

Behind "Journeyman,"
Unpublished thoughts
 by Dr. Michael Obsatz

The Journeyman suggests that there is an emotional & psychological crisis evident in American boys and men, which is finally being noticed primarily because of the increasing violence and poor academic performance of boys. Yet public discussion has not gone far enough



in that it has so far only asked how to get boys functioning again. It is not enough to find new ways of getting boys to function in what is clearly a dysfunctional system. Huge changes in men's work and family roles are reducing the time that men actually spend with boys. This is interrupting the essential transmission of male love, wisdom, and integrity from generation to generation. Boys may seem to be no different than the other Americans who are now swimming in excess consumerism, destructive media exposure, addictions, and the frenetic pace of activities. But boys are more vulnerable



because the increasingly fractured male culture has left a vacuum of values and guidance, which allow these other influences full room to undermine their development of values and "character". Fortunately, there is a change in male roles and socialization that is beginning to lead men and boys into a wholeness that is new in our times.



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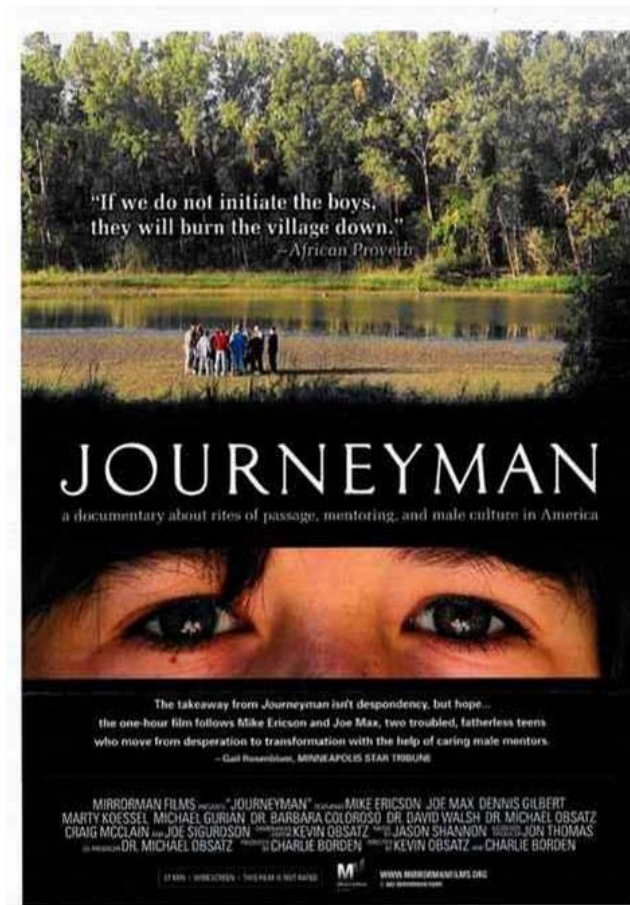
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There are 7 Crises that Experts Agree We're Seeing. Michael Gurian, author of "The Wonder of Boys," "The Good Son," tells us that America's boys are in crisis. William Pollock, in "Real Boys," states that there is a "boy code" which requires boys to keep their innermost feelings hidden. David Walsh, in "Selling Out America's Children," informs us that consumerism and materialism are rampant among kids. He reports that most American boys spend 45 hours weekly in front of video screens, and only 30 minutes in direct interaction with their dads. Understanding the trouble with boys can be helped by seeing the types of crises that exist in America today. There are actually at least seven different kinds of boy crisis in America. The symptoms of these are violence, depression, self-abuse, drug use and addiction, unprotected and promiscuous sexuality, and poor academic performance.

The academic crisis for boys is visible where boys lag behind girls in linguistic achievement and college registration.



Boys suffer from ADD and other learning disabilities. There are fewer males than females in colleges, graduate schools, or professional schools. Boys are sent to the principal more frequently for acting out. Gurian claims that boys are a year-and-a-half behind girls in their ability to read.

The Violence Crisis gets attention when Boys act out in deadly ways. Robberies and shootings in America are mostly done by males. Most of the school shooters over the last 15 years have been boys. Statistics claim that one out of four American women will be sexually abused by the time she is 21. And in most cases, this is abuse is conducted by males.



The Depression Crisis affects close to thirty percent of American males according to Terrence Real, in "I Don't Want to Talk About It Overt depression involves withdrawal. Covert depression can involve violence, addiction, and other types of acting out. Many males refuse to go for therapeutic help, and their depression is undetected. During adolescence, male suicides outnumber female suicides by 5 to 1.

The Addiction Crisis is common among boys from all backgrounds. Young males, who drink end up in automobile accidents, and, some cases, walk into rivers and drown in drunken stupors. Meth, cocaine, pot can be purchased in many of America's middle and high schools.

The Emotional Crisis lives in many young men who lack a sense of who they are internally. They don't know what they feel, and don't know how to express their feelings. Anger becomes the only acceptable emotion, and then men and boys become rage-full and blow up at people. They lack friends and supporters because they do not emotionally connect with others.



The Interpersonal Crisis is measurable in the over 36 million children living without a biological dad in America. Around fifty percent of marriages end in divorce. Since men and boys are not taught the value of nurturing and emotionally connecting, they become isolated and lack interpersonal skills.

The Spiritual Crisis can be easily seen when A lack of purpose and personal meaning pervade boys' lives. Many boys are spiritually lost, and filled with shame about who they are. Since elders do not support boys in their passage to manhood, boys are left adrift in a sea of commercialism.



We can understand why these crises exist. The socialization process for boys is one of continuous emotional and spiritual loss, according to Terrence Real and Herb Goldberg, author of "The New Male." Boys are taught to define themselves as "not feminine" -- but don't develop from loving themselves from the inside out. So, lopping off parts of themselves helps them fit into a norm of "masculinity" which is often self-destructive and unsatisfying.

The surprise for many is that we can't blame the boys. We teach them what to value, and what is taught is:

- Be tough and independent
- Don't rely upon anyone else for help
- Suffer in private
- The only feeling that is masculine is anger
- Pretend to know even when you don't
- Don't cry
- All affection is sexual
- Sexual conquests make a real man
- Dominate others
- Don't let others dominate you
- Prove manhood even if it means hurting others
- Don't trust other men or boys
- Be athletic
- Win at all cost

These messages result in many losses for boys. And the responses to these losses involve grieving. Grieving, according to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, has several components, including anger and depression. Angry and hostile boys are everywhere. Lonely and depressed boys are harder to identify. We need to understand what boys in America have lost and why they are grieving. Boys have lost:

- Trust in others
- Trust in themselves
- A support network of elders, fathers, uncles, and other males
- The right to be vulnerable
- Their inner beings -- the right to just be
- Communication and other interpersonal skills
- Emotional connectedness
- Affection from peers
- Community support
- Guidance for appropriate choice-making
- Care for their own bodies
- Rituals and rites of passage



Understanding the boy crisis can help this grieving process. It is vital that men to take responsibility to help boys discover and uncover themselves from the inside out. Elders can help boys discover their gifts and talents, learn

appropriate coping skills, and learn to nurture themselves and others.

For additional information or Questions about "Journeyman" please contact Charlie Borden, of MirrorMan Films at 651-399-0214