

THE GOOD MEN PROJECT: COMPENDIUM I



SCOTT DOUGLAS JACOBSEN

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The Good Men Project: Compendium I

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Scott

The Good Men Project

An Interview with Rick Rosner on Women and the Future (Part 1)

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

June 29, 2017

Rick Rosner is a personal and professional friend. I interviewed Rick in an extensive interview on In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, which came to about 100,000 words. Rick claims to have the world's second highest IQ. He is a member of the Mega Society and was the journal editor, as well Errol Morris interviewed him for the TV series First Person. This is part 1 of a series devoted to conversation on women and the future from the extensive interview. This series is comprised of excerpts from the In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal interview. Part 1 covers the difficulties in prediction of gender roles, artificial intelligence, and sex, among other things. The next parts will be featured in The Good Men Project.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Many, arguably most, women have greater difficulties than their male counterparts in equivalent circumstances. Their welfare means our welfare – men and women (no need to enter the thorny, confused wasteland of arguments for social construction of gender rather than sex; one need not make a discipline out of truisms.).

Net global wellbeing for women improves slowly, but appears to increase in pace over the years – millennia, centuries, and decades.

Far better in some countries; decent in some countries; and far worse, even regressing, in others. Subjugation with denial of voting, driving, choice in marriage, choice in children, honour killings, and severe practices of infibulation, clitoridectomy, or excision among the varied, creative means of female genital mutilation based in socio-cultural or religious practices; objectification with popular media violence and sexuality, internet memes and content, fashion culture to some extent, even matters of personal preference such as forced dress or coerced attire, or stereotyping of attitudinal and behavioral stances.

“All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on the ground which God intended us to occupy.” Sarah Moore Grimke said.

Everyone owes women. International obligations and goals dictate straightforward statements such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations (UN) in addition to simple provision of first life. MDG 3, 4, and 5 relate in direct accordance with this proclamation – in an international context mind you.

MDG 3 states everyone's obligations, based on agreed upon goals, for promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. MDG 4 states everyone's obligations for reduction of infant mortality rate. MDG 5 states everyone's obligations towards improvement of maternal health. All MDGs proclaim completion by 2015. We do not appear to have sufficed in obligations up to the projected deadline of 2015 with respect to all of the MDGs in sum.

In addition to these provisions, we have the conditions set forth in the The International Bill of Rights for Women by The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of the United Nations Development Fund's (UNDF) consideration and mandate of the "right of women to be free from discrimination and sets the core principles to protect this right."

Where do you project the future of women in the next 5, 10, 25, 100 years, and further? In general and particular terms such as the trends and the concomitant sub-trends, what about the MDGs and numerous other proclaimed goals to assist women – especially in developing areas of the world?

Rick Rosner: Predicting gender relations beyond a century from now is somewhat easier than predicting the short-term. In the transhuman future, bodily form, including sex, will be changeable. People will take different forms. And when anyone can change sexes with relative ease, there will be less gender bias.

Let's talk about the transhuman future (100 to 300 years from now) in general, at least as it's presented in science fiction that doesn't suck. Three main things are going on:

There's pervasive networked computing. Everything has a computer in it, the computers all talk to each other, computing costs nothing, data flying everywhere. Structures are constantly being modified by swarms of AI builders. A lot of stuff happens very fast.

Your mind-space isn't permanently anchored to your body. Consciousness will be mathematically characterized, so it'll be transferrable, mergeable, generally mess-withable.

People choose their level of involvement in this swirling AI chaos. Most people won't live at the frenzied pinnacle of tech – it's too much. There are communities at all different levels of tech.

Also, horrible stuff old and new happens from time to time – bio-terror, nanotech trouble, economic imperialism, religious strife, etc.

For more about this kind of thing, read Charles Stross, Cory Doctorow, David Marusek, or Neal Stephenson.

So, two hundred years from now, gender won't be much of a limiting factor, except in weird throwback communities. In the meantime, idiots will continue to be idiots, but to a lesser extent the further we go into the future. No one who's not a retard is standing up for the idea of men being the natural dominators of everything.

If it seems like we're not making progress towards gender equality, it may be because there's a huge political/economic/media faction that draws money and power from the more unsavoury old-fashioned values, with its stance that anyone who's concerned about racism or sexism is naïve and pursuing a hidden agenda to undermine American greatness.

Dumb beliefs that aren't propped up by doctrine eventually fade away, and believing that men or any elite group is inherently superior is dumb, particularly now and into the future as any purportedly superior inherent abilities become less significant in relation to our augmented selves. Across the world, the best lazy, non-specifically targeted way to reduce gender bias is to open up the flow of information, serious and trivial (however you do that).

In the very short run, maybe the U.S. elects a female President. Doubt this will do that much to advance the cause of women, because Hillary Clinton has already been in the public eye for so

long – she’s more a specific person than a representative of an entire gender. Is thinking that dumb? I dunno. I do know that her gender and who she is specifically will be cynically used against her. I hope that if elected, she’s less conciliatory and more willing to call out BS than our current President.

In the U.S., there’s currently some attention being paid to rape. Will the media attention to rape make rapey guys less rapey? I dunno. Will increase attention to rape in India reduce instances there? I dunno. A couple general trends may slowly reduce the overall occurrence of sexual coercion and violence.

One trend is the increased flow of information and the reduction of privacy – cameras everywhere, everybody willing to talk about everything on social media, victims being more willing to report incidents, better understanding of what does and does not constitute consent. The other trend is the decreasing importance of sex.

My baseline is the 70s, when I was hoping to lose my virginity. Sex was a huge deal because everything else sucked – food, TV, no video games, no internet – and people looked good – skinny from jogging and cocaine and food not yet being engineered to be super-irresistible. Today, everybody’s fat, and there’s a lot of other fun stuff to do besides sex.

I think that some forms of sexual misbehaviour – serial adultery, some workplace harassment – will be seen as increasingly old-school as more and more people will take care of their desire for sexual variety via the vast ocean of internet porn.

Of course, sexual misbehaviour isn’t only about sex – it’s also about exercising creepy power or a perverse need to be caught and punished – so, unfortunately, that won’t entirely go away.

During the past century, sexual behaviour has changed drastically – the types of sex that people regularly engage in, sex outside of marriage, tolerance for different sexual orientations, freely available pornography and sexual information, the decline in prostitution – you could say, cheesily, that sex is out of the closet. And sex that’s not secretive or taboo loses some of its power.

But I could be wrong. According to a 2007 study conducted at two U.S. public universities, one fifth of female college students studied suffered some degree of sexual assault.

An Interview with Rick Rosner on Women and the Future (Part 2)

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 6, 2017

Rick Rosner is a personal and professional friend. I interviewed Rick in an extensive interview on In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, which came to about 100,000 words. Rick claims to have the world's second highest IQ. He is a member of the Mega Society and was the journal editor, as well Errol Morris interviewed him for the TV series First Person. This is part 2 of a series devoted to conversation on women and the future from the extensive interview. This series is comprised of excerpts from the In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal interview. Part 2 covers the difficulties in women in science, STEM, American politics, Plato, John Stuart Mill, flourishing, and life expectancies, and more. The next parts will be featured in The Good Men Project.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Many, not all, women tend to have a hard time in science too. Improvements in welfare, access, and attainment continue. Rosalyn Yalow, Nobel Prize in Medicine for 1977, stated:

We bequeath to you, the next generation, our knowledge but also our problems. While we still live, let us join hands, hearts and minds to work together for their solution so that your world will be better than ours and the world of your children even better.

We cannot expect in the immediate future that all women who seek it will achieve full equality of opportunity. But if women are to start moving towards that goal, we must believe in ourselves or no one else will believe in us; we must match our aspirations with the competence, courage and determination to succeed; and we must feel a personal responsibility to ease the path for those who come afterwards. The world cannot afford the loss of the talents of half its people if we are to solve the many problems which beset us.

If we are to have faith that mankind will survive and thrive on the face of the earth, we must believe that each succeeding generation will be wiser than its progenitors. We transmit to you, the next generation, the total sum of our knowledge. Yours is the responsibility to use it, add to it, and transmit it to your children.

The failure of women to have reached positions of leadership has been due in large part to social and professional discrimination.

The excitement of learning separates youth from old age. As long as you're learning you're not old.

Yalow's "immediate future" exists here and now.

I observe some tendencies of form: some truth in women choosing non-STEM fields often to explain some of the number differential; decent truth in institutional barriers; a good deal to do with ineffectual programs of action; a great deal to do with lack of female mentors – male mentors appear less effective than women; a catch-22 of desire for

more women at the top, need of more female mentors from the top for women at the bottom, but lack of female mentors at the top in proportion to the women at the bottom; some more to do with inflexible tenure-track, differential pay, no childcare on-site, tacit bias for men; and, something never said – too taboo, some small minority of men not liking women; or a variable by implication of the former or on its own, working with them.

Narrowed from the prior question about the situation for women, with some of this in mind, what about the need for opening the arena for women in science more with continued technological and scientific comprehension in the 21st century to succeed in keeping apace with the rapidity of technological change, and scientific discovery and innovation?

Rick Rosner: I don't know what will draw more women into STEM fields. However, I think that more needs to be done to draw people of both genders into STEM. (A good step might be calling it "math-science" instead of STEM.) I grew up during the post-Sputnik push to educate Americans in science, followed by the laissez-faire 70s.

Now we're in the era of dumb politics, with large factions backing away from and urging skepticism about science. It shouldn't take a cold war or a big regular war for the U.S. to be pro-science. If current trends persist, the US will be overtaken by China in terms of percentage of GDP spent on R&D within a decade. Does it matter to the future whether the United States becomes a backwater country? I think so.

American politics is having a bad 21st century so far, but the best values America stands for will be important in tempering the more ominous aspects of the tech wave.

Jacobsen: In the history of men, we have some exemplars, Plato's philosophy culminated in the considerations of an ideal society appropriately given the appellation "Kallipolis," or "Beautiful City."

Few did as much theorization for female opportunity and equality, likely hypothesizing only in light of limitations of power and influence, in the ancient world apart from Plato including the incorporation of equality for women in the philosophical foundations, theoretical institutional operations, and consideration of aptitude and character found in *The Republic*, there likely exists few, or none, other in ancient times paralleling such depth of female inclusion in society and procurement of education.

Bear in mind, he did not intend the discourse of work related to Kallipolis for the purpose of equality for women, but for creation of an ideal society and people with spores devoted to women in the society.

Just society equated to just individual; ideal society equated to ideal individual; society – in conceptual equivalence to Platonic Form or Idea of "ideal society" – paralleled the individual. Well-ordered society reflected well-ordered individual – man or woman. Germinations from the dialogue on an ideal society in the seminal work *The Republic* became the seeds for partial, by the accepted canon of ethics today, female equality, most saliently found in the work *The Republic*.

We find little in the totality of literature contained within the canon of Western, and Eastern, traditions beyond Plato and the ancient Greeks until the explicit work by the bright light John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) – a utilitarian philosopher rooted in the ideas and work of Berkeley, Hume, and Locke – in the hefty essay *On The Subjection of Women* (1869) – a probable fresh

stirp outcropping from the writing of his wife Harriet Taylor Mill's essay, *The Enfranchisement of Women* (1851), because the Mills – including some by their daughter Helen – co-authored *On the Subjection of Women*, where the opening paragraph considers the issue of male & female relations and social institutions from the discerning, acute, and perceptive gaze of the Mills in preparation of probably one of the most complete disquisitions on women and their status in society in their day – one can find these throughout the prolonged essay:

“The object of this Essay is to explain as clearly as I am able, the grounds of an opinion which I have held from the very earliest period when I had formed any opinions at all on social or political matters, and which, instead of being weakened or modified, has been constantly growing stronger by the progress of reflection and the experience of life: That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.” [Mill, J.M. 1869]

Why little in the way of acknowledgement in history for women other than in some great few jewels? How can men best assist women – and by implication everyone in sum – flourish?

Rosner: History hasn't been very nice to anybody. About 107 billion humans have ever lived, and the vast majority of these had miserable lives, regardless of sex. Global life expectancy didn't reach 50 until the 1960s and didn't reach 60 until about 1980. We live like kings and queens compared to people of a century ago, and we live wretched lives compared to people a century from now.

Standards of liberty go roughly hand-in-hand with standards of living. As humanity has gained control over the world, larger segments of the population have gained some relief from misery. I expect the future to be richer, to have more life-improving tech, and to be more inclusive.

Regressive forces in politics want to maintain gender and racial hierarchies to some extent.

These efforts often masquerade as equal treatment for all, when in fact, treatment isn't equal. So people get pissed, and they protest, and they point out inequalities and hypocrisy. Bringing unfairness to the public's attention seems to be the way to get things done.

One sign of progress is that arguments for inherent inequality between genders or among races are increasingly unacceptable. And such arguments should be. I have a saying (which has failed to impress anyone) that the world's smartest rabbit is still a rabbit. By figuring out how to overcome human limitations, we can figure out how to overcome individual limitations.

An Interview with Rick Rosner on Women and the Future (Part 3)

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 7, 2017

"The vast majority of the more than 100 billion humans who have ever lived have disappeared without a trace of individual presence..."

Rick Rosner is a personal and professional friend. I interviewed Rick in an extensive interview on In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, which came to about 100,000 words. Rick claims to have the world's second highest IQ. He is a member of the Mega Society and was the journal editor, as well Errol Morris interviewed him for the TV series First Person. This is part 3 of a series devoted to conversation on women and the future from the extensive interview. This series is comprised of excerpts from the In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal interview. Part 3 covers the examples in outstanding women in history, the poor outcomes and lives for most people in history, and more.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In the timeline of women, on setting examples, instances arise of historical female virtuosity in spite of different circumstances for women *en masse*, in the commemorated annals of geniuses such as Hypatia of Alexandria, Elizabeth Anscombe, Hannah Arendt, Margaret Atwood, Simone de Beauvoir, Hildegard von Bingen, Marie Curie, Lady Anne Conway, Sarah Margaret Fuller, Susan Haack, Ayn Rand, Dame Mary Warnock, Mary Wollstonecraft, Betty Friedan, Marilyn vos Savant (greatest living philosopher of the everyday – opining), Joanne Rowling (“J.K. Rowling”/”Robert Galbraith”), and innumerable others, one need not agree with their multitudinous productions, but ought to welcome the attainments as genuine supplements to the cerebral arsenal of the erudite world.

Most of these relate in the academic, philosophical, intellectual partition of discourse on the sexes, more exist in relation to the many types of sheer brave accomplishments and firsts for women: Élisabeth Thible (First woman to ride in hot air balloon), Sophie Blanchard (First woman to pilot hot air balloon), Raymonde de Laroche (First woman to receive pilot's license), Lilian Bland (First woman to design, build, and fly an aircraft), Amelia Earhart (Not long after Charles Lindbergh – one could state Albert Read before either Lindbergh or Earhart, first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean), Sabiha Gökçen (First woman to fly fighter plane into combat), Jacqueline Cochran (First woman to break sound barrier), Jerrie Mock (First woman to fly solo around the world), Svetlana Savitskaya (First woman to walk in space), Eileen Collins (First female space shuttle pilot), and so on. Not enough time to enter into full listing and description – a compendium must suffice for now.

Even a single example, in depth, from this list of female bright lights in the human narrative, Marie Curie discoverer of the 88th element known as Radium, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics (1903) and Chemistry (1911), having an element named after her: curium, and someone of potential for higher emotional impact based on the recent nature – relative to the timeline from Hypatia to the present – of the achievements by Curie.

Indeed, she lived concurrent with the most often quoted, and misquoted, of geniuses, Albert Einstein. No introduction or explanation needed for his accomplishments of unification and foundational contributions to physics, cosmology, and insights into reality in general.

However, we do not hear much of Marie Curie off the top of our minds; even so, she may arise after some time to wonder and ponder on the cases of female genius.

When examining with thorough care the deep historical roots of the situation for women up to the modern era in the world of pedagogy, or even with a mild skim through a history text, within arguably the most important societal and cultural institution, outside of raw technological change, for the influence of individuals and collectives in society, Academia holds the most sway in refurbishing the old housing of society with new frameworks for understanding the world and the relation of human beings within, and to, that new apprehension of the world.

Some modern days of recognition such as *International Women's Day*, *Women's Equality Day*, and *Women's History Month* do some good in continual recognition from positive reflection on them.

As per the previous question, most history education tends to teach male exemplars in each field while lacking the representation of women in such fields of endeavour. History would appear to work on the shoulders of men, European men.

No exemplars in proportion to men can set tacit tones through education for the youth and in turn the upcoming generation. What could shift the focus, perspective, and conversation related to female exemplars in history?

Rick Rosner: Compared to men, a much smaller fraction of women have been highly visible to history. Of course, the fraction of men who are visible to history is already tiny.

The vast majority of the more than 100 billion humans who have ever lived have disappeared without a trace of individual presence and are remembered only as tiny constituents of plagues or wars or statistical trends.

Now, of course, everyone produces an extensive individual digital record, and the recording of our lives will only grow more thorough. (But individuals may become invisible within a deluge of information rather than a trickle.)

History is usually learned from an event- and trend-based perspective – battles, leaders, dates, economic and demographic forces. But there's another way – the slice-of-life approach – trying to reconstruct how people lived their daily lives and thought their daily thoughts.

This puts the women back into history and provides a counter-narrative to the big events POV. Most of our lives are conducted around daily tasks, not historic events. When we see history on TV or in a movie, it's usually people's stories, not dry recitations of facts.

In Women's Studies classes and by watching my daughter study history, I've learned that traditionally womanly arts are often assumed to be second-tier – mundane, decorative, part of the background – what Betty Draper does, to her frustration, as compared to what Don Draper does.

And even as *Mad Men* points out this dynamic, it still screws over Betty, making her seem unpleasant compared to Don, whom we root for even as he wrecks his life.

We're lucky to live in an era of increasingly immersive media that offers more opportunity to build complete worlds, including the worlds of the past. But even with this ability, virtual worlds can be shitty for women – for example, the *Grand Theft Auto* series is brutal to women.

The video game industry remains biased towards traditionally male action stories because they're fun, they sell, and they're easier to make compelling. Eventually, video games and immersive entertainment will learn how to embrace more of human experience. The subtlety's not there yet.

(My thinking about women's issues isn't ultra-sophisticated. But I took women's studies in college and belonged to a pro-feminist group called *100 Men Against Violence Against Women*. On the other hand, I wrote for *The Man Show*.

(It wasn't anti-women – it made fun of men's attitudes about women – but was widely misunderstood because it tried to have it both ways – making fun of men and celebrating what men like. And the fifth season, after Adam and Jimmy and the other writers and I left, was pretty mean and misogynist.))

An Interview With Rick Rosner on Women and the Future (Part 4)

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 8, 2017

“How many lives and generations will be spent in misery before social and tech trends make things better and/or weird?”

Rick Rosner is a personal and professional friend. I interviewed Rick in an extensive interview on In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal, which came to about 100,000 words. Rick claims to have the world's second highest IQ. He is a member of the Mega Society and was the journal editor, as well Errol Morris interviewed him for the TV series First Person. This is part 4 of a series devoted to conversation on women and the future from the extensive interview. This series is comprised of excerpts from the In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal interview. Part 4 covers the examples in outstanding women in history, the poor outcomes and lives for most people in history, and more.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Ethics exists beyond issues of the sexes. Issues of global concern. Ongoing problems needing comprehensive solutions such as differing ethnic, ideological, linguistic, national, and religious groups converging on common goals for viable and long-term human relations in a globalized world scarce in resources without any land-based frontiers for further expansion and exploitation, UN international diplomatic resolutions for common initiatives such as humanitarian initiatives through General Assembly Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural), Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), United Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), Food And Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), Interagency Standing Committee (IASC), and issues of UN humanitarian thematic import such as demining, early warning and disaster detection, the merger of theories of the grandest magnitude (e.g., general and special relativity) and the most minute (e.g., quantum mechanics), medical issues such as Malaria, Cancer, and new outbreaks of Ebola, nuclear waste and fossil fuel emissions, severe practices of infibulation, clitoridectomy, or excision among the varied, creative means of female – and male – genital mutilation based in socio-cultural and religious practices, stabilization of human population growth prior to exceeding the planet's present and future supportive capacity for humans, reduction of religious and national extremism, continuous efforts of conservation of cultural and biological diversity, energy production, distribution, and sustainability, economic sustainability, provision of basic necessities of clean water, food, and shelter, IAEA and other organizations' work for reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear armaments, culture wars over certainty in ethics on no evidence (faith-based ethics) and lack of certainty in morality because of too much data while lacking a coherent framework for action (aforementioned bland multiculturalism transformed into prescription of cultural/ethical relativism), acidification of the oceans, problems of corruption, continued annexation of land, issues of international justice handled by such organs as the

International Court of Justice, introduction of rapid acceleration of technological capabilities while adapting to the upheavals following in its wake, issues of drug and human trafficking, other serious problems of children and armed conflict including child soldiers, terrorist activity, education of new generations linked to new technological and informational access, smooth integration of national economies into a global economy for increased trade and prosperity, and the list appears endless – and growing.

If collated, they form one question: “*How best to solve problems in civil society?*”

Main issue, all subordinate queries and comprehensive, coherent solutions require sacrifice. You might ask, “*Cui bono?*” (“Who benefits?”) Answer: all in sum. Problem: few feel the need to sacrifice past the superficial. Some Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram protestations to represent themselves as just people while not behaving in the real world as just people. Hashtags and celebrity speeches help in outreach and advertisement, but we need long-term, pragmatic solutions to coincide with them more. Nothing hyperbolic to disturb healthy human societies, but reasonable and relatively rapid transitions into sustainable solutions. You have stated positive trajectories by thinking about the future. You talked of some, but not all. What about these collection of problems and the growing list?

Rick Rosner: I believe the best instrument of change is information. Informed people more readily disbelieve stupid shit. Widespread ignorance and distrust of well-substantiated facts are usually signs of somebody getting away with something.

We know society is trending in an egalitarian direction. Trends towards equality are in a race with technology remaking society. For me, the question becomes, “How many lives and generations will be spent in misery before social and tech trends make things better and/or weird?”

The happy possible eventual situation is that tech creates a utopia in which all people get what they want. The unhappy possible eventuality is that tech debunks the importance or centrality of humanity, and humans are afterthoughts – the stepchildren of the future – being taken care of but not really having their concerns addressed because their level of existence isn’t taken seriously by posthumans. (And of course there’s the possibility that AI gets out of hand, eats everything and craps out robots. Let’s try to avoid that.)

Tech will solve some huge problems. One of the biggest is the steadily growing population. People who have a shot at technical, earthly immortality (50 to 80 years from now) will reproduce less. When transferrable consciousness becomes commonplace (120 to 150 years from now), posthuman people may not reproduce at all (though traditional human enclaves will still spit out a steady stream of kids). The uncoupling of individual consciousness from the body it was born into solves a bunch of, perhaps most, current problems and anticipated problems – crowding, food, pollution, global warming – by allowing people to live in ways that leave less of a footprint. (Not that their choices will be made for purely ecological concerns. People will always follow their own interests, and posthuman people will choose a variety of non-fleshy containers (200 years from now) because virtual or semi-robotic containers will be cheaper, more convenient, more versatile and exciting.)

But our current problems will be largely replaced by fantastically weird problems. Virtual people will be subject to virtual attacks and virtual disease. Agglomerations of consciousness may

become bad actors. People may sic nanotech swarms on each other. You can find all this stuff in good near-future science fiction. William Gibson's new novel, *The Peripheral*, which takes place about 20 years and 90 years from now, can serve as a good, fun intro to the future. In it, some impossible stuff happens, but it's the possible stuff that's interesting and scary. There are websites devoted to the future in a very non-la-de-dah way. Look at <http://io9.com/> and <http://boingboing.net/> – they're entertaining and informative.

111 (Votes) to 1: the Not-So Golden Ratio

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 9, 2017

Human rights violated based on religious innervation in society.

International rights stipulations provide the basis for fundamental human rights. As Ban Ki-Moon has said, “We are all different from one another, but we all have the same human rights. I am proud to stand for the equality of all people – including those whose are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.”

Numerous resolutions, from both the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, make human rights inclusive of LGBT peoples, and LGBT rights distinct and important too. These are not some distant considerations, but immediate, impacting people’s lives, and violated on a consistent basis – hour-by-hour. One recent national event, from Chad, came from a distressing ratio of votes – 111 to 1 – and reiterated this perennial truism.

Last month, Chad’s National Assembly voted for a new penal code which criminalises homosexuality with 111 MPs voting for it, 1 against and 4 abstaining. This made Chad the 77th country internationally, and was the 37th country in Africa to criminalise homosexuality. Under the new law, people engaging in homosexual acts can be heavily fined (£60-£600) or serve a 20-year prison sentence.

In fact, according to a legal report by the US Library of Congress all African states, with the exception of South Africa, recognises and permits same-sex marriage. More specifically, in Nigeria, Sudan and Mauritania, homosexuality is punishable by death. This action of Chad’s National Assembly comes after Gambia passed a bill imposing life imprisonment for homosexual acts.

The fact that the vast majority – only 1 exception and 4 abstentions – of Chad’s National Assembly supported the new penal code is worrying. This bill was also supported by the country’s former Prime Minister, Delwa Kassiré Coumakoye, who mentioned that “homosexuality is condemned by all religions. We do not have to forgive something that God himself rejects because Westerners have said this or that”.

There are two issues we need to discuss here: First, the fact that religion plays a role in determining what is legal and what is not. Second, the fact that the former Prime Minister considers that it is a strong point of the new penal code that it does not conform to “Western” styles and principles.

In an era that nations fight for secularism, supporting the complete separation of church and state, some African nations, including Chad, make decisions solely on religious grounds.

What is more, Chad’s cabinet mentioned that the new penal code intends to “protect the family and to comply with Chadian society”. It is indeed a worrying fact how nations, like Chad, commit the argumentum ad antiquitatem (appeal to tradition) fallacy and base a whole penal code on tradition, family values and religion.

There is no reason or logic involved in supporting the new penal code apart from subjective statements of this nature. And it is scary to think that because of subjective statements people are going to end up in prison or get heavily fined. The former PM even called the bill a “fair balance”. This leaves us wondering, however, what may ever be “fair” about the bill when it criminalises basic human rights.

Furthermore, there is every reason to argue that anti-Westernisation is not considered a valid reason for supporting the country’s new penal code. In fact, it shows quite the opposite – its weaknesses.

First of all, the issue is not even about what Western countries do. It’s what humans do. As the great journalist and religious critic Christopher Hitchens has said: “I say that homosexuality is not just a form of sex, it’s a form of love — and it commands our respect for that reason”.

Granting homosexuals the right to engage in relationships, sexual acts or marry is itself the same right we are talking about when talking about heterosexuals.

No difference is or should be made. In fact, criminalising homosexuality is itself an act that does not serve to protect people of any society or tradition as it on its very basis does not take into consideration that a respected part of the population is attracted to people of the same sex, or even to people of both sexes. Any appeal to religion or tradition fails to provide us with a logical basis on which to support the claims that supporters of Chad’s new penal code which punishes homosexuality make.

Indeed, this “form of love” can be outlawed, and made extraordinarily risky and even lethal in its practice because of cultural and legal factors. Take, for example, the case of Tanzania suspending the outreach programmes for HIV. Why would there be a suspension for outreach programmes for HIV? The reason: homosexuality is outlawed within Tanzania and, therefore, within the logic of the system, seen as not worth considering for appropriate, and needed, outreach for HIV.

And it is not like there aren’t campaigns devoted to the implementation of the international rights via international movements – the UN Free & Equal is one such campaign, and “is an unprecedented United Nations global public education campaign for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality” (OHCHR, 2016b). These are old prejudices, and they keep cropping up. Again, why? It is easier to hate than to love, at least in the short-term.

Which leads back to the international Moral-Educator-in-Chief, Ban Ki-Moon, who said, “It is an outrage that in our modern world so many countries continue to criminalise people simply for loving another human being of the same sex...Laws rooted in 19th century prejudices are fuelling 21st century hate.”

Powerful Historic and Present Attempts to Obliterate Reproductive Rights

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 10, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, Paul Krassner, discuss powerful anti-feminists' attempts to squeeze reproductive rights.

Paul Krassner published The Realist (1958-2001), but when People magazine labeled him “father of the underground press,” he immediately demanded a paternity test. And when Life magazine published a favorable article about him, the FBI sent a poison-pen letter to the editor calling Krassner “a raving, unconfined nut.” “The FBI was right,” George Carlin responded. “This man is dangerous — and funny, and necessary.” While abortion was illegal, Krassner ran an underground referral service, and as an antiwar activist, he became a co-founder of the Yippies (Youth International Party).

Krassner’s one-person show won an award from the L.A. Weekly. He received an ACLU (Upton Sinclair) Award for dedication to freedom expression. At the Cannabis Cup in Amsterdam, he was inducted into the Counterculture Hall of Fame — “my ambition,” he claims, “since I was three years old.” He won a Playboy Award for satire and a Feminist Party and in 2010 the Oakland branch of the writers’ organization PEN honored him with their Lifetime Achievement Award. “I’m very happy to receive this award,” he concluded in his acceptance speech, “and even happier that it wasn’t posthumous.”

Paul is a friend, and colleague through the Advisory Board for In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal. He asked to do an interview with me. I agreed.

Paul Krassner: Do you think that Donald Trump will face an impeachment and a criminal case or will he get away with it? Same with Mike Pence? If they are both kicked out of the White House, would Paul Ryan become the next president which he wanted when he ran as Mitt Romney’s vice president?

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: To preface, I will note: personally, neither an expert nor an authority – good rule of thumb, do not believe me. I’m simply Scott trying to reason through things. I may veer off the tracks of the question.

As a necessary statement at the outset, often, prediction seems best left to historians. Also, prediction seems harder than ever because the world became more complicated. Synoptic judgments about anything seems hard, let alone near future extrapolations from the synopses.

Even so, many of these thoughts will not seem novel or necessarily profound, at least not to those railroaded through life on propaganda. As per Paul Mooney’s statements about the US, it has a propaganda system that is unreal, in its influence and ubiquity.

Although, if I can reason to a possible outcome, I should note Bob Wilson’s observation: the political Left’s view of big business and the Right’s view of government are both probably correct.

In America, there are over 320 million citizens looking at the spectacle, even the circus act or “freak show” – as someone dead mentioned on many occasions. Most things go noticed now. Social media makes everyone a commentator too.

Also, I say this, apparently, as a Canadian, and in other ways not so much. Not only the United States of America, the world as well, with the velocity and power of modern high technology, sits in the front row seat to the freak show. Some things became obvious to more American citizens, and the world, than before, especially the fence-sitters.

A friend of mine in California is an independent mathematician. He has been keeping intermittent track of Trump compared to previous presidents. By his estimations, Trump has done worse than any other president this early in their administration.

Most of the others ‘had the courtesy to die’ before potential impeachment. For these first questions, I looked at various sources. They did not help me. Some say high odds for impeachment. Others tell of low chances. It depends, but seems like a possibility.

With the antics on the campaign trail, whether word or deed, some thought Trump, as a Republican presidential candidate, would fail. Once elected, and past the shock, the open attacks on women’s rights, science and, therefore, medicine, shook some of the country.

Especially women, which seems to have the silver lining, citizens continue the venerable American tradition: community and societal mobilization for the good. I suspect with the ugly behaviour and talk around, and about, women tied to attack’s on women’s rights.

Women in the US will continue to protest and fight for their rights more, probably than ever. It seems instructive to note. The current generations of women represent the most formally educated and free women, globally speaking, likely in human history.

As long as things do not become too acrimonious, though things will likely become worse before better, American citizens may gather together from the ground up. To an extent, I agree with the official Pryor torchbearer, Dave Chappelle. It is important to show “local politics reigns supreme.”

In the North American countries, as appears known in tacit sub-cultures, we live in technologically advanced and ideologically primitive societies with majoritarian or democratic rule. In that, in the democratic system, the majority rules the state, the nation, or the country.

Most Americans adhere to the eldest ideological stances, relative to recorded human history, in the canon. Through the majoritarian vote, the same dominant sector’s adherence to the archaic ideologies with emotional appeal linked to high technology yield enormous power.

We need constructive alternative programs for civil society outside of the mainstream of politics. We need Americans to revive, and Americans – in Christian terms – need the ‘resurrection’ of, the ‘spirit’ of the 1960s.

That means the time of flux, change, and expansive vision, and so the possibility for the constructive future rather than destructive one based on anger, desperation, and contractive conceptions of human possibility.

Take, for example, the American protest of the Vietnam War. The protests happened during the fighting. US citizens protested the current, ongoing, wars prior to the main fighting. Now, citizens continue to protest with proportioned critical thought about institutions with power too, in the world's most powerful democracy – though much evidence to the contrary, simultaneously.

Now, to the Wilson point, in a strange, or maybe not so bizarre, coming together, big business and government became one. It is flaunted too, especially cruelly as the majority of ordinary people see stagnant or declining wages for decades – and the need to be competitive with sweatshop workers, often in slave labour conditions, halfway around the world.

American citizens, with good reason, distrust institutions – and, unfortunately, each other – and have the indignation and anger to make change, but directed in messy, destructive, and even counterproductive, ways. I see a big signal of this being true.

Both the political Left and, some of the, Right, speaking loosely and simply, became enraged over Trump's election, and the administration's decisions. Even so, the hammer is pounded on the Left and laid to rest on the Right, as a partial observation.

Hammer blows to the Left's goals, principles, and values. Mild, consistent pressure on some of the Right's ones. It's not equal opportunity punishment. Two big targets seem attacked, with one common victim set.

The least among us, as the victims. Women's rights and science, in general, as the targets. To the former, women won the right to vote, in 1920 – not simply propertied or land-owning women. Women won the right and privilege to equal access to jobs and careers, to a significant extent.

Now, take the "Global Gag" rule, the targeted defunding of, by Human Rights Watch's analysis, a human right: "equitable access to safe abortion services is first and foremost a human right." Women will die throughout the world as a direct result of the recent Global Gag rule.

As you know, when decades prior running an underground referral service, abortion, and reproductive health technologies in general, continue to remain new, and the frontier of the modern attacks on women's rights.

By the way, based on Human Rights Watch, any, even most or all, pro-life positions become anti-human right by implication. Denial of abortion equates to denial of a human right – take your pick, for or against.

To the latter, to the assault on science and scientists, the placement of non-scientists or non-science fact respecting people into positions of both tremendous power and influence, and relevance for science, and the further defunding of scientific programs.

The United States will damage its scientific and cultural reputation. Also, the reduction in the quality of science education, and provisions at the highest level, will reduce the depth and precision of the scientific decisions made by America. Decisions that speed global warming.

If not impeached, with Trump, we seem lucky, even in another colder country – though warming. We know the president's ideology: me. We understand Trump's motivation: to

be liked. He can, by accident, benefit the general population, if benefits exist for his ego through feeling liked by people.

If Pence becomes president, we have a whole other set of issues with a sincere Christian fundamentalist: “I’m a Christian, a conservative, and a Republican, in that order.” If Ryan, the federal government may outlaw carbohydrates.

Ancient Mythology, Scripture, and Believers' Archetypal Genders

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 13, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, Armin Navabi, discuss the Abrahamic faiths' male and female figures.

Armin Navabi is the Founder of the Atheist Republic. One of the most popular pages on Facebook for atheists that faced repeated censorship and shutdown from Facebook authorities. He was born in Tehran, Iran, and raised as a Muslim. Now, he is a former Muslim and an atheist living in Vancouver, British Columbia. Here we explore, in an educational series, the figures in the Abrahamic faiths from the view of a leading former Muslim, this is session 1.

Audio interview edited for clarity and readability.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, I asked about doing a series. We did an interview for *Conatus News*. I wanted to focus on *The Good Men Project*. In particular, masculinity within Islam and outside of it, and progressive developments that come from leaving it – and some that are inside of it. But you mentioned something about scripture and female and male figures, that you wanted to explore within Abrahamic faiths.

Armin Navabi: Yes, I think most ancient religions before the Abrahamic religions, if you look at their pantheon of gods, you can see female and male gods. People look at gods as parental figures, sometimes. If they look at the male gods as father figures, then the female gods as mother figures.

People they pray to when they need help. One thing I think was missing inside of the different versions of the Abrahamic faiths were the female figures. They were missing the female or mother deity. They miss something emotionally.

If you look at Catholics, they dealt with this through Mother Mary. Even though, the Bible has no reference to Mother Mary as holy or divine. This has been known scholars and Catholics. You can see Catholic doctrine introducing her assumption to heaven; it was a popular story at the time for them.

Based on popular demand, they made this canon. They added it to the doctrine. If you compare Catholics and Protestants, the Protestants focus on Jesus and God and pray to them. The Catholics pray to saints.

They ask for favors from saints. They do something Protestants don't do, which is praying to figures other than God. One of the figures is Mother Mary. Protestants do not see Mother Mary as holy, but Catholics do.

When I was in the Philippines and Mexico, I felt as if Mother Mary is even more popular than Jesus. Some people prefer a father figure. It comes with someone who has power or control or wants to bring about wrath or punishment.

The mother figure is often someone we would want to appeal to for her compassion or sympathy. That is where Mother Mary comes in for a lot of Christians because the Christian doctrine didn't have such as a female role or a mother role.

The Catholic's added that role for Mother Mary based on popular demand, even though there is no mention of her rising to heaven in the Bible. In Islam, we see something similar in Shia Islam. As with Protestant's focus on Jesus and God, you see something similar with Sunnis, as they only pray to Allah.

Even though they revere Muhammad so much, sometimes, it can be considered worship they themselves claim that Muhammad is never worshiped, and worship only belongs to God. Sunni Islam's four Khalifas are not revered remotely close to how Muhammad is. They are not holy by any means.

In fact, there is a famous quote by *Abu Bakr*, the first Khalifa, right after Muhammad's death: "He who worships Muhammad (peace be upon him) Muhammad is dead now, but he who worships Allah he is ever living and never dies."

Their reason Sunnis revered Muhammad is that he is the role model of Allah and the perfect way to live, but not divine in any means.

The Shia have 12 Imams rather than 4 Khalifas. One of the Imams is the same as the fourth Khalifas of the Sunnis. The way the Shia look at the Imams is different than the way the Sunnis look at their Khalifas. These are holy infallible figures.

Shias pray and appeal to the Imams. They make requests, what is called *dua*. For Sunnis, this is *Shirk*. *Shirk* is one of the greatest sins in Islam. *Shirk* is the act of partnering others with God in worship.

Shias don't consider this worship, but many Sunnis do, and because it is worship it is *shirk*. For example, when Shias put the shrine between them and *Kabba* while praying towards the *Kabba*, they are in effect also praying to the shrine of the Imams. This is highly offensive to many Sunnis.

If you look at Shia shrines, in Shia dominated countries, like Iraq or Iran, they are glamorously designed and in beautiful temple-like shrines. Shias consider these holy ground. But in Sunni dominated countries, like Saudi Arabia, where imams are buried, their burial is much more simple.

Even Sunnis look down on praying on Muhammad's burial ground, the kings of Saudi Arabia are buried with very little ceremony because the dead should not be worshiped, even somebody as high as Muhammad.

For example, when Shias go to Sunni dominated countries to the burial grounds of their Imams, they are not allowed to pray to them. There are many reports of the religious police beating them because they found them praying to imams, which is an act of idolatry, dead worship, or *shirk* in their mind.

Gender Stereotyped Roles and the Middle East

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 14, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, Joana Aziz, discuss her experience living in Syria and Lebanon, and sense of Saudi Arabia.

Joana Aziz is a student in Spain. She is a friend with experience growing up in Syria followed by Lebanon. Now, as a student, she is in graduate school. I wanted to get her perspective on gender roles in the Middle East based on real experience. This is part of an initiative, from me (possibly others), to expand the flavor of narratives for and in The Good Men Project. Here is the first session in this educational series.

Audio interview edited for clarity and readability.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wanted to talk about gender roles in the Middle East. I ask you this because we are friends and colleagues and have discussed these issues casually over Skype. I wanted to make a short educational series from an educated person – and gather their thoughts on the Middle East or the Middle East-North Africa region, generally, and those roles. What is the range of restriction on gender roles?

Joana Aziz: From my knowledge, I would say three countries in particular. One is Saudi Arabia, where gender roles are followed rather strictly. Lebanon is more liberal in that sense and Syria comes somewhere in between.

Jacobsen: When it comes to the first example, Saudi Arabia, what are some of the restrictions on, for example, women to start?

Aziz: When it comes to Saudi Arabia, you need to consider the religion. Any restriction comes from a religious background. For example, there is a strict code for what to wear and there is a punishment for not wearing it. Driver's licenses are not issued for women.

Jacobsen: What about the men, for the mix of religion, law, and custom, if they're not following the particular attire?

Aziz: Men have a traditional attire, but they are not forced to wear it. Usually, men do the enforcement roles.

Jacobsen: What about Syria? I know it ranks low for gender equality and for women's status generally. However, there are tragic cases such as war and refugees at the moment.

Aziz: When you focus on gender roles in an area, you want to focus: religion and culture. How much is this religion influencing things? Is it a collectivist or an individualist society? In Syria, for example, religion is not as pervasive, but there is still the adherence to a stereotypical man and a stereotypical woman. From this, the gender roles follow.

Jacobsen: What are the stereotypical man and stereotypical woman in this context?

Aziz: It is the macho-infused archetype. The man here is defined by wealth, status, domination, and the power he exercises; the woman, in this case, is seen as an extension of the man. This is

something that you can see by the language that is used. When we are in Syria, we say, “The man took this woman. He took Fatima.”

The man makes the decision. He chooses; the woman gets chosen. That’s how such roles play out.

Jacobsen: Does this reflect terms such as “Mr.” and “Mrs.”, where the terminology reflects the historical trend of ownership or property status of women.

Aziz: Definitely: yes.

Jacobsen: Where is the separation between religion and culture there?

Aziz: They have become so infused that it is hard to separate them. What happens is the woman internalizes this notion, that she becomes this property. For example, marriage is really focused on. It becomes a right of passage or an achievement.

I don’t want to generalize, but some women in Syria I assume would feel lacking if they don’t get married. It is not emphasized on the men.

Jacobsen: If a man sleeps around, what are the consequences culturally? If a woman sleeps around, what are the consequences culturally? If we take the two examples discussed, Saudi Arabia and Syria in these instances.

Aziz: It is the same thinking. If it is a man, it is a man fulfilling his needs. It is similar in religion. The Quran has an agreement that lets you sleep around. Of course, for women, you can’t sleep around.

Jacobsen: That begs the question. From a secular perspective, who are these men sleeping with? [Laughing]

Aziz: [Laughing] Special women.

Jacobsen: Let’s turn to Lebanon, what is the status of the gender roles there? What is some specifics from experiential or personal background insight?

Aziz: I think Lebanon is really trying to move forward with activism there. There are some organizations such as KAFA and ABAAD campaigning for women’s rights and fighting against violence against women and their effort is recognized as they are producing actual change on the ground by repealing laws and attempting to introduce new ones that guarantee equal rights. There is this tug-of-war between those who want to progress and those who want to resist.

This tug of war can be seen by those who want to progress and those are afraid of change.

Jacobsen: It is the context of saying, “She was asking for it. She was wearing little clothing or revealing clothing.”

Aziz: “Were you alone? Was it late?” and so on.

I saw an interesting note the other day. High Schools boys in Michigan, US left a note in the girls’ bathroom asking them to reconsider their outfit as it is affecting their concentration.

The same logic, found in religions like Islam, is present here. It shifts the blame for actions committed on to women or girls moreover attempts to resolve it through control.

Jacobsen: I believe the term is “victim blaming.” It seems like another instance in a different culture, with a different history, a different people, a different context, and a different majority religion still having the same outgrowth of perspective – of an expectation of purity of women.

Those that do not meet that – even in the cases against their will such as rape or sexual assault – then still get blamed.

Aziz: Exactly.

Jacobsen: You live in Spain, which is a different context. I don’t know the culture, though. I know it is different, but don’t know how different. Reflecting on your sense of Saudi Arabia, and personal experience with Syria and Lebanon, how does Spain differ? How is it the same?

Aziz: It is the same because I still get cat-called the same level that I used to back in Lebanon or Syria. Here I feel women can answer back, they can put those boundaries. Where in Syria or Lebanon, I would feel more taken back, not protected, and not as supported. Perhaps, it’s just me as I know many brave women who do answer back.

Such were the brave women who, as of late October, last year were campaigning in Douma, Syria. Women wanted to increase female representation in the council. This happening during war time signifies strong will and determination.

Jacobsen: That is remarkable. Thank you for your time, Joana.

Brazilian Women's Rights Struggle, Strife, and Successes

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 15, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, a colleague, and friend, Pamela Machado, discuss women's rights, feminism, and Brazil, and Latin America.

Pamela Machado is a contributor to Conatus News, and a journalist based in London, UK. She took some time to sit down and talk feminism and Brazil. Here is her thoughts, the first session of them.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You and I have written together, especially on the subjects of women's rights. Something of note since, at least, the Suffragettes. The development of women as legal persons in First Wave feminism, as deserving of equal access to work in Second Wave feminism, and, at present, deserving of the right to reproductive health services in Third Wave feminism.

Third Wave feminism is the current battleground. Associated with each of these changes is the increased inclusion of women into society on multiple levels, whether cultural, economic, political, even religious, and social. You lived in Brazil. You moved to London. You work and study there. So we have researched these things. You have seen the modern situation for men and women.

What is the current state of affairs for the relations between men and women in London?

Pamela Machado: As a Brazilian, the reality for women in London surprised me greatly. Despite being the capital and a busy city, I feel very safe at any time during the day or night – a 'luxury' I do not enjoy in many cities in Brazil. There are plenty of women acting as CEOs, Directors and it seems to me, in general, we as a gender as well represented in the job market. That said, this might not be the view of British and European women, as you can see in papers like the Guardian.

Brazil and Latin America as a whole is a very sexist place. I am not able to give a scientific reason behind that. It probably is a result of a lot of things but mostly religion and lack of education. Feminism is a much more needed fight where I come from – I am not saying that the UK and Europe enjoy perfect gender equality. It is just a matter of perspective.

Numbers of rape and 'femicide' in Latin America speak for themselves.

Jacobsen: If we responded directly, frankly, does religion seem like the main impediment to women's equality, especially patriarchal religions?

Machado: It does play a role but, in my opinion, is not the main one. I would particularly blame a 'coward' political representation, an inefficient judiciary system and, unfortunately, poor education.

Jacobsen: But doesn't religious faith, in general, enshrine male values, superiority, divinity – as in being the main image-bearers of the creator of the universe – and as the owners and protectors of women?

Machado: Yes, that is true and it is definitely a challenge to be faced. Brazil is one of the most Catholic countries in the world and the vast majority of the population is Christian. Some local churches and religious leaders seem to be more... let's say, modern, recognizing things such as divorce and contraception but they are still rare cases. And we have more reasons worry: religious political parties are becoming stronger – and they are very conservatives in their beliefs. If all goes well, next year Brazil will have presidential elections and Jair Bolsonaro, a religious far right congressman seem to be getting increasingly popular support.

Jacobsen: Also, if you take the more explicit examples in the United States, the conscious, cynical misrepresentation of women's rights and feminism, and the historical and pervasive denigration and distrust of women in general, and disgust reactions to women's bodies and especially the strange enshrinement of virginity (and so the control of women's sexuality). In a Catholic culture, and so country and society, how can women overcome this, or at a minimum liberalize the non-reality-based belief systems found in this ubiquitous faith?

Machado: I think the best way to fight this regressive system is to educate. We need to spread the word about what feminism is really about – there still people in Latin America who don't know. It is true though that some women do condone such behavior, simply because they are strong believers. We need to have empathy, we cannot blame them. In a country where the government does not look after its people and education are very poor, people hold on to what they have.

I would say that above all, we need empathy, understanding, and patience. Implementing feminism in Brazil will be a long process, it might take generations, but it is possible and is already happening. Despite still low female representativity in Congress, we do have laws to protect women and abortion is a recurrent topic in discussion. We just need to hope and act to minimize the growing influence of far right and church-affiliated parties, otherwise, our achievements so far are at risk of being useless.

Jacobsen: What policies underly the cowardly aspects of the political system in the appropriate recognition and the implementation of women's rights? Of course, and bearing in mind, the young nature of the women's rights movement and women's rights in general, as well as human rights, and so their general fragility. Something of concern to me.

Machado: As I noted above, the main threat to progress in women's rights is the rise of far right and conservative views. Leaving aside economic aspects, the left government left a good legacy for women and human rights in general.

However, with the impeachment brought to office former vice president Michel Temer, from the right front. On this year women's day speech, he went so far as in praising women for the housekeeping skills, saying that 'we are vital to the economy because we note the changes in price at the supermarket.' After having a woman in the highest position in the country, hearing such thing is insulting and infuriating.

In a World of Wonders, Sex Remains in Charge

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 16, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and friend, Rick Rosner, discuss mating strategies and dominance behaviors in human beings, and the dominance of sex in all we do.

Rick Rosner is a friend. We discuss a broad range of topics. One of interest is evolutionary theory and the implications for mating behavior. We aren't experts but are having a fun conversation between friends, and so decided to conduct some recorded sessions about this in a series on mating strategies. Here is session one, just for you.

Rick Rosner: In earlier sessions, we were talking about dominance behavior in species. It started when I saw a finch or a sparrow in a park in New York. I decided that that bird's consciousness was less focused on that individual bird's position in bird society than humans are on their positions in human society.

I did a little reading and found out that my offhand theory is not true to the degree that I thought it was. There are dominance hierarchies and pecking orders in many, many species. The potential for dominance hierarchies to form may be present in most species.

Dominance hierarchies provide efficiencies that limit animals from spending too much energy fighting amongst themselves by giving them social structure. Some fighting takes place initially, and eventually, everyone decides they're cool with where they are in the pecking order.

You don't have members of the species constantly battling with each other. This saves energy for other aspects of survival.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You don't need much extra to put more towards cognitive and behavioral flexibility. Also, estrus is year-round for our species.

Rosner: Things get weird when you look at a hyper-fit species, as humans are. The natural world is not much of a threat to the survival of individual members of a very well-adapted species, such as humans, as it is for most other species.

Most humans survive to reproductive age, and many of our displays of dominance aren't directly related to reproductive fitness. Things with humans are more complicated, more baroque. Displays of fitness and dominance hierarchies in humans are weirder and less straightforward than they are for many other species.

Within my lifetime, I have seen displays of fitness and dominance change from what can be seen as direct and basic demonstrations of physical vitality to what can be seen as demonstrations of hipness. When I was growing up, things felt more straightforwardly like jocks vs. nerds with jocks being cool and nerds being uncool.

Muscularity and fitness became more explicit in 1976, when Pumping Iron came out, making Arnold Schwarzenegger a star and weight training no longer a niche activity, but a widely accepted activity in America. People strived for trim and muscular V-shaped torsos. Clothing was tight with shirts tucked in.

That was 40 years ago. Now, physical fitness is de-emphasized compared to that era. People have the bodies they have. Clothes aren't tight. For demonstrations of dominance, I think more in terms of Brooklyn hipsters.

The comforting stereotype that I was told growing up was "You're a nerd in high school and junior high, but when you grow up you'll be in charge. Everyone who was cool and a jock will be working in gas stations."

Jacobsen: That sounds fantastically optimistic.

Rosner: It's among the things you tell the unpopular kid who plays tuba in the band. You say, "Other kids are jealous and don't like you," to make an unpopular kid feel better. I think that tuba thing came from a 1980 movie called *The Hollywood Nights*. It was about nerds trying to get laid. The tuba player's mom was trying to comfort him.

But our entire culture has gone nerdy, though you still have bro-types striving for physical perfection as a sexual dominance strategy. You've got Guido culture, which can involve hair mousse and lifting and hitting clubs at night, and aggressively be trying to hook up with women who also emphasize displays of sexual attractiveness.

Jacobsen: There are two aspects to that. One is traditional masculine with men as the head of the household. The other is bro culture which is drinking, smoking, not wearing sunscreen, riding dirt bikes and motorcycles, and focusing on hitting on women.

But beyond bros, there are strategies to appear dominant in ways that appear more awkward, less Rambo-ish and less cool than before.

Rosner: There is fragmentation – not everyone follows the same strategy. I never read John Nash, but I saw his movie biography, *A Beautiful Mind*. He says that if you're trying to find a mate, then one strategy is to eliminate the most desirable females from consideration and then choose from among the best remaining females.

You look for the best deal with reduced competition. You find the females that have the most competition for them, and then you ignore them and look for the best options based on relatively ignored females.

In *A Beautiful Mind*, there's a scene in a bar in which many guys are hitting on a blonde. Nash says to ignore the blonde and consider a nearby brunette. A stereotypically less attractive female becomes more attractive because there is less competition for her.

So, in a super-successful species where you're not struggling directly with nature or physically confronting rivals for mates, in that species there is going to be the potential for niche forming – for a number of different strategies for finding and attracting mates.

People will aggregate themselves to maximize reproductive potential by forming groups where their individual attributes can be manifest to best advantage; biggish guys who like to bench press will form bro culture, which gives an advantage to people who are best at being bros and broettes.

Modern Women's Rights, Atheism, and Ideological Warfare

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 16, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, a colleague, and friend, Marie Alena Castle, continue the talk on women's rights, human rights, and atheism in session 3.

Marie Alena Castle is the communications director for Atheists for Human Rights. Raised Roman Catholic she became an atheist later in life. She has since been an important figure in the atheist movement through her involvement with Minnesota Atheists, The Moral Atheist, National Organization for Women, and wrote Culture Wars: The Threat to Your Family and Your Freedom (2013). She has a lifetime of knowledge and activist experience, explored and crystallized in an educational series. The first part of this series can be found here – Session 1 and Session 2.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Even with groups such as NARAL, NOW, and Planned Parenthood, the onslaught against women's rights, reproductive rights and so on, continue to take place. The most vulnerable – poor and minority women – tend to be the main victims, and so their children and the associated families – and so communities. In a sequence, I see attacks on women's reproductive rights as attacks on women, children, so families, and so communities, and therefore ordinary American citizens. What can be some buffers, or defenses, against these direct attacks on the new media and communications technologies, e.g. to educate and inoculate new generations?

Marie Alena Castle: No one cares about any social effects so this has to be made personally self-serving. Start with sex/contraceptive education in schools. Impress the girls that they are NOT a public utility and whether or not to terminate a pregnancy is entirely their business, not the church's, not the state's, not their sexual partner's and not the Roe v. Wade regulations. Impress the boys with the fact that if they get a girl pregnant they are liable for 18 years of child support. Use social media to pass this around so it gets to the students at religious schools.

Try for some social effects by calling to account the "pro-life" propagandists as misogynistic, ignorant liars. (They make outrageously stupid claims about embryos and fetuses.) Put up billboards next to their 6-month-old-white-baby ads showing women (various ethnicities) asking why it is anyone's business but hers and declaring she is not a public utility and asking what the "pro-lifers" have done for real babies lately other than only opposing welfare/child care/educational aid.

Run anti-terrorist ads everywhere pointing out the group that has done and is doing the most damage – the anti-abortion violence prone clinic vandals, death-threateners, bombers, murderers (give the numbers since 1973). Note the clinics' need for excessive security, bullet proof vests, randomized doctor routes to get to clinics, etc.

OK to note the desperate situation women find themselves in and needing an abortion (rape, abusive relationship, health issues, fetal deformity, poverty, etc.) but don't do much of this because the general public doesn't care.

Jacobsen: Who are the unknown women's rights heroes, men and women, that people should more into – to self-educate?

Castle: They are the people who work at abortion clinics. They all have stories to tell. One of my friends managed a clinic and she was constantly threatened with violence and pickets at her house. I went there a few times to help in case the picketers got violent. One August I suggested she hook up her garden hose to a bottle of sugar water and set it to spray on the picketers and attract hordes of hornets. She wouldn't do it but I would have. The leader of the picketers was the local fire department chief (with expert knowledge of how to set her house on fire). She wanted to move but dared not for fear the fire chief would send a "potential buyer" to case the house for fire-setting purposes. She needed some carpentry done but feared getting someone she didn't know who would have a violent anti-abortion agenda. I got an atheist carpenter friend for her who was reliably safe.

Jacobsen: Once the shoe bites, people then become active, politically and socially, typically. These people can rise and protest in an organized and constructive way. Do you think this era of – yes, alternative facts, but at the same time – mass accessibility of information can hasten people realizing their shoe is being bitten, even when they weren't aware before?

Castle: Lotsa luck on this. Most people really do assume that, as child bearers, women really are something of a public utility and in need of regulation. Why else would there be any discussion about how Roe v. Wade should be interpreted? What we need are new court challenges to Roe v. Wade that say it should be repealed and replaced with a ruling that says abortion is a medical matter to be handled by a woman and her doctor and is not the government's business. Let's have a major public discussion about women's bodily autonomy and why their bodies need government oversight.

(While I'm at it, let me note that I am also opposed to men being drafted into the military. The government does not own their bodies any more than it owns women's bodies. You get men to voluntarily agree to kill people and you get women to voluntarily agree to give birth or you do without.)

Jacobsen: For centuries, and now with mild pushback over decades, the religiously-based, often, bigotry and chauvinism against women, and ethnic and sexual minorities is more in the open, and so more possible to change. Because people know about it, and can't deny it. And when and if they do, the reasons seem paper thin and comical, at times. What expedites this process of everyone, finally, earning that coveted equality?

Castle: The mild pushback has come because more people are losing interest in religion, and religion has always been the driver of bigotry and prejudice. The loss of interest has come from Internet sources that expose the absurdities and failings of religion.

To expedite the process you change the laws. You change the laws by organizing for and electing legislators who support civil rights. Then you elect a President who will appoint judges who support those rights. Nothing changes if the laws don't change. The laws helped bring civil rights to the South because it gave pro-civil rights citizens the protection they needed to treat people with respect. We started getting civil rights by public agitation that led to legislation that led to court review and rulings that did or did not affirm those rights. One exception: We got women covered by the Civil Rights Act when "sex" was introduced into the language in the expectation that it would be seen as such a joke that the Act would be voted down, but it passed.

To get women out of the “public utility” category, we need to get the Equal Rights Amendment passed. That failed the first time precisely because opponents said it would give women the right to have abortions. What is about abortion that sets some people off so violently? None of them show any real practical interest in born babies. Why this obsession with controlling women? Something about species survival? So many men with so many zillions of sperm and frustrated by women’s limited ability to accommodate all that paternal potential? Who knows?

The only thing holding up equal rights for all is the Catholic and Protestant fundamentalist religions (and maybe also misogynistic Islam but we have to see how that immigrant population votes after being exposed to the relatively civilizing effect of living here). It’s always those religions that protest against women’s rights, gay rights, and that so ferociously supported slavery.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, Marie.

Conversation About Brazil on the Cruciality of Feminism

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 16, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, a colleague, and friend, Pamela Machado, discuss women's rights, feminism, and Brazil, and Latin America.

Pamela Machado is a contributor to Conatus News, and a journalist based in London, UK. She took some time to sit down and talk feminism and Brazil. Here is her thoughts, the second session of them. Session 1 can be found [here](#).

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Also, there's the impact of the stereotyping, as a defense mechanism against feminism, where we need to clarify terms before a discussion can be had with an opposing viewpoint. Again, as you know as well, it is more or less conscious and done to impart the image of a cranky woman feminist and an obsequious male feminist. I heard one stereotype from a Canadian academic of the "sneaky male feminist." The landscape of stereotyping is diversifying, but the purpose is consistent.

Pamela Machado: The woman feminist stereotype is a big problem in Brazil – they are popularly called "feminazis", and I see it as a perfect example of how careful we need to be when we attempt to teach ideologies to others. It seems a simple concept for us, educated and non-religious people, but the reality for the majority of people in developing economies is pretty different. Once again, I think we need empathy and understanding the story of communities.

Jacobsen: Let's simply clarify here, what does feminism mean here to you? Outside of the generic definition of social and legal equality of the sexes, something seen in John Stuart Mill with Classical Liberalism.

Machado: It is in essence social and legal equality of the sexes, but we need to understand that men and women do not function the same way. There are biological, neurological differences between them – just to name a few, which must not be ignored. Feminism is ultimately about freedom. Women deserve to be free to live their lives as they please – whether as a single professional, a housewife, married with no kids, and so on... A woman's life concerns no one but herself.

Jacobsen: Once in awhile, and sometimes often, the landscape of the experience of an activist becomes rather unpleasant and even possibly unbearable with the continual barbs at work, with colleagues, even outright in the public sphere, which can make adherence to the unpopular ideological stance for change to a more secular future in line with human and women's rights more likely to feel something that that activist wants to give up. It's tough, especially with most of the world adhering to the magical-mystical ideologies where women are not equal to men – and feminists are seen as threat number one. How do you push through these tough times, as a minority view and so as a minority activist?

Machado: That's an answer I don't think I have. We brace ourselves, right? If we look back in History, we see swings to the left, to the right, populism, fascism... So far, no ideology stays in

power forever. I would say that keep strong on your principles and hold on to the ones who share your values.

Jacobsen: Catholicism, as you described earlier in some detail, has cultural hegemony over Brazil, and so over the people of the country – even the irreligious conceptualizations that may not even have to be verbalized; things that are taken as first-person truths, but are not anything akin to that, where the truths about the ‘world’ are not in any way related to the real world, the natural world.

Christianity and Islam hold cultural hegemony over half of the world’s population, which is a staggering statistic and truth. That leaves me stunned in reflection on it, but it is true, well-documented, and important to know when considering the future of feminism in the international scene.

So going from the particular to the general here, from London and Brazil and Canada to the globe, the state for women in the developed world, which tends to be an admixture of Christian and secular, and the undeveloped or developing world, which tends to be an admixture of dictatorships and Islamically-run countries. These faith-based initiatives, as the Bush Jr. administration would call them, seem almost as if implacable barriers to the implementation of the secular ethic, international human and women’s rights.

Machado: I am not an academic or expert in the subject at all, but it seems to me that fighting for feminism goes beyond religion and secularism. There are plenty of awesome feminist Muslim women – and not only women, as well as there are Christian ones. The fight for gender equality should not impose that one gives up their faith – even if a more literal interpretation of their doctrine could imply that women and men do not enjoy the same privileges as individuals.

Jacobsen: What might the next wave of feminism or women’s rights campaigning and activism look like in the future?

Machado: One particular feminist issue in Brazil is the fight against the ‘culture of rape’ we live in. Almost every woman in the country knows has been through some kind of verbal sexual harassment. Men justify saying they intended to compliment when it truly is intimidating and grotesque. It almost became one of the slogans of a feminist campaign the statistic that there a one rape case in Brazil *every eleven minutes*, 47,000 cases in one year.

Therefore, I see the fight for women’s right closely tied in with cases of sexual violence and repression to media and public services that are not punishing aggressors.

70s Sex, Today's Sex, and Opting Out of Sex

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 17, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and friend, Rick Rosner, discuss mating strategies and dominance behaviors in human beings, and the dominance of sex in all we do.

Rick Rosner is a friend. We discuss a broad range of topics. One of interest is evolutionary theory and the implications for mating behavior. We aren't experts but are having a fun conversation between friends, and so decided to conduct some recorded sessions about this in a series on mating strategies. Here is session two, just for you.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Do you think there is an aspect of time perspective in this culture or cultures? Where if you look at the perspective of time that someone emphasizes – the past, present, and future do you think they're focusing on the present?

Rick Rosner: I'm not understanding entirely.

Jacobsen: If you look at rave culture, these are people experiencing the present in a hedonistic frame. There is a whole psychology of time perspective. If you look at the Gideos, the bros, the guys...

Rosner: ...I see what you're saying. As a successful species, one of the things we have to burn is time. There's an aspect of time consciousness – that we have time to burn on foolish, youthful lifestyles. No one plans on being a raver or a Guido forever, but, right now, it's fine.

The cost of time is fairly low. Colleges, to some extent, are holding pens of parties, (depending on which college and what people's goals are) – to some extent, you can see college as a way to reduce excess productivity.

For hundreds of years, we've experienced increasing productivity through industrialization and automation, To the extent that millions of people graduating high school don't join the workforce to personally survive or to help the nation survive.

Instead, they can spend four years or more learning further skills and/or partying in college, which is an indication that we have excess productivity and that colleges can be seen in some lights as sponges to soak up and squander excess productivity.

College gives many people a place to waste time. (It worked that way for me.) There are plenty of other activities in society that are time sucks that we get to engage in because we have time to spare. You can have entire lifestyles that are time sucks and time-wasters.

You can be a Guido and sow wild oats. And then get your shit together in your late 20s. It's the same with rave culture. Rave culture is outwardly about everybody being loose and free and at least temporarily not addressing the constraints and responsibilities of everyday life.

But behind that, it is still a demonstration of dominance and fitness. Ravers wear not much clothing. People who are in—

Rave culture is among other things, a competition to look sexually attractive. Take Coachella, which is southern California's biggest rave-type event. It's hot. It's in the desert. People wear

super-skimpy outfits. Despite being packaged as a place of freedom, Coachella is a place to display of sexual fitness.

If you ask most people attending a rave, hooking up will not be their number-one stated objective. Nevertheless, hooking up is a huge underlying theme.

Jacobsen: You see these play out in preferences of expression. [Laughing] That is a really abstract way of putting it. Men and their titles; women and their makeup. Typically, women will emphasize their looks; men will emphasize their status.

Also, there's denigration of competitors. Then there is denigration by men against other men's status, or women denigrating other women's beauty.

Rosner: You have straightforward strategies, then you get into ironic, less-straightforward hipster culture, where the criterion is authenticity, about living authentically. People riding antique bicycles, having old-timey facial hair, using old, artisanal technologies.

In hipness culture, you try to arrive at a state of hipness authentically, through having honest interests in throwback handcrafted culture as opposed to being a poser who's only interested in it because everyone else is interested.

Jacobsen: What about people on the fence who just want to fit in and so adapt to the culture or sub-culture?

Rosner: You can try to choose a culture. You can turn out to not be well-adapted to any niche. You can choose to opt out, and just be adversarial. The 2016 election included all sorts of adversarial groups, like the 4Chan groups, or Pepe the Frog people – people sharing intolerant messages, and a lot of the pro-Trump people – or the more visibly offensive pro-Trump people, or the alt-Right people. A lot of those people belong to cultures of opting out.

Guys who have given up on being popular and getting girlfriends. Lonely basement guys, trolls basically. Troll culture is an opting-out strategy.

Jacobsen: The trolls, the MGTOW, much of the men's movement...

Rosner: ...there are a lot of guys in those cultures who have decided it's not worth it for them to find a niche to compete to hook up with girls, and so they are going to stay on the sidelines and amuse themselves by trolling.

That points at masturbation culture.

Jacobsen: Which overlaps with porn culture.

Rosner: They're close to being the same thing, I think. Most everybody in the 21st century is still horny, as humans have always been. But it's easier than ever to relieve one's horniness without social contact. It's easier to get off without social contact.

So, you have people opting out and giving up on social contact, and giving up on productive, positive social contact altogether, and living lives that are pretty solitary except for online interactions. They can be hostile because they don't have to meet any societal standards to have orgasms.

A paradise of porn.

Sex Strategies in the Hipster Age

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 17, 2017

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Rick Rosner is a friend. We discuss a broad range of topics. One of interest is evolutionary theory and the implications for mating behavior. We aren't experts but are having a fun conversation between friends, and so decided to conduct some recorded sessions about this in a series on mating strategies. Here is session 3, just for you.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: There is a psychology of failure to adapt to these rapid changes with older men followed by younger men. It is the psychologizing it, or providing new diagnoses of it, with things like "Arousal Addictions." Have you heard of this?

Rick Rosner: No, but go ahead.

Jacobsen: It is not developing a tolerance and need more of the same substance, as with cocaine, for example, but need more of different varieties of a thing, and so arousal addictions. It would be something like "Pornography: Variations on a Theme, of Addiction."

What happens is you get a shot of dopamine in the reward system in the brain, in particular, the nucleus accumbens, it feels good.

Typically, what happens as you grow up is the prefrontal cortex, which is the house of executive function, allows you to plan, be conscientious, be moral, delay gratification, and so on, from which then once you accomplish these plans and delay this gratification, and succeed for the thing that was a later gratification, and so on, you get that shot of dopamine from the nucleus accumbens.

So, you have a system: planning ahead, delaying gratification from the prefrontal cortex for executive function, getting a reward – the nucleus accumbens activates and you feel good, so you value real-world context. You get the context. But with pornography and video games, you get the reward and no context.

Rosner: All of this stuff spreads across other parts of life. Trolls feel as though they won't get laid, but also a lot of them also feel as if there's no path to good employment. They feel as if there is no achievement path for sex, for work, and so that increases the alienation and the hostility.

Also, there are more paths to pretty high levels of easy gratification than there were 40 years ago. Entertainment is more entertaining, food tastes better now, I've said this before. In the 70s, many more things sucked and sex was definitely one of the best things to aspire to.

Now, there were so many other awesome things, more entertaining stuff in the world compared to the 70s. Sex doesn't have to be the main thing you aspire to – so that is, even more, the reason for trolls not to aspire.

Video game culture is about achieving gratification via entertainment rather than building a path to the future. I don't know whether gamers, if you survey them, view what they do as temporary, followed by grudgingly attempting to fit into the traditional adult world.

I mean, if you survey Guidos, I assume they'll say Guiding is a temporary thing they're doing while they can and eventually they'll settle down and get married. The people on *Jersey Shore* have settled down, have married and had kids. Snooki has written three books so far, maybe more, including one on parenting. Fucking Snooki, who used to pass out while pissing next to dumpsters, has written a bunch of books. So has her friend J-Woww, also a dumpster pisser.

Jacobsen: I do not have experience with dumpster pissing.

Rosner: When I wrote for late-night TV, I had to watch a lot of *Jersey Shore*. There's a lot of pissing by dumpsters because you're drunk and can't be bothered to go back inside the club.

I don't know whether trolls or what percent of them, consider trolling a temporary phase and then they'll take on some kind of adult role – will try to grow up.

Think You're Not Trying to Get Laid? Think Again

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 18, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and friend, Rick Rosner, discuss mating strategies and dominance behaviors in human beings, and the dominance of sex in all we do.

Rick Rosner is a friend. We discuss a broad range of topics. One of interest is evolutionary theory and the implications for mating behavior. We aren't experts but are having a fun conversation between friends, and so decided to conduct some recorded sessions about this in a series on mating strategies. Here is session four, just for you.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In the past, we talked about the differentiation between different partnership options, or not, in developing countries as technology causes a massive change in social and cultural life, and in political orientation.

What we're talking about now is sub-cultures that come somewhat out of 70s and 80s, and some new ones with regards to technology, that amounts to fringy outcroppings of what might come in different forms.

I mean, an alteration in the way people partner or don't, so I mean a greater variety in partnership expression.

So, guy culture, anti-social culture, or, the one that you were describing, the not quite anti-social but non-social bro culture – which may include little contact with women or society and not getting higher education and just dropping out, in addition to variations on that theme via becoming hooked on some form of electronic stimulation rather than engaging in moderate use.

What does this mean with regards to some of our older conversations about the broadening of the landscape? For example, we see much more acceptance of LGBTQ+, which opens the landscape for people to feel more comfortable in their own skin, and to partner-up in the ways that they would have otherwise if not for oppression or repression from society: covert and direct.

Rick Rosner: There are several things going on. Maybe we can find the main themes. For me, the main theme is that I grew up in the 1970s, which was a particularly sexual time. It was also a time that thought—the sexual attitudes of the 60s and 70s, during that time, were thought of being essential and more natural than the attitudes of any other time that came before.

Telling the Truth and Facing the Consequences

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 19, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, Imam Shaikh Mohammad Tawhidi, discuss being silenced, peace, media, and telling the truth and facing the consequences.

Imam Shaikh Mohammad Tawhidi is an Australian Shi'i Muslim. He is an author, creationist, educator, preacher, researcher, and thinker. He has Iraqi origin and was born in Qum, Iran. Here we discuss Islam and atheism, and media representation and being silenced.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: The first question: Why do you think you're being targeted?

Imam Shaikh Mohammad Tawhidi: I'm being silenced because my following grew 45,000 in 3 months and the radical Islamists are complaining. I was receiving an average of 20k views for my videos and over 7k comments. Facebook didn't even explain what's going on.

Jacobsen: What is the main message of peace? What are the some of the more prominent reasons youth become radicalized?

Tawhidi: My message on Facebook was exposing extremism in Islamic books. And youth are being radicalized because of the lack of condemnation of terrorism by Mosque preachers

Jacobsen: What does Facebook need to do to be welcoming to you? There are anti-Israel and Anti-Jew pages. They are not shut down. Atheist Republic was shut down. The Council of Ex-Muslims of North America was shut down. Now, you are shut down. What does this mean for atheists, and those that left the faith and are ordinary reformers within the faith?

Tawhidi: I was not made by Facebook. Therefore, my Facebook page being shut down doesn't slow me down, but it's affecting my audience who were on my page daily and it's hurting their feelings

Jacobsen: Why do you think atheist pages are taken down? Do you think atheists and peaceful Muslim s can unite against those trying to silence them and take them down?

Tawhidi: Yes, I have been calling for all Peaceful Muslims to unite with the West against Islamic radicals from their own faith.

Jacobsen: What have been effective tactics and communication channels – outside of Facebook – to get the message of unification against Islamic radicals out to the public?

Tawhidi: Gab, minds.com, Twitter, and national media

Jacobsen: What do you think of those trying to silence you?

Tawhidi: They're giving aid to radicals and slowing down the message of peace

Jacobsen: Even with their feelings hurt, and while the Facebook is down now – while you were a paying customer for promotions, where can people get in touch with you?

Tawhidi: Twitter: @imamofpeace.

Jacobsen: You have become big in the media, lately. Why do you think your message is resonating?

Tawhidi: Because people are attracted to the truth.

Jacobsen: Who are other, secular and religious, exemplars who are telling the truth?

Tawhidi: And they're realizing much of the attacks against me are not true. Many people are doing what they can but none of them are being censored like me

Jacobsen: What about the issue of fake reformers? What can be done about them? How can the West best help?

Tawhidi: Fake reformers are everywhere I have written an entire article about it on the [Huffington Post](#).

Jacobsen: Why can't people who disagree come and argue with you, rather than simply silence you?

Tawhidi: I have invited the Australian National Imams Council for a debate, however, there has been deafening silence from their behalf.

Jacobsen: [Atheist Republic](#) and [Council of Ex-Muslims of North America](#) were shut down too. You are a Muslim page. Why were you shut down now? What does this portend since this extends from the ex-Muslim and atheist community to the ordinary, peaceful Muslim community – through at least one of its leaders: you?

Tawhidi: It seems to me that Facebook does not want any voices opposing their agenda.

Jacobsen: What are the common tactics of the Islamic radicals?

Tawhidi: Mass reporting of pages they disagree with, and in return, Facebook's Automated system shuts down the page and blocks the administrative accounts from posting.

Jacobsen: Who are personal heroes or heroines for you?

Tawhidi: Imam Hussain.

Jacobsen: What are your favourite verses in the Quran?

Tawhidi: "And we created you as nations and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Verily the most honorable amongst you is the most pious".

Jacobsen: What do the Islamic radicals most often use to justify their ideology and actions?

Tawhidi: The corrupt teachings of Sahih Bukhari

Jacobsen: Why can't people who disagree come and argue with you, rather than simply silence you?

Tawhidi: Because I know their arguments and how to invalidate them.

Jacobsen: Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

Tawhidi: The dawn of freedom is near.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, Imam Tawhidi.

Skepticism, Humanism, Atheism, and Right Wing Upbringing

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 19, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and friend, a colleague, and guest, Angelos Sofocleous, discuss Sofocleous's background and upbringing and professional life.

Angelos Sofocleous is a friend and colleague. We write together a decent amount. I asked about an interview for an ebook, where we would discuss his background. I wanted to diversify the content of the e-book, free one, with not only the articles written with friends and colleagues but also interviews with the writers themselves. Here is Angelos.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: To begin, we have been writing partners. In fact, you've been one of my more prolific writing buddies, activist work, for about a year – coming into a year-and-a-half. It is cool because we're on almost opposite sides of the globe, but we work on common initiatives relatively consistently. I wanted to diversify some of the content of this volume with some more diverse interviews with people beginning their active careers. Their lives in other words, so here we are after you agreed to be a willing interviewee (victim). What was early childhood to college life like for you? Was there an activist background? How do you find the developments within the EU throughout your lifetime?

Angelos Sofocleous: Thank you for the opportunity, Scott. You are one of the most active, intelligent, and knowledgeable people I know. It is a joy to be able to work with you on a number of projects.

To begin, I have been through many phases of “metamorphoses” from early childhood to college life. I can think of periods in my life with which I have very little in common with the person I am now. From a very young age though, I always remember myself going through the encyclopedias in my grandma's house, trying to figure out what interests me; from biology to politics, from astronomy to philosophy. Soon, I found out that I was interested in one thing: Knowledge.

Luckily, I was a very introverted and shy child. This gave me the opportunity to be able to spend my time wisely on what regards social interactions while I very carefully allocated my (limited) energy on things that could benefit me. Hence, I spent a lot of time with myself. And I felt totally fine with it. I never get why people consider it weird for someone to stay at home on a Saturday night, or go to the movies by themselves, or pick a book and sit on a park's bench. I was thus involved in activities through which I would spend time having discussions with myself, exploring my mind, and writing down my ideas and thoughts.

Writing, o writing. I started my anonymous personal blog when I was 14, in which I still write 9 years later, although the person who started the blog is different from the one who still writes on it. Words in my mind have no voice, no physical expressions; they can only be expressed through writing, and this is what I did for most of my life. Had it not been for writing, my mind would be a chaotic mess of unstructured and unorganized thoughts, probably expressed in non-conventional ways. And I wouldn't like that. Writing, thus, saved my mind from going crazy. A

mind that cannot be expressed, either stops thinking or stops expressing itself. Both can lead to insanity.

The year when I started writing signified a turning point in my life. Growing up in a right-wing religious family, the opportunity arose through my teenage years, to revolt against what I had grown up with, and explore new ideas, while questioning my own, deeply held at that time, beliefs. I no more consider ‘belief’ to provide an appropriate basis on which to base arguments – What is needed is knowledge, and in case of knowledge is not possible (yet), one must suspend belief until there is appropriate and satisfactory evidence for knowledge. This is science.

Apart from some close friends, I was never able to discuss my atheistic and agnostic beliefs, as well as my opposition to religion and my endorsement of science, with my family or even at school. This is how it is growing up on a small island, with less than 1 million population, which claims to have one of the biggest percentages of religious followers in the European Union. My ‘teenage revolution’, then, was not verbal and not physical, it was mental.

That being said, my ‘activist’ background was limited to sharing my ideas, trying to encourage people through my writings and influence them, while I was doing the same with other people’s writings. No action out in the streets, no discussions outside social media, limited involvement in groups. I would not say, then, that I had any activist background when it comes to my teenage life unless you want to call writing a form of activism.

In any case, I drew myself more and more into skepticism, freethinking, and humanism, and tried to educate myself on these issues, waiting for the time when I would apply this knowledge into the world. This could not be done after high school though, as I had to spend two years doing mandatory military service. I will not waste much space here to talk about it, as it’s not worth it. I am ashamed of my country that treats its 18-year-olds in such a way, still having remnants of ‘hegemonic masculinity’. There is great potential for encouraging young people to develop themselves, and military service is definitely not a way to do this, at least in my country.

Things had changed, however, when I entered university. Having spent two years of physical and mental inactivity, I decided that it was time for me to become active. At the moment, I’m the president of two student societies, Durham Humanists, and Cypriot Society of Durham, while I’m a Sub-Editor at my university’s newspaper (Palatinate UK), a writer at ConatusNews.com, and a co-editor at Secular Nation magazine. I have also just published my second poetry collection. I am therefore active in writing again, this time having the opportunity to meet like-minded people and be active in groups, promoting campaigns and influencing students and the general public to a greater extent. I feel that most of the chains that held me back to my teenage years have broken, and I am now able to take action on the issues that concern me.

Now, moving onto your last question regarding the developments within the EU within my lifetime, I witnessed a major shift in Europe, from conservatism to liberalism and progressivism. Mutual respect and recognition of human rights across Europe, of course, need to take place at a personal level, within societies, but also at a national, and even pan-continental level.

This is what I feel the EU has achieved, bringing European countries closer to each other without erasing any aspect of their unique identities but, in contrast, managing to protect, secure, and enrich each nation’s identity through mutual recognition and respect for each other nation’s identity.

Onward With the Fight for Women's Rights, Right?

[Anya Overmann and Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 21, 2017

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is continuing the American tradition of fighting for women's reproductive rights with education and legal protection.

Anya Overmann and I came across this report on the Freedom From Religion Foundation and its efforts to protect reproductive rights and proper education. Just for you.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation announced the aim to combat another bill designed to attack women's reproductive rights (FFRF, 2017). It deals with abortion, which, to be fair, is a split issue among women, and the general populace, in the United States.

Based on research into the general public's views on abortion from 1995-2017, the Pew Research Center reports (circa 2017) that "57% say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, while 40% say it should be illegal in all or most cases" (Pew Research Center, 2017).

However, more than half of American adults do not take an "absolutist" view on abortion. They will be somewhere between most or some of the time in their views, whether pro-life or pro-choice. Note, the terms "pro-choice" and "pro-life" are not formal terms used in the Pew Research Center report, but seem implied to us.

This bill would essentially prevent OBGYN students at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health from training to perform abortions. It's not just discouraging women from getting abortions — it's cutting off access to abortions at the source.

The FFRF opposes this bill due to its perpetuation of the age-old attack on women's rights, as well as restricting the education of medical students at UW. There's absolutely no secular reasoning for passing a bill like this. All it does is simply reinforce the fact that in 2017 women's rights are in continued need of strong advocacy and implementation., and protection.

If this bill were to pass, it would set a legal precedent for the rest of the United States, which would open the doors for more significant regressive initiatives. Ultimately reversing not only women's rights, but scientific and medical progress as well, the FFRF is one of many organizations taking a stand – as they should.

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This Week In News, A Kevin and Benedict Story

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 22, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and friends, Kevin and Benedict, talk about their podcast, This Week in News with Kevin and Benedict (TWIN).

Kevin and Benedict are colleagues. We have written and worked together. They have a podcast called This Week in News with Kevin and Benedict. I like them. Here's their story. Kevin grew up in Sacramento California, where he conquered his enemies and saved the city from annihilation multiple times. He currently attends UC Berkeley as a Political Science major. He also worked as a heavy equipment mechanic for 5 years before college. He enjoys cigars, hockey (Go Sharks), politics, and saltwater fish tanks. Benedict is a Brit living in the US. Just for you, part 1.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wanted to interview each of you together because you're friends and do some decent work through a podcast. I wanted to explore some of that. You both agreed. What is your brief background?

Kevin: I first want talk about the statement where you said we are friends. We are acquaintances at best. How dare you put my name in with his, interview over!

Jacobsen: [Laughing]

Benedict: Now, we're going to answer your question. I am originally from the UK. I studied at Oxford University, Spanish and Portuguese. I decided I didn't want to do anything with that. I wanted to be a journalist or pundit, whatever I am now.

I have done a lot of writing for people for free to get my name out there. I stumbled upon Kevin. Now, we have a podcast. That's how we got there today.

Kevin: I am from Sacramento, California. I took two semesters of Spanish [Laughing]. I worked as a heavy equipment mechanic a few years after high school. I radically changed my life from being a Right-wing dirt bag to leaning heavily to the Left.

It was a dual change of coming to atheism and realizing everything I ever believed was basically wrong. I was re-examining things and searching for the truth. This brought me there. I was a mechanic for 5 years.

I went back to community college, then got into UC Berkeley, where I am now. Then all three of us were working for an outlet, writing online. We met through there. Benedict was doing a podcast there at the time. It was terrible, I must say. Your form was off.

For a quick moment, can I critique your old podcast?

Benedict: You can if you want.

Kevin: I always wanted to do a podcast, but it was a matter of finding a partner. It is a matter of British accents. I thought, "This is a perfect podcast partner, who can make me sound better."

Benedict: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Kevin, you noted the transition from a Right-wing social and political, and so cultural, perspective. Was it all-at-once or slow transition? What was the feeling?

Kevin: It wasn't all-at-once. It was a gradual thing. It started with some things I believed being chipped away at, starting with climate change. I was a climate change denier. People would introduce me to the facts.

It became more and more apparent that I am wrong here. That something else was going on here. In my mind, and the way I was raised, I had to look for myself and examine things. Once you can do that with one issue, it becomes easier with other things. It was looking at the bottom of it rather than what the Right-wing commentators had been saying all of my life such as the guy who ran *The Blaze*, Glenn Beck.

I had more Glenn Beck books that anyone should ever have. I had two.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Kevin: Five years ago, if Donald Trump ran for president, I would have voted for him. That's how far gone I was.

Jacobsen: What about you, Benedict?

Benedict: *I have left-wing tendencies growing up. I go through occasional center leaning wobbles, especially in high school. That kind of time because of the people I was surrounded by at the time. When I went to university, I solidified in left-wing and liberal thinking. At the same time, I came across atheism and being skeptical of stuff and trying to question everything.*

I do not think I have changed much. I haven't had a radical right-to-left swing like Kevin, but I have become more left-wing as I study politics more. Europeans tend to be more left-wing anyway, so definitely in the American sense – maybe for a European perspective too. If anything, I have become more left-wing with time, but probably more centrist than leftist.

Kevin: Was high school your Tory years?

Benedict: *Yes, when I write my autobiography, I will become famous and those will be the "Tory Years."*

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Kevin: You had a picture of Margaret Thatcher up on your wall.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Benedict: *Yes, it was when we went through the recession and had a left-wing government, so we felt there must have been some reason for this to be wrong and a change must be necessary away from the established way of thinking. But you could more left-wing than the Labour government had been to that point, I assumed the natural change was to be Right-wing.*

It wasn't necessarily the "Tory Years," but more like the "We need change" years – from the status quo. An obvious change at the time was to lean more Tory, though I don't think I'd agree with myself now.

Jacobsen: You founded TWIN or This Week in News with Kevin and Benedict. What was the inspiration for it?

Benedict: *I am a very grumpy person. I like to complain the news. I spend too much time thinking other people are dumb [Laughing].*

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Benedict: *We spend a lot of time critiquing the Trump administration because that's who is in power. I like to think we'd be critiquing whoever else might be in power. We simply have a lot more to talk about with the Trump administration because they are in power. Do you agree with that Kevin? We are both democrats, but we wouldn't not critique Democrats simply because they are of our party.*

Kevin: I asked, "What will we do when Donald Trump is out of office?" Well, then is the time to start looking at more of the mundane issues, I feel like right now we are in crisis mode. I feel there are many bad and dangerous things. It is important to focus on them. I believe other things are worth focusing on our side when our people do wrong, but there is a limited amount time. It is more important with constraints to focus on Donald Trump and the administration.

It is important to critique people on our side when it is appropriate. We do try to get those smaller stories and criticize people on our side when it is appropriate to do so. We made a point of critiquing Kathy Griffin, people on our side, and say stupid things. In the show recorded today, we talked about how the new Democratic Party slogan is stupid [Laughing]. It is not just news. We try to keep things light and entertaining too.

As a news consumer myself, I like nice and dense news, but I want it to be entertaining as well.

Leading Youth Humanist on Gender, Masculinity, and Femininity

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 24, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and friend, Marieke Prien, talk about humanism and the idea of gender roles, and gender in general, from a humanistic perspective.

Marieke Prien is the President of the International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organisation. I am in the Americas Working Group and an editor and contributor to its publication Humanist Voices. Here we discuss gender and sex.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Gender and sex get mixed up. What is sex, and gender, to you?

Marieke Prien: Just the regular definition: sex is something anatomical, gender is social and a personal identification. Unfortunately, many people do not make this distinction, even though not only does it make sense and is needed, it also makes it so much easier to understand people and their identity.

Jacobsen: You are the President of the International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organisation (IHEYO) of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). IHEYO is part of IHEU. Religions have ideals, archetypes, figures, gods, metaphors, allegories, to define gender. The roles, responsibilities, and rightness of an image for masculinity and femininity. Humanism may have them too, but do not have a text or holy scripture. Is there a conception of masculinity and femininity in humanism?

Prien: First I must make a distinction between gender and masculinity/femininity. Gender is an identity as described above. Masculinity/femininity are, in my understanding, terms used to say that something, like a character trait or facial feature, is “male” or “female”.

Regarding gender roles, my answer is that no, we don’t really have that. Humanism is about freedom, including that your way of life should not be restricted by guidelines and rules of society (as long as no one gets hurt, obviously). The humanist community is very diverse and everybody is encouraged to choose their role, choose how they want to live, and that nobody gets judged for that choice.

When it comes to masculinity and femininity, most of us probably have some concept of that and the opinions can differ. But I think you could say that these concepts just don’t mean so much, they don’t really matter. To use an obvious example, a woman is not expected to dress in a way that would be described as “feminine”. Obviously, people have different personal taste, but it is just that: a personal taste. Not a rule others need to follow.

Jacobsen: How much does this differ from religious definitions?

Prien: Most religious definitions are very strict in that they divide people into two sexes, equalize them with genders, and appoint roles to those groups. Women must do this, men must do that. If somebody does not live according to this, that’s frowned upon. I am not saying that all

religious people tightly follow that, but these are the rules stated in many scriptures, archetypes etc. as you mentioned before.

This division and appointment of roles are what does not happen in the humanist definition.

Jacobsen: If it does, should humanism even have conceptions of masculinity and femininity and good or bad versions of them?

Prien: This is a hard question for me because I am not sure of what to think of these conceptions. They don't make so much sense to me because I find it hard to make that distinction between masculine and feminine, and I don't really know what benefits people have from using these terms over others. To me they sound kind of harsh and as if things could be 100% male or 100% female, which they are not. But if we use the words in a different way, to express that, for example, something is more common in males, but recognizing that it doesn't mean it's wrong for a female to have that trait, then that's fine.

So I would say that we do not need the concepts, but I don't want to go so far as to say that we should actively get rid of them.

Jacobsen: How can a modern scientific view of sex and gender update our views, and so expectations about men and women – scientific because of the humanistic principles and values as the framework?

Prien: If we look at the distinction we made about sex and gender, and recognize that gender roles are for the most part a social construct, then what this view does is take away the expectations we have.

There are some differences between the sexes, simply because of the biology. But the important thing is that these differences don't exclusively define us, and they don't make one group better than another. They don't influence a person's rights and responsibilities and must not be allowed to dictate our ways of life – a maxim that we are still struggling to live by. We must look at the individual, not at the group we think this individual belongs to. And that's the humanist principle.

Get Involved via Social Interest Groups

The Good Men Project aims to reinvent media. Be part of it and try our Social Interest Groups.

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 26, 2017

Men and mental health, we is a guy supposed to find support? I think about the Social Interest Groups (SIGs) hosted by The Good Men Project. It is important to recognize the importance of consistent, regular, and deep conversations with people of like mind. A group based around men's mental health is one route.

Social Interest Groups (SIGs) are a place where people with similar interests, or intellectual engagements, social ties, and emotional commitments can virtually meet. The SIGs are an aspect of men having an outlet not only with other men but also with women on the same telephone line listening and commenting, which permits open expression and disarming discussions to emerge in an organic way.

If you haven't looked at the Social Interest Groups, I suggest looking into them. They give a way to open up. It also provides a channel for learning about concerns of other individuals and difficulties in their lives.

Those contexts and environments, and implied emotional commitments can over time show the common themes in the life of ordinary people working through problems current in their lives. Those current problems are not necessarily solved, or even sufficiently covered or spoken about at the moment.

However, there is a sense of feeling less bound by the moment and the constraints of time to reflect, consider, analyze, and come together in a community of people with like mind to provide not solace or solutions but mutual sympathy and solidarity.

I find them helpful for the realization of honest, open conversation, which modern television news channels do not necessarily provide. The morning news media is degenerative from prior standards. The 21st-century is a century of atomization, at least in the early 21st century.

The atomization of people probably makes them feel alone. The Good Men Project effort is to bring us together through channels. It is one way to broach uncommon subjects for more people, not necessarily topics new to the older generations. They had other problems.

But we modern people have our own as well, which are distinct but not less important than prior generations. In that light, I hope you take the time to join one of the social media interest groups of The Good Men Project.

Criticizing Islam, Becoming a ‘Criminal’, Being Tortured, and Leaving Islam

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 27, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and friend, Waleed Al-Husseini, the founder of the Council of Ex-Muslims of France, discuss Waleed's life and views.

Waleed Al-Husseini founded the Council of Ex-Muslims of France. He escaped the Palestinian Authority after torture and imprisonment in Palestine to Jordan and then France. He is an ex-Muslim and atheist. Here is an educational series on ex-Muslims in France, just for you, part 1.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How did they torture you in Palestine?

Waleed Al-Husseini: It was many ways. They were left me standing most of the day and only slept 2 hours with only one meal of food in the afternoon. Some standing on one leg while I'm up on my hands. Sometimes, they left me to stand on small bottles! After it, they made me run to not have marks cos of that. And some beating with electric things, this was 4-month from 10 months I spent in jail!

Jacobsen: What was the purported crime?

Al-Husseini: Insulting the feeling of Muslims, insulting the gods of religion, and making trouble in the society. It was a military court.

Jacobsen: What did you write about? Why were you such a threat with mere words?

Al-Husseini: I had my blog in Arabic, which was, in the beginning, questioning Islam and discussing the issues in the Quran, then I start crisis Islam and Quran and Mohammed's life and showing that Mohammed was just a man who lived his life in the 7th century like everyone, and showing that the Quran has nothing special in it. Quran is a product its time and era.

I explained my atheism, and why I'm atheist and why I left Islam.

Jacobsen: With the foundation of the Council of Ex-Muslims of France, what is the main value for the members there? How do you build ties with the international ex-Muslim community?

Al-Husseini: Our values are based on humanity, universalism, and the laïcité values. We are fighting for the right of non-believers and leaving Islam. We fight for women rights; we fight for the civil rights!

How we build ties in the conference, such as the one in London, through this, we make people feel not alone. We give them the power to contact us. For me, I am sure there is at least one ex-Muslim in every family!

But they can't speak in public because of the danger involved in it. I got arrested. Another got killed. Others still live hidden because someone will kill them. Others are waiting for one of these options.

Jacobsen: Is the problem inherent in the doctrine and principles, figures, and ideals of Islam, or in the surrounding culture, or something else, predominantly?

Al-Husseini: The problem is Islam, even most values in the culture come from Islam. I don't mean political Islam, Wahhabism or whatever you wish to call it. I mean Islam itself, from the Quran and Mohammed's life.

Jacobsen: What do those that have not been in the situations you and countless others have been in not get? Why is it crucial for them to understand this?

Al-Husseini: These people only who live in Europe or America. Often, they have never been Muslims. That is why they will never understand it. Even the situation of ex-Muslims, if you told them about this person was killed and another was arrested, they will answer it's not Islam instead it's the government. They will assert it is a special case!

These people have little knowledge about Islam and what it is. They just know about Islam and what they hear from their close friends!

Some of them are blind!

Jacobsen: Thank you for taking the time once more, Waleed, always a pleasure, my friend.

Karen Loethen, Secular Parenting, Australia, Brazil, and Being an Atheist Parent

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 30, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, Karen Loethen, discuss atheism, secular parenting, and the considerations in becoming a parent in a secular environment.

Karen Loethen comes from the Midwest of America. Now, she lives in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia – say it with the accent in your head. She is an open and happy – nay joyous – atheist. She writes, and has for some time. Her core belief, as an optimist, is in the inherent goodness of all people. She has two children and an amazing husband. I asked about interviewing her on atheist parenting, but chose “Secular Parenting” for a more “inclusive” (as they say nowadays) title. So here we are, part 1, just for you.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Was the move to Australia a decision with the children in mind? Why there over the Midwest, or elsewhere, in any case?

Karen Loethen: Actually, Scott, we no longer live in Australia. We lived in Brisbane Queensland Australia for a year and a half for my husband’s work. We were SO fortunate to have the opportunity to take the kids there and set up a household. It was wonderful and we miss it every day. Our decision to move the kids (ages 14 and 11 at the time) was actually a very, very easy one to make at the time.

As homeschoolers, we are exceedingly free with our schedule and living arrangements. Being in Australia was a phenomenal life lesson for all of us. We also had the chance to move to Brazil at about the same time. We decided to go to Brisbane for several reasons, not the least of which was an opportunity to see an eclipse. There was an eclipse in 2014 and we were able to be in Cairns QLD for the occasion. In fact, astronomy was a huge draw for us to go to the Southern Hemisphere. Lol

But we would definitely have chosen the move to Brisbane for many other reasons had we known better at the time. The secular vibe of Brisbane was wonderfully freeing. We are a homeschooling family and are quite used to being in groups of religious families. While in Brisbane I can honestly say that I don’t even know the religious bent of many of the families we befriended. Religion is simply not a public issue there.

We are now back in the Midwest and happy to be here. We have a new grandchild in the family and she will keep us firmly rooted here in the Midwest!

Jacobsen: What are some bigger differences between atheist, or secular, and religious parenting?

Loethen: Actually the intro is very wrong about this one too...sorry. I definitely prefer the label Atheist Parent over any other descriptor. Many people bristle over the use of the term atheist; I do not. I embrace it loudly and proudly. In fact, secular means activity without religion so many parents consider themselves secular while actually believing in a higher power. So, verbiage notwithstanding, the differences are massive!

I couldn't and wouldn't attempt to characterize the labels you have asked about because, were I to do that, about a million people would find fault with the definitions and say That isn't me! So I will try to answer you with the understanding that the word some remind us that there is no way to characterize people; there is no black and white, but many shades of grey. My responses below come from my own experiences and from real people and situations that I have encountered, in general, with an effort to portray each group honestly and with an effort to avoid extremism in my answers.

In general, though, some religious parents look to their religious texts for guidance in childrearing and sometimes this includes being pro corporal punishment for children, maintaining anti-LGBTQ philosophies, incredibly messed up ideas of healthy sexuality and relationships, teaching of mythology as fact, fear of free thought and intellectualism, and many other points that I find reprehensible.

My personal experience of being in this position is that religions offer a very black-and-white way of looking at the issues of humanity, of not allowing for the many different shades of grey. Of course, there are those religious parents who do not fit into this slice of a definition. Some religious parents are sadly motivated by fear. Fear of offending their deity, fear of losing the blessings of their church or religious community, fear of disapproving family members, and fear of operating outside of an approved, narrow margin of lifestyle, thought, and deed.

Some people who attempt to practice a secular parenting style seek to raise children within the religion and belief system of their choice while being less connected to the doctrine of that religion that troubles them. I would assume that these parents feel a greater sense of freedom to reject troublesome parts of their inherited religion while still embracing the warm feelings that can come from religious belief.

As for atheist parents, I would assume that some of these folks are able to consider each issue independently and come up with a preferred sense of personal integrity and choice. With no institutional connection or alliance, freethinking parents have the freedom, the responsibility to fully explore life issues and making decisions and choices that make the most sense for their families, embracing and celebrating the wonderful shades of gray, and other colors, in the world. Of course, these parents often have to eschew popular approval and/or familial connection for choosing to live outside of the popular mythology.

Jacobsen: What are some smaller differences between secular and religious parenting?

Loethen: Again, acknowledging the many, many parenting styles in the world, my guess would be that the day-to-day prayer, seeking of blessings, belief that a deity is real and involved in life, etc...these things are usually a normal part of a religious family's life. Books read, conversations had, people chose to be in their circle, the level of freedom to explore ideas outside of their comfort zone...these kinds of things seem to be a few of the places I can come up with this moment where secular families differ from atheist families.

Karen Loethen, Parenting Style, Non-Negotiables, and Secondary Characteristics

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

July 30, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, Karen Loethen, discuss atheism, secular parenting, and the considerations in becoming a parent in a secular environment.

Karen Loethen comes from the Midwest of America. She is an open and happy – nay joyous – atheist. She writes, and has for some time. Her core belief, as an optimist, is in the inherent goodness of all people. She has two children and an amazing husband. I asked about interviewing her on atheist parenting, but chose “Secular Parenting” for a more “inclusive” (as they say nowadays) title. So here we are, part 2, just for you.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What are the main concerns regarding parenting style (authoritative, for example) when raising children?

Karen Loethen: Gosh, you’re not asking much, are you, Scott?!

I’m sure the internet has tons of great websites that discuss these styles of childrearing, but I’m happy to give some general concerns for each for you. In psychology, there are four major styles of parenting: authoritative, permissive, neglectful or uninvolved, authoritarian. These four parenting styles represent differing amounts of two major dimensions of parenting: the amount of responsiveness that a parent has to a child’s needs and behaviors, and the amount of control a parent seeks to extend to their child’s behaviors and choices.

Allow me to give you a brief rundown of each of the four styles beginning with authoritarian. As the name suggests, this parent insists on high levels of control and excessively low levels of response to a child’s needs and wants. This parent is often quite strict, has high expectations of their children, and an inflexible set of rules that the child is expected to follow.

Not surprisingly, children of these parents often experience depression, anxiety, difficulty making decisions, secret lives, difficulty making strong relationships, and a myriad of other problems that make emotional maturity a difficult thing to attain. Authoritarian parents, while intending to raise children that reflect well on the parents, sadly can pass along even more serious outcomes like substance abuse, emotional abuse, and unlawful behaviors of many kinds.

Unresponsive parenting might have a goal of raising highly independent children, or it may simply reflect a parent’s inability to raise children with their display of low levels of personal and familial control and low levels of responsiveness to the needs of their children.

This neglectful style of parenting can sadly raise children who have no skill in decision making, in learning to control personal behavior, in understanding what it means to be independent and mature. The children of these parents might be victims of major depression, suicidal feelings, personality disorders of all kinds, substance abuse, confusion about healthy and normal behavior in society, and unable to form close, healthy relationships.

Permissive parenting is when parents respond with low levels of control to their children and with high levels of responsiveness. These parents, probably with the thought that they were giving their children freedom and autonomy, actually neglect to give children something that they desperately need: parents who expect basic rules to be followed in the family, essential schedules, reasonable expectations, necessary limits, and logical consequences.

The absence of these parenting essentials create children with oddly egotistical views of the world or children with extreme lack of a sense of self. These children will struggle to form healthy relationships, will indulge themselves while being unable to make healthy, smart decisions necessary for independence, and an overall absence of a basic understanding of social and community living.

The healthiest style of parenting is considered to be authoritative. These parents tend to display medium levels of control, a level that allows for learning and growth, and a warm and responsive atmosphere. Family rules are clear and understandable, parents expect good things from and for their children, and children are supported while being encouraged to be independent.

Children from these parents will often have higher levels of self-esteem because they have been taught how to operate optimally with regards to their own strengths and growth areas. These fortunate children are better able to form warm, lasting relationships and are generally productive members of society.

Jacobsen: Does choice in partner make all the difference in the world? From the perspective of a woman looking for a partner to having, bear, and raise children, what are the characteristics to look for, first the necessities or non-negotiables?

Loethen: Nah. LOL. Of course. Choosing a life partner is one of the most important and difficult decisions a human being will ever have to make. Depending on one's parents' styles of parenting, adults looking for life partners might be sadly attracted to immature partners, abusive partners, unhealthy partners of many kinds. I strongly believe that both men and women looking for partners need, always, to work to develop their own healthiest self first. The process of becoming emotionally healthier, working to gain

Choosing a life partner is one of the most important and difficult decisions a human being will ever have to make. Depending on one's parents' styles of parenting, adults looking for life partners might be sadly attracted to immature partners, abusive partners, unhealthy partners of many kinds. I strongly believe that both men and women looking for partners need, always, to work to develop their own healthiest self first.

The process of becoming emotionally healthier, working to gain self actualization, sets human being up to make healthier choices in their lives like choosing healthy partners, making smart financial decisions, becoming independent and interdependent, and many other growth qualities that ensure better decision making.

What qualities might one look for? Someone working on their own sense of self, someone seeking to improve themselves, someone who recognizes the necessity of fiscal conservatism, someone with interests and hobbies, someone who shares a similar philosophy to you, someone warm, someone who laughs, someone compassionate, someone who likes you back.

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someone who shares a similar philosophy to you, someone warm, someone who laughs, someone compassionate, someone who likes you back.

Jacobsen: What are some of the secondary characteristics and attributes the partner must have when considering a partner for parenting with you?

Loethen: It's extra nice when they are your best friend, when they are kind to strangers, when they love their family...

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time today, Karen – looking forward to next session.

Loethen: Next session? What have you got in mind, Scott? LOL

Alex Betsos, Harm Reduction from British Columbia through Canada

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 1, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and friend and colleague, Alex Betsos, discuss harm reduction in British Columbia and Canada, as well as Karmik and CSSDP.

Alex Betsos is a friend, and colleague through Karmik and Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy, where I am a Member-at-Large for Outreach and Alex is an International Representative on the Board of Directors. Here is an interview with Alex about harm reduction, an educational interview. I trust this helps.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: We met a few months back, last year in fact. Gonzo Nieto, who is a prominent – lots of press in the Canadian news – and well-spoken member of the community, recommended you to me.

You and I had some time, a few months back, to discuss harm reduction and the national organization of students for harm reduction and “sensible drug policy,” called Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP).

You work for Karmik, which is a west coast harm reduction initiative. You’ve been deeply involved with the CSSDP and Karmik, and harm reduction in Canada as a whole. That is our background together.

We conducted a short interview, which didn’t cover enough of your expertise a few months ago. So here we are, and I apologize for having to ask this, but it is an educational interview, what is harm reduction?

Alex Betsos: Harm reduction, in its most basic form, is an acknowledgment that life contains risks, and in order to lessen the likelihood of risks, we take certain precautions. Looking both ways when crossing the street or putting on a helmet are all harm reduction tactics.

Jacobsen: How does harm reduction, as a philosophy, influence Canadian drug policy?

Betsos: Harm reduction offers opportunities in Canadian drug policy, but it’s always a bit tenuous. We’re fortunate to have a government right now that acknowledges the importance of harm reduction even though sometimes it’s just lip-service. It’s important to note that harm reduction in Canada is frequently couched in the four pillars model, which allows parliamentarians to continue prohibitionist thinking with certain appeasements to harm reduction practices and ethos.

Jacobsen: With the National Anti-Drug Strategy of the Harper, launched in 2006, renewed in 2012 and 2014, the emphasis appeared to be more on enforcement. What is the evidence?

We need enforcement, but we need treatment and prevention. The previous Prime Minister Harper said, “If you’re addicted to drugs, we’ll help you, but if you deal drugs, we’ll punish you.” What is the ideal apportioning of funding for the substance use and misuse (or abuse) in Canada?

Betsos: First, the question assumes that keeping drugs illegal is a desirable thing. Ideally, enforcement would be downplayed, and some adaptation of a public health approach to drug distribution would be the real step.

If we have to keep some prohibitionist model, putting resources into harm reduction and treatment would be more useful allocations of this money, and to some degree prevention, however, I would point out that harm reduction can encompass part of prevention.

Jacobsen: What are some of the main organizations, and their mandates, for harm reduction in BC?

Betsos: There are lots. Each region has its own health authority, and within that, there are a variety of harm reduction organizations.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the time, my friend – take care.

Armin Navabi, Mother Mary versus Fatimah

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 5, 2017

Scott Douglas Jacobsen and guest, Armin Navabi, discuss the Abrahamic faiths' male and female figures.

Armin Navabi is the Founder of the Atheist Republic. One of the most popular pages on Facebook for atheists that faced repeated censorship and shutdown from Facebook authorities. He was born in Tehran, Iran, and raised as a Muslim. Now, he is a former Muslim and an atheist living in Vancouver, British Columbia. Here we explore, in an educational series, the figures in the Abrahamic faiths from the view of a leading former Muslim, this is session 2. Session 1 [here](#).

Audio interview edited for clarity and readability.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Why are you comparing Islam and Christianity?

Armin Navabi: *Because I see the similarity in the difference of between Sunnis and Shias are like Protestants and Catholics.*

Catholics added Mother Mary as a divine figure. Shias added another female figure, which is Muhammad's daughter Fatimah. Sunnis have a highly revered female figure, which is the favorite wife of Muhammad named Aishah.

They have given her this very high title of "Mother of the Faithful." They revere her, but not as much as Shias revere Fatimah. Shias consider Aishah with disgust and hate, sometimes, because she waged war against the first Imam, Imam Ali.

So, Aishah is a high figure in Sunni Islam. Fatimah is not only holy, but infallible too, and a role model for all women in Shia Islam. Fatimah is someone people even pray to. When many Shias standing from a sitting position or trying to pick up something heavy, they often ask for help or strength from these Imams by calling out their name. This is offensive to many Sunnis, which see these prayers or worship of dead people rather than almighty God.

I always saw Sunni Islam as obsessed with victory, power, and conquest. Sunni Islam seems a lot more macho and masculine. Shia Islam is obsessed with being a victim and being oppressed. A lot of focus on female figures in Shia Islam. I felt Shia Islam was more feminine and Sunni Islam was more masculine.

Another point of conflict between Shias and Sunnis is that fact that the second Khalifa of the Sunnis, Umar, unintentionally caused Fatimah's miscarriage and eventual death. To Sunnis, he was this macho man warrior who leads the Islamic army to many victories.

This is the person who took Islam from Saudi Arabia and conquered many lands for Islam, which includes Iran. It is not a center of Shia Islam, which is another reason why many Shias hate Umar.

When Ali refused to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr, the first Sunni Khalifa, Umar was the one who showed up at Ali's door and slammed the door open. Fatimah was behind it and pregnant

with Ali's third son, who died from this incident. Fatimah died awhile after this. That is another reason Umar is hated by Shias.

If you ask Shias if what they're doing is considered worship of Fatimah, Ali, or Husain, they'll say, "No, worship is only for God." But if you observe how they pray to these Imams and other figures, you could see why Sunnis might consider it worship. Many Shias mention Ali, Husain, and Fatimah more than they mention Muhammad and Allah.

For example, many Shias consider the dust from Karbala to be holy. Karbala is where Husain, the third imam of Shias, died. It is interesting that I noticed people in Iran bring the dust from Karbala and they consider it holy but have never brought dust from Mecca as a souvenir which might say something about their priorities.

Geoff Speakman, Atheist Republic Brisbane Consulate

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 10, 2017

The Atheist Republic is the largest public atheist Facebook page. Here is the Atheist Republic Brisbane Consulate.

The Atheist Republic (Twitter, Facebook, and website) is the largest public atheist Facebook page. The page has more than 1.7 million likes, which makes the Atheist Republic the most popular atheist community on any social network. The Atheist Republic has consulates throughout the globe in the major cities of the world. Its founder, Armin Navabi, is a friend and colleague. Here is the series of interviews with the consulates of the Atheist Republic: Atheist Republic Brisbane Consulate.

Audio interview edited for clarity and readability.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Was there a background in atheism, familially?

Geoff Speakman: My parents never spoke either for or against religion. I formed my own opinions about religion and the existence of gods.

Jacobsen: Within that family background, was there a surrounding culture that brought forth a critical mindset towards religion? If so, how? If not, why not?

Speakman: Not really. Mine was a normal childhood minus religion. We were migrants who came from England to Australia, which may have insulated me from cultural and family ties to religion.

Jacobsen: Through these threads of family and surrounding culture, what made for the pivotal moments in development as an atheist?

Speakman: There was no pivotal moment. I have always been free of religious indoctrination.

Jacobsen: Also, “a-” as a prefix in atheism means many things because it is both denial and affirmation. What is affirmed there to you? What is denied to you?

Speakman: I have chosen the description “atheist” to best describe my nonbelief in religious teaching. I am considering changing my description to “anti-theist” due to the bloodshed that religious division causes worldwide.

Jacobsen: How did you find the Atheist Republic? What do you do for them? What are your tasks and responsibilities?

Speakman: I came across the Atheist Republic on Facebook. I was asked by them to be an administrator of the Brisbane Consulate where I approve applications to join and keep a watch for hateful or bigoted posts.

Jacobsen: How does an Atheist Republic consulate work? What are its daily operations? How do you make sure the operations function smoothly?

Speakman: The Atheist Republic is simply a Facebook group of like-minded people worldwide.

Jacobsen: Why volunteer for them? What meaning comes from it?

Speakman: I volunteered because I believe that communication and the sharing of ideas are the way to overcome division, mistrust, and conflict. The internet provides such communication. The internet is a revolution that will unite the people of the world.

Jacobsen: How does the Atheist Republic, in your own experience and in conversing with others, give back to the atheist community and provide a platform for them – even to simply vent from social and political conventions that hold them either in contempt or in begrudging silence for fear of loss of life quality?

Speakman: The Atheist Republic provides a place where atheists can find each other, have a feeling of belonging and organize themselves.

Jacobsen: What do you hope for the future of atheism? What are the movements next steps?

Speakman: Ideally the internet will expose theists to ideas that will convert them into rational, peace loving citizens. I hope that United Atheist Republic Consulates can assist in bringing about peace in the world.

Jacobsen: Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

Speakman: These are critical times for the future of our planet and for mankind. Tough decisions need to be made regarding stabilizing human population and preserving our environment. Theists must realize that the future of our planet is not in the hands of gods and that they must take responsibility for the making of their own future.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, Geoff.

Speakman: You're welcome.

Claire Saenz, Looking in the ‘Mirror’ and Seeing the Self

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 11, 2017

Claire Saenz is a SMART Recovery Facilitator for SMART Recovery. In this series, we look at her story, views, and expertise regarding addiction.

Claire Saenz is a SMART Recovery Facilitator for SMART Recovery. It is an addiction recovery service without a necessary reference to a higher power or incorporation of a faith, or some faith-based system into it – by necessity. Those can be used it, but they are not necessities. The system is about options. In this series, we look at her story, views, and expertise regarding addiction, having been an addict herself. This is session 1.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When it comes to the experience of addiction, what were your addiction and particular substance of choice?

Claire Saenz: My substance of choice was alcohol, which was coupled with an eating disorder and an anxiety disorder.

Jacobsen: What were the thoughts that ran through your mind as you were working to combat the addiction, to stop using the substance(s)?

Saenz: I was highly motivated when I decided to stop drinking, so my primary thought, initially, was that I was going to quit or die trying. I felt determined, but also extremely vulnerable because giving up alcohol meant that in many essential ways, I was giving up my sole coping mechanism.

Jacobsen: How did SMART Recovery compare to other services?

Saenz: Other services I used in my recovery were AA, individual therapy, and pharmaceutical treatment of my anxiety. I found SMART similar to AA in that it is also a peer support group. I found the social support aspect of both programs helpful. SMART was drastically different from AA in almost all other respects, however, and much more like the individual therapy I received.

SMART’s philosophy is one of personal empowerment rather than reliance on a “higher power”. The use of stigmatizing labels such as “alcoholic” or “addict” is discouraged. Direct discussion (“cross-talk”) among group participants is encouraged. Sponsorship is not part of the program. Group facilitators are not professionals, but they are trained in the SMART tools and meeting facilitation skills, and they are expected to adhere to a code of ethics.

Finally, SMART recognizes that recovery, while a process, is not necessarily a permanent one. While participants are encouraged to attend meetings for a significant time period and to become facilitators to pay it forward, we do not view recovery as being a permanent state. Instead, we achieve a new normal.

Jacobsen: What were some of the more drastic stories that you have heard of in your time as an addict, as a recovering addict, and now as a SMART Recovery facilitator?

Saenz: For the reasons mentioned above, I don't refer to myself as an addict or alcoholic, "recovering" or otherwise. If a label must be applied to my state, call me a person who has recovered from an addiction to alcohol.

As far as drastic stories, they fall into two categories: the carnage of addiction itself, and the carnage of one-size-fits-all addiction treatment where the "one size" is the twelve- step approach.

The carnage of addiction is simply limitless. I have lost dozens of friends and acquaintances to addiction-related causes, from organ failure to overdose, to suicide.

At one of my first AA meetings, I spent a few minutes talking to a nice young man who went home that night and hung himself. I know multiple people who have lost spouses and children to addiction. It is a dreadful condition that takes the lives of fine people, and the solutions we currently offer, as a society, are breathtakingly inadequate.

In terms of the consequences of one-size-fits-all treatment, it should come as no surprise that in a world of individuals, there will never be an approach to any physical or mental condition that will work the same way, or as well, for everyone. And yet for years, we have prescribed the exact same treatment to everyone with an addictive disorder.

Worse, what passes for treatment is often nothing more than expensive indoctrination into a free support group (12 step programs, themselves, are free)—and if the patient fails to improve, the prescription is...more 12 step. Of course, this isn't working. The shocking thing is that we would ever expect it to work.

Jacobsen: How has religion infiltrated the recovery and addiction services world? Is this good or bad? How so?

Saenz: Twelve-step programs, which form the basis of most "traditional" treatment, are religious in nature. Adherents sometimes claim otherwise, but courts in the U.S. have nearly universally disagreed on that point.

As one jurist put it, ""The emphasis placed on God, spirituality, and faith in a 'higher power' by twelve-step programs such as A.A. or N.A. clearly supports a determination that the underlying basis of these programs is religious and that participation in such programs constitutes a religious exercise. It is an inescapable conclusion that coerced attendance at such programs, therefore, violates the Establishment Clause." Warburton v. Underwood, 2 F.Supp.2d 306, 318 (W.D.N.Y.1998).

Because they are religious in nature, such programs may not be the best choice for, and certainly should not be the only option given to, atheists or individuals with an internal locus of control.

Beyond that, the religious atmosphere of the programs can, and sometimes does breed an environment where seasoned members of the program become almost like "gurus", given an almost clergy-like status and an inordinate amount of power over newer and more vulnerable members. Sometimes this power is used to exploit. The classic exploitation is sexual—"13th stepping" is a common euphemism used to describe the practice of veteran members manipulating newcomers into engaging in sexual relationships—but emotional and financial exploitation can happen as well.

But the most tragic consequence of the infiltration of religion into addiction treatment is not, in my view, the "religious" aspect per se but the fact that the focus on that approach excludes all

others. The real tragedy is that people are dying because they are never even told of other approaches that might help them.

In my own experience, 19 years ago when I sought treatment for my addiction to alcohol, I was told that the only option for survival was to become an active AA member. Being the rule follower I am, I did exactly that. I spent the next nine years of my life going to AA meetings and attempting to fit my fundamentally humanist worldview within the confines of that program.

I eventually found this impossible and left the program. In the aftermath of that, I had to re-examine every thought and belief I had developed in the time I had been abstinent to determine whether those thoughts and beliefs were my own or had been implanted during my AA years. I found this an extraordinarily painful process, in many ways as painful as quitting in the first place.

When I found SMART Recovery and realized that it had been possible, all along, for me to have received social support in a manner that honored who I was a person, I cried. I thought not only of myself and all the pain I'd gone through because I wasn't told of other options besides AA but of all the others who had experienced the same thing.

This would be equally true regardless of the specifics of the treatment being offered because there is no one approach that is right for everyone. The real tragedy is the pain that has been caused, and the lives that have been lost, because one approach has become too dominant.

Helen Pluckrose, Windows and Mirrors – Views from the Outside In

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 14, 2017

Colleague Helen Pluckrose from Conatus News discusses The Good Men Project from the outside and some of her own work in the writing world.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wanted to interview you because you're a colleague. I haven't set aside enough time to interact with you, so here's my lucky break! Also, you mentioned having a different view, potentially, than the general "ethos" of The Good Men Project. How might your views differ, socially and politically?

Helen Pluckrose: Hi! Nice to chat with you. I am not sure of the extent to which my views differ from the general ethos of The Good Men Project but have caught pieces every now and then which seem to share talking points I have concerns about within intersectional feminism.

For example, a look at trending articles right now reveals 'Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person' and 'Confessions of a Privileged White Male and Former Conservative.'

I am skeptical of approaches to social justice which focus on systems of privilege favoring dominant groups rather than prejudice and discrimination affecting minorities. This is often regarded as a kind of 'original sin' based on identity and used to perpetuate the root problem of prejudice and discrimination: judging people by their gender, race or sexuality rather than their values and behavior.

It shifts the focus to the groups least affected by prejudice and regards their greater access to rights and opportunities as an unjust privilege rather than focusing on groups which are disadvantaged and regarding this as a denial of basic equality needing to be fixed. As a universal liberal and humanist, I see more worth in focusing attention and compassion on those who are disadvantaged than shame and censure on those who are not.

I also find the systems of privilege approach to be reductionist and require many generalisations and forcing people into categories. Although the concept of intersectionality intended to overcome such reductionism and show that oppression can be complex and multi-faceted, in practice it often doesn't because it neglects class unless accompanied by another form of marginalised identity and assumes that men are consistently privileged over women in a way that can only be supported by reading society through an ideological lens and applying much confirmation bias.

I support efforts to address areas in which men are disadvantaged – the right to genital integrity, unequal custody norms, unequal sentencing, neglect of provision for male victims of violence and a failure to address gender gaps in education, homelessness and suicide – but find that the men's rights' activism can also be highly biased and ideological.

I favor an approach to thinking about ethics in the realm of gender which is strongly humanist and liberal, and which values men and women as humans, as equals and as men and women facing different challenges due to biological and cultural differences.

Jacobsen: What are some important messages that those in The Good Men Project may not necessarily take into full account when considering their own political and social views, as someone with a degree of objectivity looking from the outside in? I am fascinated to know because I wouldn't necessarily know as I am in the 'water' so to speak.

Pluckrose: I wouldn't like to generalize as you have so many writers and they surely have a range of views. I recognize that The Good Men Project is neither men's rights' activism nor feminism but an exploration by men of the experience of being a man and trying to be a good one in the 21st-century society. I think free-ranging discussion of how to be a good man is a great idea in the same way as discussion of how to be a good woman would be because, although it is most important to be a good person, men and women are not identical physically, cognitively or psychologically and they do not face identical challenges in society.

I would simply hope that the overall ethos would be positive about the inherent worth of men, their contributions to society and the nature of masculinity.

I may be biased by my close connection with feminism but my experience of liberals addressing the topic of masculinity or manhood in an ethical sense is that too many see it as a problem to be fixed or restrained or detoxified.

They also tend to look at it in a way which centers men's relationships with women rather than men's own needs and experiences due to a feeling that these have been centered for too long which I'm not sure is true. Of course, this need not be the case at all.

Explorations of what it is to be a good man can be done unapologetically in a positive and practical way which does not devolve into the pathologisation of masculinity. It need not neglect to appreciate the positive qualities more typical of the male psychology nor prize them above those more typical of the female.

Also among the currently trending articles of The Good Men Project are 'Why Does Stress Cause More Depression in Men Than in Women?' and 'Nobody Gets to Tell My Sons What It Means to Be a Man' which I found to be both male-centred and positive.

Jacobsen: What are your favorite topics to write on? Can you link to some examples?

Pluckrose: Academically, I write mostly about late medieval and early modern religious writing by and for women. I am interested in the way that women negotiated authority and autonomy for themselves using religion within patriarchal societies which denied them both.

My popular writing on contemporary issues have included advocacy of secularism and skepticism, critiques of postmodernism and intersectional feminism, dissections of common flaws of critical thinking and analyses of how to fix the problems within the political left and thus strengthen it. The common thread linking these is my interest in ideology and the ways that people think and have thought, particularly on the subjects of religion and gender.

Jacobsen: We both contribute to Conatus News. What seems like its core message to you? Why did you start writing for them? How did you find them?

Pluckrose: I like Conatus News because of its positioning within the political sphere. With its core definition of 'progressive' and its commitment to secularism and human rights and its opposition to regressive, identitarian, postmodern politics, it is open to contributions from everyone from liberal centrists, liberal lefties, libertarian lefties, radical lefties, socialists, radical feminists and centre-rightists with liberal aims. This gives it both coherence and diversity within

a leftist, progressive ethos quite different to the culturally-relative postmodern left. As a liberal centre-leftie, non-feminist supporter of gender equality who favours a mixed economy, I have strong differences with the radical writers, both feminist and economic but we tolerate these differences well and still find common cause where we can.

Outside of Conatus News, my readers are often centrists and much of my writing focuses on the problems within the left that I want to fix, so it is valuable to have a platform which appeals mostly to leftists. I found Conatus when Terry Murray, the feminist writer contacted me to invite me to the 'Defending Progressivism' conference, for which I am very grateful.

Jacobsen: Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?

Pluckrose: No, I don't think so. I will certainly pay more attention to the output of The Good Men Project, though.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, Helen.

Pluckrose: Thank you, Scott.

André Coelho, Basic Income, Gender Differences, and Gender Roles

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 10, 2017

André Coelho is a contributor to the Basic Income Earth Network. I asked about some perspectives on gender roles, as he is a friend and mentor. Here is the result.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wanted to talk about masculinity in the 21st century. You have been a mentor for me through the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN). What is BIEN, as an open plug? More to the interview, if you look at the gender roles where you live, what are they?

André Coelho: BIEN is a decentralized organization composed by people who promote, in their diversity, a core idea currently named basic income. BIEN holds a non-political defense and promotion of basic income, a progressive social policy which aims at de-linking income from employment, in a pursuit of freedom for all.

In Portugal, my place of birth and residence, there are still marked gender differences in society. Women access incomes, on average, lower than men. Women get sexually discriminated in day-to-day situations and are burdened, on average, with more workload than men, namely within the household. Domestic violence against women is still a reality in Portugal, in the dawn of the 21st century.

At work, there are also some gender roles that are still reinforced in Portuguese society. For example, it's very hard to find a woman working in construction. Or in mechanical workshops. Or in computing (although here things are changing). On the other hand, in the caring world, one seldom finds men working. Nursing, cleaning, social assistance and kindergartens are examples where women clearly dominate.

Jacobsen: Are these gender roles more or less functional as we're moving farther and farther into the 21st century?

Coelho: I understand that there are basic traits that incline men and women more to certain roles. Caring for children or elderly people come natural for women, given their motherhood instincts. This doesn't mean men cannot fulfill these roles, but only that, at the time being, they do in fact come more naturally to women. Conversely, a woman can also learn and get trained to be a good construction worker, but their interest in such activities is usually low.

Fundamentally, however, I don't feel men and women have specific or fixed roles to play in society. As we move further into the 21st century, as society gets transformed into something this species has never experienced before at a global scale, traditional gender roles get more and more irrelevant.

Jacobsen: As a leader in the basic income world, what are you taking into account when mentoring and writing, and leading?

Coelho: I don't know how much of a leader I am, or if I can be called as such. However, I try to remain aware that nothing I may do, in the basic income world or within other spheres, is possible without the collaboration of other people. At Basic Income News (a part of BIEN's activity), to give an example, we have a rotating team of more or less six people, who make it possible to publish every day, given our relatively high-quality standards. My role there is to make sure work flows in the smoothest way possible, and that everybody's happy. That implies being thankful for all the help they provide, because nothing would be produced without these people's goodwill, technical capacity and devoted efforts.

More specifically in mentoring and writing, my approach is usually to make people comfortable with our system at Basic Income News, explaining and supplying all the information they need to work properly and to their maximum satisfaction. I do not teach anyone to write, but instead show them where our quality standards are, and help them to bring their own writing style up to our standards, if necessary. For that we also have a team of volunteer reviewers, who are dedicated to reviewing text, style and content of every article that gets published through Basic Income News.

Jacobsen: Mentorship is important for older males to do for younger males. How do you go about it, e.g. in the BIEN world or elsewhere?

Coelho: I don't see mentorship as a gender relationship (older males onto younger males). I have mentored males and females alike at Basic Income News, and of different ages. But as I see it, mentorship is mainly about making the other person feel he/she is at home, and that is achieved not only with information and technical aspects, but also with gratitude and flexibility. And being available when the need arises, so that the person gets integrated in the best possible way. Acknowledging mistakes is also part of a mentor's job, because the more you recognize your humanity the more you reduce distance between people, and that is crucial for close and durable work relationships.

Jacobsen: What do you see as a healthier version of masculine identity, e.g. self-image and action?

Coelho: I feel that men in general are still somewhat mistaken into thinking they are in control. Or that they should be in control. That can make men possessive, over confident or afraid (to lose control). All those feelings are bad. A healthier version of man would be, first and foremost to let go control. That doesn't mean living in chaos. It means letting go of dominating attitudes, micromanagement and strengthened rigidity. To turn pyramid hierarchies into lateral collaborative organizations. To stop looking at oneself as a stone wall, that supposedly can take any weight and any blow, to a more human-like self-image, where mistakes and compassion are possible.

Ironically, a more flexible and humble self makes it possible to grow into a strong, resilient person. On the contrary, an apparently all-mighty solid and rigid self turns men into fragile beings that fall apart once they crack – and they all eventually do. In civil engineering, as a kind of parallel, we know that very rigid materials are usually associated with fragile behaviour: they suddenly snap after an initial crack. Good construction materials are those rigid enough to withstand design loads, but flexible enough to accommodate displacements and not snap under high stresses. The same in people, and particularly men. In a nutshell: less rigidity, more flexibility. Long term resistance comes from resilience, and resilience comes from knowing who you are, away from artificial notions of control.

Jacobsen: Also, you're an independent scholar. What topics are of interest to you? How does this build into your ability to function better in the professional world, e.g. mentoring, writing, and leading?

Coelho: At present my life doesn't allow me to do research, keep up my professional engineering activity plus volunteering for BIEN or Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth. That is, in the absence of a basic income. I would like to reduce my engineering hours and dedicate more time to research, music and volunteering. In research, particularly, I would like to continue my studies into construction and demolition waste management, as this is one often disregarded aspect of waste management, and one critical if we intend to go sustainable on this planet. Quality, meaningful research – in our monetized, all-business world, much research has lost its meaning and is of little use to society – is an important way not only to expand our knowledge, but also to inform policy into building a better society.

Sex also interests me. Like this it sounds too bold, but it truly interests me in an analytical sense, as it informs so much about who we are, men and women, conjugating almost every human trait. There are so many unconscious behaviours related to sex, the “animal” part of it and its interaction with our “cultural” side. We are the product of our evolutionary path, as much as we are the result of our own culture. We are at the edge of a great human transformation, one that will dictate if we go extinct, or if we will survive and live happily on this planet. And that is also related to how we understand, deal and accept our sexuality. The human being definitely interests me.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, André.

Coelho: I thank you for your interest in what I had to say, by answering your questions. Cheers.

Enrique Valdés Pliego, Atheist Republic Oaxaca City Consulate

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 15, 2017

Atheist Republic is the largest online facebook group for atheists. Here the Atheist Republic Oaxaca City Consulate representative, Enrique Valdés Pliego, talks about atheism.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Was there a background in atheism, in the family? Within that family background, was there a surrounding culture that brought forth a critical mindset towards religion? If so, how? If not, why not?

Enrique Valdés Pliego: My father's background has a religious mindset. So I lived with him my first 9 years. I was a believer then, but at the dissolution of my parents' marriage, I lived with my mother's family who is scientist and agnostics. At that point, I developed my critical thinking skills. They had a library, a big area to read. I had a lot of time to read. My mother's family never took to me to participate in any religious activity, but we used to visit museums and watch movies, theatre and a lot of other activities.

Jacobsen: Through these threads of family and surrounding culture, what made for the pivotal moments in development as an atheist?

Pliego: There were a lot of pivotal moments, but some of them were like moments of revelation, when a bunch of religious ideas had not sensed, or when a religious community used to act violently against free people, I disagree with religious events where I obliged to shut up just because if I express my self it could be dangerous. but the most important pivotal moment was understanding some concepts like freedom, opinion, law, belief, respect, persuasion, and profit.

Jacobsen: Also, "a-" as a prefix in atheism means many things because it is both denial and affirmation. What is affirmed there to you? What is denied to you?

Pliego: In my mind, I think strongly it's a free theme, so there's affirmed that even God in existence, people like me will defend always our rights when some people use that freedom to believe or not believe and is denied to leave our freedom on abuse or swindler hands.

Jacobsen: How did you find the Atheist Republic? What do you do for them? What are your tasks and responsibilities?

Pliego: I found AR because people need to talk about common themes, protection, people with common issues. I do community links, produce messages, questions, replicate notices, and act as a community manager. We work with freedom. Our work is free. We just have a couple of easy rules. Respect is always a base. Our responsibility is to build a web of free people, to guarantee it, not to fight against religious people, but build bridges toward civilization.

Jacobsen: How does an Atheist Republic consulate work? What are its daily operations? How do you make sure the operations function smoothly?

Pliego: Each civilization, each community, city or town grow up independently, even AR. so each consulate has similar rules, is part of a mesh that works as a train, lot of people go in and go

out, if they need something we could offer them, with out fees, just because we are real people who want to give to our time the other opportunity to future, options. each one it's different, each person has rights.

Jacobsen: Why volunteer for them? What meaning comes from it?

Pliego: Why help people? why build better communities? why is the sense of build civilization a struggle? why make divisions? why disrespect other with same rights? why people arrive at the moon or finding lots of advances? A lot of meanings are inside people, each one of us, but even objective things, because its function, peaceful communities, educated communities are possible, even the opposite.

Jacobsen: How does the Atheist Republic, in your own experience and in conversing with others, give back to the atheist community and provide a platform for them – even to simply vent from social and political conventions that hold them either in contempt or in begrudging silence for fear of loss of life quality?

Pliego: When people grew up inside a religious world, with lots of fears, even a tiny, little, very small opportunity of freedom is a great experience, that's why we want to provide a big community for religious refugees. We do not provide disrespect, we want to achieve the common place of meeting, brainstorming, options to kids, their parents, just people who need say any thing related to religiosity, what they feel, what they need, what they lived, what they could give to the community. everybody must live freely. everybody deserves it.

Jacobsen: What do you hope for the future of atheism? What are the movements next steps?

Pliego: Not hopes, it's a reality, some places, some countries, towns, who known about rights, about liberty are convinced of taking care of it. the future is related to spread of liberty, with rights, not religious issues, an atheist is not a furious stubborn, is not a politician giving recommendations, is not a leader, is just common people who love freedom as anyone who had to prove it. the next step is the common objectives, freedom anywhere, and maintenance of it. even we have a local activities calendar and sometimes a common calendar at whole consulates. You could check with the consulates, some of them have a complete project while others are building

Jacobsen: Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

Pliego: No one deserves disrespect, abuse, lack of freedom; everybody deserves human rights and a healthy world. obviously, we must take decisions, but this kind of decisions could have sense between human rights.

Jacobsen: Thank you for your time, Enrique.

Pliego: Good night.

Claire Saenz, SMART Recovery, Process, and Addicts in Recovery

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 15, 2017

Claire Saenz is a SMART Recovery Facilitator for SMART Recovery. In this series, we look at her story, views, and expertise regarding addiction.

Claire Saenz is a SMART Recovery Facilitator for SMART Recovery. It is an addiction recovery service without a necessary reference to a higher power or incorporation of a faith, or some faith-based system into it – by necessity. Those can be used it, but they are not necessities. The system is about options. In this series, we look at her story, views, and expertise regarding addiction, having been an addict herself. This is session 2.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Now, you're working for SMART Recovery and have been for a while. How long? Why there? What is in it for you (cui bono)?

Claire Saenz: I started with SMART Recovery in 2007 as a participant, following my departure from AA. At the time, I was going through a deep reevaluation of my personal belief system. I call it my “recovering from recovery” period. My initial reaction upon learning about SMART and its philosophy was profound sorrow that I had not had access to that program when I initially made the decision to quit. I was horrified to realize that the counselor at the rehab I attended in 1998 had done me a vast disservice by insisting that my history of addiction meant that my thinking could not be trusted and that the only way to recover was through AA. It was due to that misdirection that I ended up spending years of my life in an ill-fitting program.

I continue to participate in SMART now, after ten years, for one simple reason: I do not want others to have the same experience I did. I want to see that people have knowledge of, and access to, SMART as well as other approaches to addiction recovery.

I suppose you could say that there is nothing to be gained for me personally in my continued work with SMART and the issue of choice in recovery since I'm comfortably abstinent now. To be honest, I have been tempted at times to say “I've got mine and I've done enough” and take up another meaningful cause. But then I meet yet another person who is caught in the net of endless 12 step, who weeps to meet a person who is contented and healthy outside of that world, and I realize afresh that this is my life's work.

Jacobsen: How do you work with people? What is the process there?

Saenz: There are several aspects to my work. The first is advocacy: getting the word out that quality recovery treatment requires that people seeking recovery receive full information about their choices. I have done this in many contexts. In addition to writing articles about SMART Recovery and the constitutional issues surrounding mandated 12 step attendance, I have been interviewed for books and television and presented several continuing legal education programs regarding SMART and the general issue of choice in recovery.

The second aspect has been working with SMART at the board or committee level to help set policy and strategize for further growth.

The third aspect is working directly with people seeking recovery, which is the activity I enjoy the most. Even before I began facilitating a local meeting, I would often communicate directly with people seeking recovery who were going to SMART's online meetings and felt they would benefit from personal contact with a SMARTie. I've also served as the point of introduction for newcomers who learned about SMART from AA members. Within AA, there is a growing group of members who are more than willing to send struggling newcomers to SMART. I love to see this increasing awareness that although we may have different philosophies, we share the same goal: helping people achieve abstinence.

Jacobsen: If you could take one principle from working with addicts in recovery and have that implemented at a federal level, what would it be?

Saenz: I would like to see a Supreme Court decision that mandated 12 step participation by the criminal justice system is a violation of the First Amendment and cannot take place in the United States. There are several federal circuit court cases that say this very clearly, as well as state supreme court cases, but I would like to see this principle come from the highest court in the land.

Jacobsen: Why do people become addicts? How do they? Does the 12-step program deliver on its purported ends?

Saenz: Well, if I could provide a simple answer to the “why?” question, we could all brush off our hands and go home! However, the question is controversial and the topic of much research. At the moment, the evidence seems to point to the conclusion that while the etiology varies, for most, it is a combination of genetics, environment, and psychological factors. As a complicating factor, at least half of those with addictions have a co-occurring mental illness, often a mood disorder. Treatment of dually diagnosed people has to be integrated—the two conditions must be treated together as they tend to be inextricably entwined.

As far as the “how” question, I think that’s fairly simple. People become addicted by engaging in the addictive behavior too much for too long. I know there are theorists who could complicate this, even going so far as to claim that people are “addicts” before they ever engage in addictive behavior, but this strikes me as an entirely illogical stance.

As far as whether 12 step delivers what it promises, the answer is it does—for some, but by no means all. It’s great choice for those it helps. For those people, it delivers what it promises. The problem is that it doesn’t work for a significant number of people. The exact success rate is a matter of extreme controversy and I’ve witnessed some fine people following the argument down a hopeless rabbit hole. However, it is unquestionably true that 12 step does not help, and may in fact harm, a number of people.

Jacobsen: Does faith more often or less often than not improve the recovering addict through their recovery to sobriety?

Saenz: Once again, it depends on the person. It amazes me that we all too often view people with addictions through a lens that presumes they are all the same, have the same experiences, and find the same approaches helpful. Faith helps some people. It does not help others. It did not help me.

Jacobsen: What are the personal dangers in helping addicts through recovery?

Saenz: If you're talking about me personally, I can't think of any dangers that aren't already present in my day to day work as a lawyer. The fact is simply that some people are not safe, whether they suffer from addictions or not. I do the best I can to protect myself, I have security systems in place and generally try not to be entirely alone with people, but other than that I don't worry about it. I am also not particularly concerned with whatever reputational danger might exist by being open about my history of addiction. I believe I am a success story and am proud to help the next person achieve their own version of success.

Dr. Leo Igwe, Nigerian Femininity and Masculinity and the Nigerian Humanist Movement

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 16, 2017

Dr. Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement, who was recently awarded in recognition of his service to humanism.

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Leo Igwe is the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement and former Western and Southern African representative of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. He holds a Ph.D. from the Bayreuth International School of African Studies at the University of Bayreuth in Germany, having earned a graduate degree in Philosophy from the University of Calabar in Nigeria. Here we talk about masculinity and femininity in Nigeria.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wanted to conduct a conversation series on masculinity from a humanist perspective in Nigeria with you, Leo. Why you? You founded the Nigerian Humanist Movement. So, to begin, and with this relevant justification as to your qualifications (doctorate as well), what is traditional masculinity and, by implication, femininity in Nigeria?

Dr. Leo Igwe: There is always a risk of conflation in responding to a question such as this because any answer could easily be taken to be all embracing and applicable to all. Definitely, an understanding of traditional masculinity or femininity that applies to over 170 million people in Nigeria with various cultures and beliefs presents a challenge.

Having said that, given the nature of this conversation, I offer a personal opinion. In brief, traditional masculinity or femininity is simply that idea of manliness or womanliness that is handed down from the past. This idea of what it is to be a man or a woman draws its moral and binding force from the fact that it was handed down to a generation that assumes it is expected to observe it, comply with it and pass it on without revision or alteration.

Thus as a tradition, this quality of maleness or femaleness is deemed sacrosanct. It is designated as the norm for social ordering, nurturing and cultivation. It is important to note that the idea of manliness and womanliness which people regard as the norm because they are handed down from the past differ from community to community, and sometimes from family to family, in fact from individual to individual. It is difficult to pin it down.

Generally speaking, masculinity is traditionally identified with strength, power, toughness, and leadership hence the notion of male domination in gender discourses. The male is taken as the natural head and is expected to be strong and should be capable of absorbing pain without crying. The male is nurtured to be the defender, the one who protects the family and who tackles anything dangerous or threatening. Womanliness is associated with 'weakness' and vulnerability. Marriage, childcare, child bearing and domestic duties are also linked to womanhood.

Persons are brought up to fit into these roles and expectations. Unfortunately, the emphasis is often, on women and their designated subordinate and subjugated roles. It is often forgotten that

male persons are brought up by their parents including their mothers and sisters, nieces and aunts to fit into certain designated roles.

They are pressured sometimes against their will to be manly. These designated manly and womanly roles are well spelled out and mainly applicable in rural areas and among uneducated folks, or in religiously conservative environments. In such situations and circumstances, ruralness, lack of education and faith constrain the ability of males and females to break away from the traditions.

Jacobsen: These designated roles likely, come from Abrahamic religious traditions, as expectations?

Igwe: I prefer to say that supernatural traditions, not only the Abrahamic codifications, are at the root of these designated qualities of maleness and femaleness. In fact, traditional masculinity and femininity are embedded in indigenous religions that predate Abrahamic religious traditions in Africa. What we have in contemporary Africa is a situation where the faiths of Christianity and Islam only reinforce pre-existing religious and traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.

Jacobsen: How does the humanist perspective, in your opinion, differ from these views? How is it similar, even the same, as these views?

Igwe: A humanist perspective is the same with the traditional viewpoint in the sense that they are all human creations and constructions. They are all attempts by humans to define, designate and assign roles and duties. Humanist and non-humanist ideas of manliness and womanliness are devices to make sense of human associations and interactions. But the humanist perspective is different because it is a product of critical evaluation, not of revelation or blind faith.

The humanist view of masculinity or femininity is non-dogmatic and can be questioned and challenged. The humanist idea of male or female is informed by reason, science, and human rights. It is non-conformist and non-orthodox. Like traditional masculinity and femininity, humanist masculinity takes cognizance of the outlined duties and responsibilities. However, the humanist idea of manliness and womanliness is not cast in stone. The qualities and functions are subject to revision and rejection in the light of knowledge and individual freedom.

Jacobsen: If you were to define a humanist masculinity, how would you define it?

Igwe: It is the idea of maleness that emphasizes the humanity of men and males, the fact that men are human like their female counterparts. That males have emotions, entertain fear and suffer pain like their female counterparts. Simply humanistic masculinity stands for maleness as humanness. It stresses male care, compassion, and cooperation while acknowledging domination and oppression as a human, not as an exclusively male property.

The whole idea of humanist masculinity is vital in clearing this mistaken impression that associates 'masculinism' or masculinity with the subordination of women. There are cases of male oppression of women but is that masculinism? No, not at all. That should not be designated as what it is to be manly. Being manly should be within the ambient of humanity not without. Women do oppress men too but is oppression of men feminism? No.

Subordination of men should not be identified as feminism. It is an aberration of feminism. Just as feminism does not imply the oppression of men, masculinity should not be equated with the oppression of females. Thus humanist masculinity is – and should be – about the expression of humaleness or hu-manliness and not the humiliation and subordination of females.

Jacobsen: What is a way to inculcate a healthier, humanistic, masculinity in young men in Nigeria?

Igwe: Of course, it is through education that the inculcation of humanist masculinity can be achieved. Unfortunately, this goal cannot be realized in the form of education we have in Nigeria at the moment. The educational process is manipulated to preserve certain religious and traditional values and interests. The educational system is used to reinforce notions of masculinity and femininity that are incompatible with humanist and human rights values. So the inculcation of humanistic masculinity can only happen if the educational system is overhauled to foster and reflect humanistic ideas and values.

Eric Mah, Psychology, Lifespan Cognition lab, and Not Being Afraid

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

August 17, 2017

Eric is a friend and colleague, who works with me in the Lifespan Cognition Lab. Here we talk about psychology, selection of degree, the Lifespan Cognition Lab, his main research question, and tips for becoming involved in psychology.

Eric Mah is a friend and colleague, who works with me in the Lifespan Cognition Lab. Here we talk about psychology, selection of degree, the Lifespan Cognition Lab, his main research question, and tips for becoming involved in psychology.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How did you come into an interest in psychology?

Eric Mah: Like many (most) undergraduates starting an Arts degree, I signed up for a number of intro psychology courses in my first year at KPU. I was immediately drawn to several aspects of the field—the complexity and mystery of the human mind, the direct relevance of findings to myself and others, and the sheer variety of interesting research areas. As I took more courses, I also came to appreciate the rigor and applicability of psychological research methods and the ingenious and elegant research designs scholars have used to answer profound questions about the mind. Currently, I see psychology as one of the fields with the most remaining unsolved puzzles and mysteries—and I can't resist a good mystery!

Jacobsen: What is your degree? Why select it? Why choose the Lifespan Cognition Lab?

Mah: I graduated with a BA Major in Psychology (Honours) and a BA Minor in Philosophy. Though my primary interest is in psychology, philosophy has also fascinated me. Similar to psychology, my interest in philosophy grew out of a curiosity about the many great mysteries that philosophers have tackled: What is the nature of reality? What is knowledge, and how much can we really know? What makes a person who they are? What makes something right (or wrong)? On a more practical level, I believe that the tools provided by philosophical education—critical thinking and healthy skepticism, ability to evaluate arguments, and openness to new ideas, among others—are extremely valuable in psychological research (and most other fields)! While the mysteries philosophy presents are fascinating, I believe that many of them are in principle unsolvable, and most of them have limited relevance to everyday life. I believe psychological research has more answerable questions and more practical relevance, but one of my research interests is in the psychological questions one can ask about philosophical questions (e.g., how do people think about morality, free will, arguments, epistemology, etc.)

I chose the Lifespan Cognition Lab primarily because I wanted more experience in the field of cognitive psychology. Prior to my involvement with Dr. Bernstein's lab, my work, including my Honours thesis, had been in social and positive psychology. Cognition is a broad and fascinating area of psychology and I wanted to expand my knowledge and expertise to this field. Cognitive research has revealed a number of seemingly paradoxical and mysterious psychological phenomena that beg explanation (e.g., irrational biases, unexplained phenomena like the

revelation effect, etc.). In particular, research on common biases and fallacies aligns with my broad research question.

Jacobsen: What is your main research question?

Mah: My main research question, broadly, is this: Are humans more rational or irrational? While we like to call ourselves the “rational animal”, research suggests that we can be systematically wrong in our thinking—we rely on time-saving but oft-faulty heuristics, fall victim to unconscious bias, and regularly commit fallacies.

Within this broad research question about rationality, there are several more specific questions I would am interested in trying my hand at: What are the ways in which our thinking can be flawed?; What are the contexts in which bias arises; Can we guard against systematic errors in thinking, and if so, how?; Are biases truly “irrational”—or are some of them actually adaptive?; What constitutes “rational” thinking (e.g., purely logical/philosophical standards or something else)? Due to the broad nature of these questions, I could see myself in cognitive, social or forensic psychology.

Jacobsen: What are some good tips for those with an interest in psychology for becoming involved in a psychology lab? What should they not be afraid of? What should they be prepared for?

Mah: Research work is incredibly interesting and rewarding, and working in a lab offers a lot of opportunities you might not find elsewhere (e.g., funding, resources, guidance from senior researchers, opportunity to attend conferences, connections w/potential supervisors). Practical lab research experience is invaluable if you’re planning on eventually attending grad school or doing any post-undergraduate psychology work. Overall, I would definitely recommend joining a psychology lab to any student serious about psychology, regardless of whether they have research or clinical inclinations.

In terms of advice, I would recommend starting early. I see a lot of students that join up in their late 3rd or 4th years of their degree, and they don’t have a lot of time to get research experience (and the all-important lines for their CV). I had the good fortune to be approached by a faculty member and senior researcher (who would later become my Honours supervisor) in my 1st year at KPU, and a number of the students in our lab came to us in their 1st/2nd years. By getting an early start (i.e., a late 1st year or early 2nd year in a 4-year program), you have more time to gain research experience, dabble in a number of different projects and research areas, and find out if research is for you.

On a related note, don’t be afraid to approach faculty researchers, even if you’re just starting along the psychological path. As a lab manager, I’m always impressed to see a 1st or 2nd-year student with an interest in psychological research and the initiative to seek out lab opportunities. Even if you feel you lack experience and knowledge, the lab is a collaborative learning environment. Faculty researchers and more experienced research assistants are happy to guide you and help you learn the skills necessary for research. I see a lot of students who are intimidated by faculty and end up being too afraid to approach them about research opportunities. My advice here: Don’t be afraid! Many faculty members are more than willing to talk research and offer advice (and research opportunities) to students.

As for preparation, it does help to have a basic foundation of research experience. This experience generally comes from 1st or 2nd-year research methods and stats courses, and I

would recommend that interested students take these before pursuing more involved research in a lab. Early research methods courses also provide a great opportunity to find out if you enjoy research and whether you're a good fit for it. Beyond that, those interested in lab research should be prepared to work hard. Lab work most typically involves running subjects but also involves study design, data entry, data preparation (e.g., posters, manuscripts), and presentations (e.g., to fellow lab members, conference audiences).

In sum: take a couple research courses, start looking early, and don't be intimidated or afraid—just be prepared to work hard!

Joey C., Psychology and Counselling, Lifespan Cognition Lab, and Application of Knowledge

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 18, 2017

Joey C. is a colleague, who works with me in the Lifespan Cognition Lab. Here we talk about psychology, selection of degree, the Lifespan Cognition Lab, his main research question, and tips for becoming involved in psychology.

Joey C. is a colleague, who works with me in the Lifespan Cognition Lab. Here we talk about psychology, selection of degree, the Lifespan Cognition Lab, his main research question, and tips for becoming involved in psychology.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How did you come into an interest in psychology?

Joey C.: For myself, I was always interested in pursuing something that would have to do to help people. My family and I thought something in the medical field (i.e. a physician) would most likely be the best road to go down in the future, and as I was leaving high school and pursuing a university career, I decided that learning about human processes and behaviour would be the first stepping stone in my journey.

Jacobsen: What is your degree? Why select it? Why choose the Lifespan Cognition Lab?

Joey C.: I am in the Arts program with a major in psychology and a minor in counseling. As aforementioned, I was always interested in helping people and no matter how many research studies I read about different areas of psychology, my first question is “Why?”. I chose the Lifespan Cognition Lab as cognitive psychology is a field that I have been interested in for a few years, and I feel that I can contribute on a multitude of levels for the lab, and at the same time, learn new things every single day.

Jacobsen: What is your main research question?

Joey C.: I haven’t done any independent research for the lab yet, as I have started out recently in the Lifespan Cognition Lab. My dream and end goal would be to pursue clinical psychology in the criminal justice system. For that, I recently have written a paper on the logic and rationale behind classification and diagnosis of psychopathy in children and adolescents. In addition to the Cognition Lab, I am a part of the KPU IMAGE lab, in which I was interested in learning how social perceptions of advertisements can be changed and influenced. At some point, I would like to do research for head injuries. I am a soccer player (goalkeeper) and in my career, I have gotten a concussion before and noticed that I was having a hard time grasping topics and things normal people would have no problem doing in a shorter time. Though this was several years ago and I made a full recovery, I would like to see how a person who recently faced brain injury vs. a person who has not would perform an identical task.

Jacobsen: What are some good tips for those with an interest in psychology for becoming involved in a psychology lab? What should they not be afraid of? What should they be prepared for?

Joey C.: I would say to just start out with an open mind. I was extremely into social psychology when I started out at Kwantlen and it changed to clinical and now is a happy balance between clinical and cognitive. Since you get to do the experiments up close and hands on, you learn new things and might be attracted to different areas of psychology you might not have even known about. Additionally, asking questions is important because there are times where you might not know the answer. I have learned that sometimes, it's totally OKAY to say that you don't know an answer or something. The next step is to learn and work hard to remember and use that knowledge where it's applicable. Psychology is all about hard work. It's not easy to do research or become a lab assistant/researcher but you have to work hard for it and earn everything you get. Sometimes you won't get the result you want or were expecting and that's okay too. Nobody truly knows what they're looking for in psychology, but that's the fun part; finding out new things and expanding out own minds on different topics.

Danielle Blau, Brown University, Gifts and Talents, and Family and Educational Support

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 22, 2017

Danielle Blau talks with Scott Douglas Jacobsen about her personal narrative and views on life, writing, philosophy, art, and more.

Danielle Blau's Rhyme and Reason: Poetry, Philosophy, and the Art of Living the Big Questions is forthcoming from W.W. Norton. Her collection mere eye was selected for a Poetry Society of America Chapbook Award and published in 2013 with an introduction by poet D.A. Powell, and her poems won first place in the 2015 multi-genre Narrative 30 Below Contest. Poetry, short stories, articles, and interviews by Blau can be found in such publications as The Atlantic online, The Baffler, Black Clock, The Harvard Review, The Literary Review, Narrative Magazine, The New Yorker's book blog, The Paris Review, Ploughshares, Plume Poetry, The Saint Ann's Review, The Wolf, the Argos Books poetry anthology Why I Am Not a Painter, and Plume Anthology of Poetry. A graduate of Brown University with an honors degree in philosophy, and of NYU with an MFA in poetry, she curates and hosts the monthly Gavagai Music + Reading Series, and teaches at Hunter College. Here are her views and story, part 1.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You graduated from Brown University with an honors degree in philosophy. Also, you earned an MFA in poetry from New York University. Obviously, a deep background in philosophical and poetic thought. Both, often, abstract or, if not, parsing the aspects of the world into distinct (and abstract) bits. Was there an early indication of gifts and talents in philosophy, poetry, or analytic and metaphor thought? Any anecdotes from within the family?

Danielle Blau: Well, I was a weird kid, for sure—that much I know. And my family likes to tell this story about how as a toddler (maybe two years old or something) I used to do this thing whenever they had the gall to address me by my given name: I'd fly into a rage and inform them, "I'm not Danielle, I'm *this*!" I was very insistent on this point, apparently. Which meant that for a little while there I was basically refusing to acknowledge anybody's direct address; which, of course, made it even harder (I think it was already not easy) to get me to come out from where I was moonily standing under the kitchen table, and to put on my shoes and my other pant leg or whatever—to just comply in any way with the relevant unfolding business of daily life. I'm not sure how long the "I'm not Danielle, I'm *this*" era lasted exactly, but it was a definite stage in my early-childhood development.

Were these bizarre tantrums indicative of emerging gifts and talents in philosophy or abstract thought? Who knows. They seem indicative of emerging neurosis, to me, certainly. My family got a huge kick out of them, though, and my mother, in particular, puts a very generous spin (as mother's will) on the nature of my perplexed little brain during this period. My mother is a philosophy professor, by the way, so this interpretation might say more about her than it does about me (or toddler-me): but as she saw it, here was the stage in my development when I ceased to view myself as the necessary, infinite, eternal Subject (which that all-meaningful name I'd

been associated with since time immemorial—Danielle—had I guess come, in my mind, to represent); here was when it struck me that I was in fact just one more thing, one more object—one more *this* in a vast world of *this*'s. I'm not Danielle, I'm this.

Jacobsen: Was the family and educational environment supportive of these gifts and talents? Or was this something requiring a struggle to maintain and develop to the full?

Blau: I think they were a little nonplussed actually—most especially my father, who is a theoretical physicist/ abstract mathematician himself—when I didn't go the way of abstract math, because through most of my childhood-through-adolescence that looked like the direction I'd almost certainly be heading. In my college years that shifted over (slightly), to analytic philosophy, which was also totally fine in their book—but when I announced at the end of college that I'd not be going on to get my PhD in philosophy, and would instead pursue this poetry thing, that was a bit of a shock to the family system (to my dad particularly), and to my professors, and also somewhat to myself.

The thing is, though, I'd always felt pulled in two opposite directions—between the world of abstract universals, which Bertrand Russell describes (in *The Problems of Philosophy*) as “unchangeable, rigid, exact, delightful to the mathematician, the logician, the builder of metaphysical systems, and all who love perfection more than life,” on the one hand, and the world of concrete particulars, which “is fleeting, vague, without sharp boundaries, without any clear plan or arrangement, but [which] contains all thoughts and feelings, all the data of sense, and all physical objects, everything that can do either good or harm, everything that makes any difference to the value of life,” on the other.

Both worlds have equal footing in reality, it seems to me (along with Russell), but there's also something incompatible about them. It's a little like those famous optical illusions: the duck is just as much a part of the picture as the rabbit, but you can't hold the two visions in your mind at one and the same time; as soon as you see the duck, the rabbit vanishes (and vice versa).

“According to our temperaments, we shall prefer the contemplation of the one or of the other,” Russell says. “The one we do not prefer will probably seem to us a pale shadow of the one we prefer, and hardly worthy to be regarded as in any sense real.”

But I've always loved contemplating—and living in—the one world just as much as the (somewhat incompatible and yet still equally real) other. And I think I can do that, in poetry. I can see the duck and the rabbit at once.

And then I've also found—though the two disciplines are of course extraordinarily different—that, for me, there's a weird similarity between the process of writing poems and the process of doing philosophy: The one process often feels like hunting down the single right rhythm or image to get at a certain vague turning in my gut, while the other feels like excavating the single hard core of an argument in a certain bog of intellectual queasiness. And these two feelings of mine (which, despite my odd choice of analogies just now, are not at all gastrointestinal) do have a fair bit in common, it turns out.

Danielle Blau, Process, Poetry, Aloneness and Fear, Weeping, and Philosophy

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 22, 2017

Danielle Blau talks with Scott Douglas Jacobsen about her personal narrative and views on life, writing, philosophy, art, and more.

Danielle Blau's Rhyme and Reason: Poetry, Philosophy, and the Art of Living the Big Questions is forthcoming from W.W. Norton. Her collection mere eye was selected for a Poetry Society of America Chapbook Award and published in 2013 with an introduction by poet D.A. Powell, and her poems won first place in the 2015 multi-genre Narrative 30 Below Contest. Poetry, short stories, articles, and interviews by Blau can be found in such publications as The Atlantic online, The Baffler, Black Clock, The Harvard Review, The Literary Review, Narrative Magazine, The New Yorker's book blog, The Paris Review, Ploughshares, Plume Poetry, The Saint Ann's Review, The Wolf, the Argos Books poetry anthology Why I Am Not a Painter, and Plume Anthology of Poetry. A graduate of Brown University with an honors degree in philosophy, and of NYU with an MFA in poetry, she curates and hosts the monthly Gavagai Music + Reading Series, and teaches at Hunter College. Here are her views and story, part 2. Part 1 [here](#).

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: If you reflect on the process, how have you developed a method for writing poetry? Did you learn from someone else, develop your own and then refine it, some admixture of the two, or something else?

Blau: I've always written and loved to write, but for a while I didn't actually know what it was I was writing. And at a certain point, I began to worry. Because even though, as a reader, I still wanted to lose myself in the sumptuous folds of a highly plotted novel, my tastes as a writer seemed to be growing increasingly eccentric. So I noticed I had ever less patience for getting down to the crucial business of plotting, say—but ever more patience for mulling over the benefits of ending a particular sentence on a trochee versus a spondee, say, or for deciding whether the made-up brand of HIV self-testing kit bought by a particular character should be named HemoGenuine Diagnostics or Ora•cular.

And this—my compulsion to be sidetracked, as it seemed then—was kind of worrisome, until I found myself reading more and more books of poetry, in my spare time, at some point during college. Which is how it suddenly dawned on me: Hey, they haven't been hobbled and misshapen pieces of fiction, what I've been writing all my life; they've been poems!

Once I knew I was writing poetry, I didn't have to beat myself up over what had seemed like my excessive preoccupation with detail; I was free to throw myself into the sideshow—because it wasn't a sideshow, I now understood, but the heart of the matter. That's one of the things I so love about poems: how shiftily and how deviously they can arrive at the heart of things.

Jacobsen: Often, poetry speaks to the heart, and to the heart of things. What have been some common themes in your poetry?

Blau: Aloneness is a big one for me, and the fear of being blotted out—the Lone Human Voice vs. the Vast Obliterating Void. And then (this has always been a theme, but it seems to have become ever more present in my writing these past odd eight or so months): how this particular fear of ours, this deep human fear of going cosmically unheard—of not *matter*ing—seems to lie at the heart of what is most ungenerous and most evil in us, too. So much of our small-mindedness and xenophobia and racism seems rooted in this fear, and in the bizarrely misguided notion that mattering is a sort of zero-sum game.

Jacobsen: Is there a poet who makes you weep? Who?

Blau: Oh, so many poets make me weep—I guess I must be a weeper. But most recently I think it was John Clare: “And e’en the dearest—that I loved the best— / Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.”

It doesn’t help matters that when he wrote these lines, Clare was in the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, and that this is where he ended up living out the last twenty years of his already-tragic-enough existence, in total isolation from his family and friends—but, then again, it *does* help matters, in a way. Or rather, it makes matters (and the nature of my weeping) more complex.

Because there is also something astonishingly hopeful (maybe almost joy-inducing?) about the fact that this man who was born to illiterate farm laborers in turn-of-the-eighteenth-century England, who spent the good part of his life ploughing and threshing, and the rest of it in a mental hospital—that this man and I can be so close. Because that is definitely how it feels when I read him; when I read his poem “I Am!” it seems clear beyond reasonable doubt: not only do I have intimate knowledge of Clare, but Clare has intimate knowledge of me.

It’s one of those things that poems sometimes manage to do, somehow—to shatter our metaphysical solitude (or very nearly) in a way that precious else can. The poet Stevie Smith has this quote I love: “The human creature is alone in his carapace. Poetry is a strong way out. The passage out that she blasts is often in splinters, covered with blood; but she can come out softly.”

Jacobsen: What was the benefit of the philosophy undergraduate degree for your own personal philosophy, ethical stance, and worldview?

Blau: My undergrad training in and continued preoccupation with philosophy has definitely upped my generalized astonishment levels throughout these however many years; it has made me more generally astonished and more uncertain (that much is certain).

And I think maybe it has made me generally sadder, too, to be honest—but sadder in a good way, in a way that also makes me kinder and more generous, more loving, I think. Because it’s never far from my mind: how at odds the individual human perspective is with the (distant and indifferent) View from Nowhere: how little we all are: how all alone: how much we all just want to matter.

So it’s made my view of human life more ultimately tragic (or, in my lightest of moods, more ultimately absurd), I guess. But that has only made me feel more bone-deeply how much we are all of us in this thing together: Here we all are, a vast collection of tiny *this*’s, each of us wishing the world would make us feel as infinite and infinitely necessary as we feel to ourselves. So why not just allow each other that, if and when at all possible? It seems, given the circumstances, the least we can do.

Sarah Mills, Writing Methodology, Tone and Pace, and Tips for Budding Writers

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

August 30, 2017

Sarah Mills is a Writer and Editor at Conatus News, as well as a personal friend with whom I have written some articles. Here is a short interview with her.

Sarah Mills is a Writer and Editor at Conatus News, as well as a personal friend with whom I have written some articles. Here is a short interview with her.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What is your methodology for writing?

Sarah Mills: Each writer has a different approach to writing. Some like to take an organic approach, which involves sitting down and allowing the story to develop while writing. Others, myself included, prefer to outline the direction of the story and have all the elements in place before beginning to write. This includes any research and character development.

Jacobsen: How do you take into account tone and pace in your writing? How has your previous writing affected your current writing? What makes for a better piece?

Mills: I like to think that, in my writing, form and content are inextricably linked. For example, a piece packed with action might call for shorter sentences and paragraphs, which make for a faster pace. If a piece is more introspective, on the other hand, perhaps a discursive style might be more appropriate. A writer might also choose to play with reader expectation and deliberately deviate from this. I like to experiment.

I hope that my current writing is always an improvement on my previous writing. A successful piece will most always bring an original perspective to the table. If a writer, either through innovative use of language or a unique set of life experiences, can cause a shift in the reader's mind so that he/she views a concept in an unconventional light or even comes to a profound conclusion about humanity, I think this is an achievement. But it is an equally commendable achievement if the reader is simply entertained or allowed to escape the stresses of life for a little while!

Jacobsen: What are some of your more enjoyable topics to write on? Can you link to some examples?

Mills: It depends what you mean by 'enjoyable.' Most of what I write is not light-hearted, but I do enjoy, if we define that term loosely, writing about socially and politically relevant topics. Art can be edifying when it draws upon reality and holds up a mirror to society. I believe that it can be an instrument for change in this way. So while writing about something like genocide, for example, is never going to be enjoyable- as in pleasurable – I am gratified if it is illuminating and leads readers to appreciate our common humanity. Having said that, I do dabble in short stories that, I like to think, are witty or humorous, albeit in a dark way. Here's a link to a short story that was recently published. It's called '[Hayfever](#)' and it deals with conversion therapy, hive mentality, consumerism, the pharmaceutical and food industries, and the environment- all under 4,000 words!

Jacobsen: What are some tips budding writers can use to make their writing more effective?

Mills: Read. Before a writer is a writer, he/she must be an avid reader. Read classics. Read experimental work. Read pieces that shifted the paradigms of the literary world. Follow the rules before you break them. Get a strong grip on grammar. Don't be pretentious and haughty and think you're too cool for school. Many artists fall into this trap. The artist is not a persona. The artist is simply a person who acutely perceives and relays. Write about your passions and write well.

Jacobsen: What is next for you? How do you hope to develop your craft? Any books coming down the pipe?

Mills: I try to never sit on my laurels. As soon as I've had something published, I'm on to the next article, short story, or poem. I hope to have more of my works published; I do see this as a sort of positive feedback, a confirmation that my writing appeals to people other than myself. So that is definitely a goal. I am currently developing a novel that I'm quite passionate about. It's in its nascent stage and is going to require a lot of research.

Emile Yusupoff, Traditional Gender Roles, Political and Social Trends, and the UK

[Scott Douglas Jacobsen](#)

September 13, 2017

Emile Yusupoff sits down to talk about traditional gender roles, and gender, in the United Kingdom in the early 21st century.

Emile Yusupoff is a 24-year-old unregistered barrister in the process of applying for pupillage. Emile's undergraduate degree from the University of Edinburgh was in Philosophy and Politics, and he maintains involvement with these fields through writing from a classically liberal perspective for publications including Conatus News. Here is part 1.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: In your experience, what are the traditional gender roles in the UK for men and women?

Emile Yusupoff: I suppose it's very similar to the rest of the West in that the male is the breadwinner and the woman is the homemaker. I guess it depends on how traditional you want to get. I don't think that's been universally the case at least since the 60s, I think it has definitely shifted since then, to a subtle extent rather than just ending.

Jacobsen: Over time, you've noted that you've become more left-leaning or liberal bent?

Yusupoff: Yeah, I mean my own personal trajectory is not quite is quite idiosyncratic. I actually flirted with the far-right when I was a teenager. My parents are very liberal and I guess the only way I could rebel at the time, I thought, was by saying "oh yeah, fascism!" and that was kind of my way of being edgy as a teenager.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Yusupoff: Because just saying "oh, drugs!" wouldn't have raised eyebrows. So I guess from there I was a mainstream conservative then became a radical right Libertarian... Ayn Rand and all that. And then from there, I mitigated that position, so now I'm somewhere between a liberal and Libertarian. So I'm to the right of liberals on a lot of economic issues, but I think the state has much more of an important role in helping the worst-off than a lot of Libertarians would allow. And then in the areas where liberals and Libertarians agree, either description would work.

Jacobsen: What are the political trends and social trends of the UK at large? What direction do they have a tendency of leaning?

Yusupoff: I think we're overall heading towards a rejection of liberalism in this country. If liberalism can be defined as encompassing neo-liberalism, the center-left, and the Left, our trajectory is against globalization, against free markets, against migration. It's towards the Theresa May or Blue Labour line of thinking. I don't think the Corbyn thing represents a real shift of the population towards a hard socialism, but I do think it suggests a rejection of free markets and globalization. And I don't know if Conservative is the right way of describing the direction of our social trends. I think Authoritarian Nationalism may be a better description. In

the UK we do have a level of moderation, and as much as I don't like the trends I've just described, I think the checks in our institutions and culture will mean we will never have a Trump in this country. Although we do see similar movements in that way, fortunately, we'll be somewhat mitigated in that sense.

Jacobsen: Given the personal and political perspectives as well as the national one, and also noting the descriptions as you traditionally defined, what do you think would be a healthier sense of a male identity? What are healthier behavior and thoughts, without going into identity politics?

Yusupoff: I wouldn't want to give a single answer to that. I think it has to be entirely idiosyncratic. So I have an issue saying that there should be roles set. I know that some people would say that perhaps we need to have a new sense of masculinity or that we need to encourage men to be more comfortable with feminine traits. This might sound trite but I think it essentially comes down to each individual and whatever they feel is a flourishing way of living. So for some men, I think a traditionally male role would work well. And I think we should be encouraging the creation of a space where men do feel free to pursue more feminine traits. But I don't think any of these are a one-size-fits-all policy. The culture would just have to be one that encourages people to have the space to choose.

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