

## IS RAMBO A REAL MAN?

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[Assignment: Respond to the essays we have read and the issues we have discussed concerning gender roles by writing an essay that makes a point about gender; you can write about your own experience or you can analyze the ideas of writers we have read. Construct your paper as a comparison or as an exemplification essay.]

(1) With sweat glistening on his rippling muscles, Sylvester Stallone grasps his machine gun at his waist. With a sneer on his lips, he pulls the trigger and showers an enemy with bullets. Many movie-goers may remember this scene from Rambo. Action-adventure movies like Rambo, Indiana Jones, or Predator often have a male figure as their main character who is always muscular, unintelligent, mechanically gifted, and courageous. Speaking as a male, I feel such stereotypes generate a false image of the male gender.

(2) Let's take a look at Rambo for example. All of Rambo's actions exemplify this sense of aggression. Rambo flies through a Vietnamese village and destroys everything. He does not sneak into the village to retrieve the prisoners for whom he is sent. Instead, he finds the prisoners and then kills everybody else in sight. Besides being aggressive, Rambo remains unemotional throughout the movie. He feels no guilt after killing hundreds of men. Nor does he cry for his companion who is killed in fighting; he only becomes more aggressive and vengeful. The movie portrays the male as a shallow being who is concerned only with survival, like the primitive men of the Stone Age. With only grunts and snorts for language, he lives his life in hope of surviving day by day. However, I can vouchsafe from my own experience that such a conception of the male gender is far from accurate. I am not afraid of crying or showing my emotions in public. I know that Rambo will not be standing at his grandma's funeral with tears coming down his face, but I know that I will. Also, I feel that I tend to remain quiet, shy, and passive, instead of being aggressive. I stay away from such sports as football and hockey which require much aggression. And I know that there are many other men like me. Not all men may be shy or quiet but nor are they like Rambo.

(3) Another movie that portrays this false image is Predator with Arnold Schwarzenegger. First of all, the physical appearance of all the men in the movie creates a false image that males as a rule are all muscular and extremely strong. The actors in the movie seem to be wrestlers or body builders who are perhaps on steroids. Certainly, such an image is inaccurate in representing the male gender because we do not see men the size of Schwarzenegger very often. To build his body to Schwarzenegger's proportions, an average man would take

several years and give up, in the process, many other enriching activities in his life. Also, Predator depicts males as having superb mechanical and scientific abilities. In one scene, Schwarzenegger builds an elaborate trap made of vines and tree branches that catches an alien being. From talking to my peers and from my own experiences, I feel not all men are that mechanically adroit. My father has difficulty understanding such things as the VCR or my stereo. Finally, Predator suggests that the male is a self-sufficient loner. Schwarzenegger is a "one man army" who manages to destroy an invisible alien that killed his companions. In all action-adventure movies, men take on armies by themselves. In contrast, I am a more dependent person who relies on his friends and parents for support. For instance, I found the switch to college difficult because I was so dependent on my group of friends for enjoyment and my parents for guidance. Schwarzenegger relies on himself while I rely on others.

(4) A final example of action-adventure movies which create false images of males is the Indiana Jones series. Indiana Jones is portrayed as a courageous hero-figure with no fears. He always acts with confidence in times of pressure. For example, in Raiders of the Lost Ark, Indiana Jones is chasing a truck which holds the Ark of the Covenant. He rides up to the truck, jumps onto it, and kills all the men except one. This man throws him under the truck. Jones manages to attach a rope to the bottom of the moving truck and drags himself back up. Then, he kills the final enemy and gains his treasure. Such scenes highlight the absolute determination and the remarkable courage of Indiana Jones. He is fearless against heavy odds. But not all men are like Jones. I know that I lose confidence in times of pressure. Sometimes I do poorly on important tests because I become nervous and start feeling insecure. So too others sometime fail as, for instance amateur athletes, because they too cannot handle the competition and the pressure. The fearless hero, Indiana Jones, may be a satisfying fantasy but he is a false image of the male gender as a whole.

(5) Society finds such fictional heroes entertaining. I have to admit that even I enjoy such movies. In fact, I saw Rambo four times! But however entertaining, these movies are inadequate representations of the real male today. Real men are very different from these men in the movies. It may be difficult to classify what exactly is a real man but whatever he is he is very far from the men of the movies.