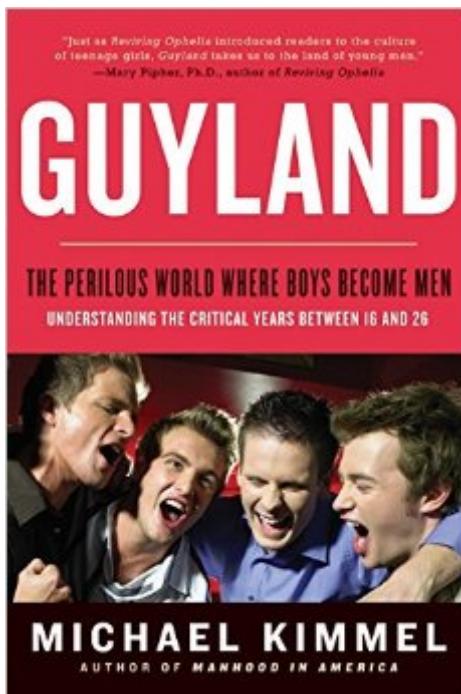


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Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men



Synopsis

The passage from adolescence to adulthood was once clear. Today, growing up has become more complex and confusing, as young men drift casually through college and beyondâ "hanging out, partying, playing with tech toys, watching sports. But beneath the appearance of a simple extended boyhood, a more dangerous social world has developed, far away from the traditional signposts and cultural signals that once helped boys navigate their way to manhoodâ "a territory Michael Kimmel has identified as "Guyland." In mapping the troubling social world where men are now made, Kimmel offers a view into the minds and times of America's sons, brothers, and boyfriends, and he works toward redefining what it means to be a man todayâ "and tomorrow. Only by understanding this world and this life stage can we enable young men to chart their own paths, stay true to themselves, and emerge safely from Guyland as responsible and fully formed male adults.

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Customer Reviews

As a 39 year old guy who quite consciously side-stepped "guyland" throughout my life I appreciated the thorough outline of what a lot of white middle-class guys go through in high school, college and beyond. I always walked by certain bars with the young binge drinkers Kimmel talks of and wondered what they hell they were up to. What I don't appreciate is the shaming tone of the writing and the antiquated definition of a grown man. Marriage and children are not the only barometers for maturity. And as much as the bullies need to be held responsible for the violence they cause, "guys" including said bullies also need more real-life, healthy role-models and real compassion. The violence that erupts in boys most likely has very long roots. Think about it. Most boys are steered

clear out of their feeling at about age 5 with the classic statement, "big boys don't cry!" and goes on from there. Factor in that boys receive less quality attention in general than their girl counterparts and the messages in popular culture and it's no surprise they're acting out. I was also very disappointed that a little less than one-fifth of the book towards the end was dedicated to solutions. I've also got to believe that there are more stories of kids, like myself, who have led great alternative lives to "guyland" and who've never set foot on a sports team or a fraternity. I tried a number of times to enter these social groups in high school and college and simply found that their company was just not very entertaining. My one small solution for helping guys in guyland and mankind in general is attending Men's Groups in the style of Robert Bly. I discovered my Men's Group in college in 1991 and have been attending them ever since.

It doesn't surprise me that some are going to rip this book to shreds. I don't read to agree with everything the author has to say. I read books like this to push myself to learn, react and discuss with others. I judge books on their ability to make me think about a topic. I also recognize that when an author tries to take on a topic like this there is NO way they are going to cover everything... the book would be 1000's of pages long if they did. A few of my observations are listed below:

1. As a social-science researcher I, too, wish that Kimmel would have been more specific in detailing his methodology. Those criticizing his research design, lack of comments about Human Subjects committees, etc, could make the same claim for MANY other research-based books that don't want to bore the average reader this information. It is quite common for those conducting sociological research in more unexplored areas to use qualitative designs - those that just provide observations on a particular group of people. This doesn't make them unscientific, however we should be careful not to generalize these findings to all groups of young men. Kimmel does state early on that most of his observations were about young white middle-class men. Some readers and social-science researchers might like to know a little more about what he actually did. The book in many ways is a phenomenological study that has some limitations, but also much to consider. The "mapping" he has produced is a good starting point for further research.
2. Although this book might describe the majority of white young men, there was little noted about the exceptions to the problems. There are young men out there who live differently...

The sociological survey of the adolescent male adult "Guyland" actually starts strong and interesting. Sociologist Michael Kimmel promises to explore why the white middle-class male has decided to abandon the usual adult responsibilities of getting a job, marrying, and raising a family. In

Kimmel's approximation, male adolescence spans roughly from age 12 (nutrition, health, and sanitation mean that the onslaught of puberty is earlier and deadlier) until the mid-thirties (when somehow the white middle-class male outgrows living at home, roaming from dead-end job to dead-end job, and harboring wild impossible fantasies, and slouches into being a responsible family man). This would have been an endlessly fascinating study, but Mr. Kimmel unfortunately fails to deliver, and instead offers a litany of the sins, disappointments, and grievances of the white middle-class male: too much sports, too much hazing, too much pornography, too much anger and violence, too much video-games. Why can't men grow up, and accept their emotional complexity as human beings and reach out to all humanity? This is all established psycho-babble thanks to "Real Boys" and "Raising Cain" and "Reviving Ophelia" (trendsetters that all are mentioned in this work), but Mr. Kimmel takes us from the merely melodramatic to the outrageously insane: to defeat the culture of entitlement (it is true that white middle-class males are all incredibly spoiled), the culture of silence (no one likes a rat, right?), and the culture of protection (is society too tolerant of the misbehavior of males?) that help to spawn the nefarious bleak world that is Guyland, Mr. Kimmel proposes massive school, family, and government intervention. Mr.

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