), and exposure to interparental conflict. In addition, sociologist Timothy Biblarz, lead author of a study conducted by University of Southern California and University of Washington, had written that when income and job status are taken into account, children raised by single mothers are nearly as likely to succeed in adulthood as children raised in two-parent households. They are even more likely to succeed than children raised in homes headed by a stepfather or a single father. The single or divorced mother alone is not responsible for poor childrearing outcomes and social ills, contrary to "fatherless homes" pablum promoted by this book and by men's movement groups on the Internet.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

I have spent so much time countering the claim that men and women are equally abusive that I have considered writing a template that I will copy and paste to the appropriate

Internet newsgroup, mailing list, letter to the editor, article, or discussion board when this material rears its head. I've sent reams of valid research countering this claim to various state legislators, women's activists, and domestic violence workers when it surfaces in opposition to domestic violence bills during hearings. Farrell's inclusion of it in his book does not make it legitimate.

The first problem with this chapter is the source cited for the claim that "[o]nly 6 percent of the men involved in domestic violence say they were the perpetrator; 81 percent said their wives were the perpetrator (13 percent said it was mutual)." The source is a survey conducted by the Texas Children's Rights Coalition, which is a fathers' rights group -- a political group, not a valid research group. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts, most abusive men, when asked if they had been abusive, not only deny and/or minimize their abusive behavior, they frequently insist that their female partners -- the *real* victims -- were the abusers.

Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz's "Conflict Tactic Scales" (CTS), as detailed in their book "Behind Closed Doors," artificially isolated individual physical actions without taking them in the context of either the abusive episode or the abusive relationship. The result is a false positive: that women are just as physically abusive as men. The three interviewed one member of each family, the wife or the husband. Szinovacz [Szinovacz, Maximiliane E. 1983. "Using couple data as a methodological tool: The case of marital violence." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*] checked the validity of this approach by interviewing couples, and found that couples' accounts of their violence, measured by the CTS, didn't match much better than could be expected by chance. Szinovacz also found that when couple data, rather than "aggregate data", were used, there was 50% more violence from husbands and 20% more violence from wives. Husbands tended to report less of their own violence than their wives indicated; wives were somewhat more likely than husbands to admit to their own violence. Similarly, Jouriles and O'Leary (1985) found that agreement between partners given the CTS was "low to moderate".

The CTS do not tell if violence by women is done in self-defense. Straus devised newer studies which continued to utilize the CTS, and declared that self-defense was not a factor because, in his studies, women frequently initiated violence. However, since the context of the initiation was not known, it is irresponsible to outright claim that a woman who makes the first move is the abuser.

Dobash et al found identified several problems with the CTS. Rape, sexual assault, choking, suffocating, and scratching were omitted. So were incidences that occurred after the woman left the abusive relationship, which was when the most frequent and most serious incidents such as murder and stalking, were likely to occur. Of course, murder cannot be tabulated by self-reporting. According to Berk et al [Berk, R et al. 1983. "Mutual combat and other family violence myths", in D. Finkelhor et al (eds). "The dark side of families: current family violence research." Sage, Beverly Hills.], "It is quite clear that men are struck by their wives. It is also clear that because men are typically larger than their wives and usually have more social resources at their command, that they do not have as much physical or social damage inflicted on them as is inflicted on women. Data from studies of households where the police intervened in domestic violence, clearly indicate that men are rarely the victims of "battery". Thus, although [the CTS figures] show similar rates of hitting, when injury is considered, marital violence is primarily a problem of victimized women."

When taken in context, these incidents clearly show that in the vast majority of cases, women are the victims of domestic violence, not men. Most men are not violent. It is not man-bashing to tell the truth: that the vast majority of domestic violence perpetrators are male.

The extensive list, in the Appendix, of research supporting the view that men and women are equally abusive has appeared, nearly verbatim, on several Internet men's rights sites. It is not a new entry especially written for his book. It has been attributed to Martin S.

Fiebert, Ph.D. The vast majority of the research directly cites the problematic CTS, and the remainder includes the CTS as a major part of its source material. It has also appeared in an article on the web site for 'Family Resources & Research,' an organization operated by the Rev. Sam and Bunny Sewell. The Sewells are not research scientists. Their organization is a political group. This web site is quite blatant in its anti-feminist position with statements such as: "It suits the political agenda of feminists to quote statistics that make men look bad. Most of the feminist empire depends on their success in demonizing men. The term 'family violence' is familiar to professionals and is inclusive of violent females. Feminists began to use the term "domestic violence" while quoting arrest statistics that emphasized male abusers and female victims. This was necessary so the public focus would be on the only police statistics that made their scam look believable. Con artists call this the 'hook'." The article further refers to the truth that women are the victims of domestic violence 95% of the time as "America's Most Successful Political Hoax."

One of Farrell's articles is included on this website: "Spouse Abuse is a Two-Way Street." Following his article is the list that appears in his Appendix. Farrell wrote that he had contacted national NOW headquarters and the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund to "ask them if they knew of any two-sex domestic violence studies that showed any study I had not included in the Appendix. They could not cite a single one. They had relied on *crime* statistics from the National Crime Victimization Survey to say that women were battered more." The question Farrell should have asked NOW and NOWLDF was not the one he asked. He should have asked if those studies supported the conclusions he was making. According to Dobash, Szinovacz, Berk, Jouriles and O'Leary, the CTS leave quite a bit to be desired.

CONCLUSION

Feminism has done a great deal to bridge the gender gap, but it's work is not yet complete. The gender wage gap needs to be narrowed. Studies have shown time and time again that men have not picked up the slack when it comes to fathering and housekeeping. Feminists are weary of countering hateful claims that women are as abusive as men, and that "battered men" are this country's unseen epidemic. Women experience bias in divorce that men do not experience, despite loud claims to the contrary by fathers' rights advocates. Once the remaining biases are eliminated, only then will feminism have accomplished one of its primary goals.

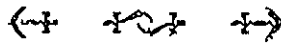
It is not up to anti-feminists such as Farrell to decide whether or not feminism is obsolete, nor does he have the right to define the feminist movement. On the surface, this book waxes poetic about bridging the gap between the sexes. In reality, it seeks to both cement the inequality that already exists, and to provide a platform from which Farrell may blame the feminist movement for his professional difficulties, including getting his books published. Such a backlash is a hostile attempt to prevent anyone, male or female, adult or child, from prospering from inevitable changes in our culture. Change requires relinquishing power, and the men and women who subscribe to men's movement tenets as described by Warren Farrell do not want to face the unknown. They do not want change. Sadly, they don't understand that they have all to gain and little or nothing worthwhile to lose.

This is the most tragic thing about "Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say:" Farrell was in a position to help men make real, lasting, positive changes in their lives, and he punted the ball. He favored blaming feminists for the ills experienced by men, rather than give men the reins to make the necessary changes themselves. He is well-known. Plenty of people who have never picked up one of his books have heard of the name "Warren Farrell." Even if he were to attempt to assist men in making real, lasting changes, the men and women who look up to him may not accept such a turnabout from him. The men's and fathers' rights movements have a very heavy presence on the Internet. Site after site blame the feminist movement for many of the problems that men may experience. It's so much easier to point a finger at feminism than it is to do the time-consuming, exhausting, and thankless work necessary to restructure a gender role from the inside-out.

"Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say" is exactly what Warren Farrell's supporters want to hear. I fear that they would abandon him if he were to ever directly address the masculine role in a healthy, straightforward fashion. However, I don't see that happening any time in the near future. Any man who makes pro-incest statements for a skin mag, or who tries to find a publisher for a man who has written that "a woman should give an erection at least three times before he gives it to her once," has no right to call himself a feminist. He hasn't fooled the real feminists. Not one bit.

Trish Wilson is Feminista's Editor at Large.

Please visit her webpage, [The Women's Network](#) for more articles about feminism and the fathers' rights movement.



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