

## **Sex & Masculinity**

### **Don Sabo's "The Myth of the Sexual Athlete"**

Sabo discusses connections between sports and male sexuality.

1. Locker-room sex talk promotes sexual behavior but stigmatizes intimacy with women.
2. Sex as sport: dating is defined in terms of "scoring." Having sex with no emotional involvement is "a mark of masculine achievement." "Sexual relationships are games in which women are seen as opponents, and his scoring means her defeat."
3. Performance and patriarchy: "Many athletes organize their energies and perceptions about a performance ethic that influences sexual relations. Men apply their goal-directedness and preoccupation with performance to their lovemaking."

Sabo argues that many men are suffering from "sexual schizophrenia": "Their minds lead them toward eroticism while their hearts pull them toward emotional intimacy. What they think they want rarely coincides with what they need."

## Grazian's "The Girl Hunt"

"Girl hunting": heterosexual adolescent males aggressively seek out female sexual partners in dance clubs, cocktail lounges, and other public arenas of commercialized entertainment in the city at night."

However, research suggests this is an ineffective method of finding sexual partners.

Method: analysis of firsthand narrative accounts by 243 heterosexual male college students at Penn.

Grazian claims that girl hunting is a collective performance of masculinity:

The girl hunt "is as much *ritualistic and performative* as it is utilitarian— it is a social drama through which young men perform their interpretations of manhood."

Girl hunting "is not always a purely heterosexual pursuit but can also take the form of an inherently *homosocial* activity."

"The emotional effort and logistical deftness required by rituals of sexual pursuit (and by extension the public performance of masculinity itself) encourage some young men to seek out safety in numbers by participating in the girl hunt as a kind of *collective* activity, in which they enjoy the social and psychological resources generated by group cohesion and dramaturgical teamwork."

"Young men employ a set of collective "hunting" strategies designed to (1) reinforce what I call 'the myth of the pickup' and other dominant expectations of masculine behavior; (2) boost confidence in one's performance of masculinity and heterosexual power; and (3) assist in the performance of masculinity in the presence of women."

Before the girl hunt, men engage in collective rituals of confidence building. During the girl hunt, men perform for and cooperate with each other, e.g., as "wingmen." While men may enjoy performing masculinity, it also "promotes social inequality and subordinate behavior *among men*."