

The Rise in Cortisol in Family Daycare: Associations With Aspects of Care Quality, Child Behavior, and Child Sex

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2946618/pdf/nihms190593.pdf>

Both anxious vigilance and angry, aggressive behavior were observed more in boys than girls. Given the association with the cortisol rise, this would suggest that boys might have experienced more stress at child care than girls. However, as noted above, we found no gender difference in cortisol at daycare. Rather, we found that gender moderated the associations of behavior and rise in cortisol over the day. For boys, larger cortisol increases were associated with more angry, aggressive behavior, while for girls it was associated with more anxious, vigilant behavior.

That is, larger cortisol increases were observed for the girls who, in addition to being anxious and vigilant, were also less socially integrated into the daycare setting. Our scoring of positive social integration was based on whether the child was central to the action, such that if the child left the activity or decided to change the activity then the other children would follow or play would stop. When combined with anxious, vigilant behavior, our summary score may have reflected anxiety over threats to goals of having and maintaining relationships with peers.

If by this young age social relationships are beginning

This argument does not explain why we obtained a significant association between angry, aggressive behavior and the rise in cortisol for boys but not girls.

For boys it may have been a reflection of salient threats to agency, which, even at this age, may be a more central goal for boys than girls. Indeed, this would be consistent with evidence that as early as one year of age, loss of control (agency) over a loud, noise-making toy elicits more negative affectivity in boys than girls (e.g., Gunnar, 1980), as well as evidence of gendered differences in adulthood in the role of fighting and asserting dominance or control versus seeking relationships in coping with threatening situations (Taylor et al., 2000).

The data for angry, aggressive behavior and stress for boys, however, was even more nuanced than gendered association with intrusive, over controlling care would suggest. Specifically, in the moderation analyses we found that among boys, angry and aggressive behavior moderated the association between warm, supportive care and the cortisol rise. Specifically, we found that it was the boys who scored low on this measure whose cortisol rise at child care was associated with the degree of warm and supportive care they received. Under conditions of low warmth and support they showed large increases in cortisol over the day, while under conditions of high warmth they show small increases that were well within the norm for cortisol changes over the day at home. Boys scoring high on angry, aggressive behavior did not show any modulation of the cortisol response to child care in relation to care provider warmth and support. This moderation effect was the opposite of that predicted based on arguments that children who are more vulnerable to behavior problems (e.g., externalizing-type problems in this case) might be more sensitive to variations in care quality. However, as boys were more aggressive than girls, it may be that boys scoring low on angry, aggressive behavior may have had more difficulty managing play with other boys and thus may have been more dependent on the degree of warm, supportive care they were receiving from the care provider.

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Gunnar et al.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxYs2Pv86WA&list=TLPQMTMwNjIwMjSslxbflZorZg&index=3>
Japanese men stay in their bedroom refuse contact and eat in secret

The study found that frequent worries or demands, generated by partners and children, were linked to a 50%-100% increased risk of death from all causes. Men seemed to be particularly

Silent Men film asks why so many still struggle to open up
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The topic of male mental health has received much more prominence in the last decade - something many would argue is long overdue.

But while the high rates of male suicide have put the topic firmly on the national agenda - huge numbers of men still find it difficult to be openly vulnerable and discuss their feelings.

"Whereas my experience is when you're a bit more open and vulnerable, that can actually lead to stronger relationships, and therefore more joy, connection and fulfilment. And yet still we're drawn to being closed off."

Cowles' friend Ainslie says his outlook changed after having a baby
The idea of men suffering in silence is nothing new. It was 1854 when Henry David Thoreau wrote: "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation."

The fact that the essayist's most famous observation has survived for 170 years and is still quoted so widely today is a testament to its relatability - but also of how little progress has been made.

Thoreau tapped into a feeling many men have, both then and now, of being unfulfilled - whether that's in their career, relationships or for reasons they can't quite put their finger on.

Overwhelmed by the commitments or mundanity of day-to-day life, while simultaneously unwilling or unable to voice their emotions, men often find it hard to cope.

Blue blanket theory

"I suppose it's always been something I've struggled with, opening up and showing emotions around family," Cowles says of his reasons for making the film.

"While I was at university, I'd done a little film which investigated that, but it always felt like this thing that I hadn't fully resolved in my life."

Setting out to explore the subject further at the start of the film, Cowles posts an advert online, looking for men to speak to for the documentary. He then goes to interview some of those who reply.

He travels around the country and speaks to men from different walks of life over several years. At one point, he attends a retreat where men gather for a weekend to do group therapy.

"I wanted to go on my own journey, parallel to speaking to men as part of the film. But it turned into a more personal film than I expected," he explains.

Cowles meets Larry (right), who invites him to a retreat where men gather for a weekend to do group therapy

The Scottish filmmaker interviews members of his own family and studies how their personalities shaped his own. "My dad likes drilling holes in the wall, and his stamps, but he's not big on verbal communication," Cowles notes early on - painting a picture of fathers many will recognise.

One trauma specialist interviewed for the film cites a study which found that babies in blankets - and therefore assumed to be boys - were touched for significantly less time than girls.

"So that's really interesting, what are we doing in our culture about socialising boys to not be touched as much, not be seen as vulnerable, not need emotional support as much as girls?" she asks.

"The toughening up - 'be a brave boy, big boys don't cry' - that process of making you into a man, where someone has told you that that's what a man is, that a man has got to be emotionally strong.

"There are all these social constructs that kind of trap you, which is causing huge numbers of mental health issues for guys. We've got a big problem on our hands."

Silent Men is Cowles' first feature documentary, but he previously won a Bafta Scotland award for his short film Isabella.

The film begins with Cowles setting out to be able to tell his parents he loves them

Asked if it was difficult to get the men featured in the film to talk about their feelings, Cowles replies: "Strangely not, because there's something about speaking to a stranger that can sometimes feel a lot easier than speaking to someone who's in your own family. I guess it's because you've less to lose."

The insights from other men make for interesting viewing. One contributor, Ainslie, says his outlook changed after having a baby. But not necessarily in the way you might think - he says the responsibility of being a father actually meant there was less time and opportunity to find room for expressing his own emotions.

Another man, Dom, tells his young son constantly how much he loves him, and says he hated the thought of anybody close to him dying without knowing how much they meant to him.

One of the film's most affecting - and funniest - moments comes when the microphone Cowles' brother is using cuts out after the battery dies, and he uses that exact moment, when he can't fully be heard, to tell Duncan: "I love you."

Dom says he hated the thought of someone close to him dying without him telling them how much he cared about them

Despite all the heavy talk, the film is peppered with moments of levity - the director occasionally cuts away abruptly from tough conversations to run footage of soothing shorelines and bumble bees on flowers.

"One thing I really wanted to do with this film is make it feel accessible, not all mental health based, but [to] also contain humour and leave people with a smile on their face," he says.