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So, Three UC Regents Walk Into a Bar ...

Here's a trick question: How many UC regents does it take to screw in a light bulb?

Well, one of them would surely feign outrage for the preference awarded based on the light bulb's skin color. Another would lament that all of this light-bulb-screwing is surely hurting the quality of the university and its students. A third would indignantly call a press conference and demand an independent audit into why the light bulb has not, in fact, been screwed in. In the end, though, not much would get done.

That scenario would be funny if it didn't hit so close to home in



Hats Off

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describing the UC Board of Regents, which spearheads perhaps one of the more dysfunctional and incompetent bodies in California state government.

Though the regents rarely leave their posh meeting facilities up at UC San Francisco to make the pilgrimage to other UC campuses, their role in the lives of students cannot be understated: Regents make all official university policies, set tuition-fee levels and approve new building plans. Which is why all students should be worried about the inadequacy (if not incompetence) of the bunch currently at the helm.

In recent years, the University of California has been plagued by a seemingly never-ending series of scandals. There were the missing secret computer files and injuries at the UC-managed nuclear lab in Los Alamos. Then there was mismanagement of the university's pension fund. And then there were UCLA officials who illicitly sold corpses donated to the university for medical research on the black market. (That last one was my favorite.)

In all of these controversies, the regents ended up with egg on their face; their inability to rein in the unwieldy campuses and the UC Office of the President has only become more apparent in recent months, with increased scrutiny into the university's compensation practices. The scrutiny has suggested that the regents are as much in the dark as everyone else.

When the *San Diego Union-Tribune* first made news of Chancellor Marye Anne Fox's undisclosed hiring bonus, the regents were equally surprised. "It's disappointing to learn there was a package put together that I didn't know about," Regent John Moores told the paper.

When the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on a slush fund that pays UC executives who quit working, former Regent Ward Connerly pondered: "Why are individuals getting 'severance' payments for voluntarily resigning from a job?"

And of the *Union-Tribune* story about Fox serving as a director of 11 corporations and nonprofits? "That's a lot of boards," Regent Judith Hopkinson said.

Yes, a lot indeed.

One explanation for why the

[KOGAN, page 6]

The Lost Boys

Why do we fret over female adolescents while males commit suicide at higher rates?

Can a stereotype kill you? Eighty-six percent of all adolescent suicides are committed by males. And it doesn't get much better with age; across all age groups, males are four times more likely to commit suicide than females. In fact, suicide is the eighth-leading cause of death for all American men. And suicide is the second-leading cause of death among college students.

Even more disturbing, everyday culturally-accepted "male" behavior is being cited as the cause of alarming statistics such as these.

Researchers at the University of Cincinnati suggest that in the western world, and the U.S. in particular, there exist a lot of "cultural messages about what it means to be masculine," including the beliefs that men don't cry or show emotion, that men have to be physically and emotionally strong, and that men can take care of themselves and shouldn't ask for help. Of course, this is certainly not a new revelation. Ideals and assumptions about men are so ingrained into our culture that we don't even notice them. Allegedly, men never ask for directions or talk about emotions with their friends. The opposite stereotype is that women overdo it when it comes to talking about their feelings. But perhaps the lack of an emotional outlet for males is literally killing them.

"Women process their experiences with friends. They discuss their feelings, seek feedback and take advice,"

said George E. Murphy, M.D. and professor of psychiatry at the Washington University School of Medicine, in an article for *Science Daily*. This approach to problem solving often leads women to seek professional help and makes them "much more likely to tell a physician how they feel and cooperate in the prescribed treatment, and as a result, women get better treatment for their depression."

Men, in contrast, often shun professional help because it is just not considered manly to seek treatment. And it's not just for emotional problems either. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Men are twice as likely as women to go two years or more without seeing a physician." Perhaps this is part of the reason why men generally have higher levels of substance abuse and are more likely to suffer chronic conditions and fatal diseases than women. Murphy worries that men believe they "are supposed to be competent in all areas" and thus avoid any action, like seeking advice, which may show a supposed weakness. It's childish to associate seeking medical help with weakness, but, unfortunately, society has conditioned many men to equate the two.

A typical man may not even acknowledge his problems, let alone see a professional about them. It's the same reason why some fraternities compete in binge drinking, or why guys brag about how many women they've slept with — those acts are matters of maintaining social status among male peers. And as anyone who's tried to stage an intervention knows, it's especially hard to help someone who won't even admit to having a problem.

The shocking fact is that women attempt suicide almost twice as much as men, yet it is men who are four times more likely to succeed. The attempts of women usually include methods that allow for second thoughts or rescue, such as an overdose of sleeping pills. Men tend to use handguns or ropes to end their lives, methods that are lethally effective and perhaps imply that they are deeply afraid of being saved.

"Power and control are critically important to men," said Lanny Berman, executive direc-

tor of the American Association of Suicidology, in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. To be known as someone who attempted suicide would suggest not only weakness, but also incompetence, a status that is "antithetical to the traditional male role."

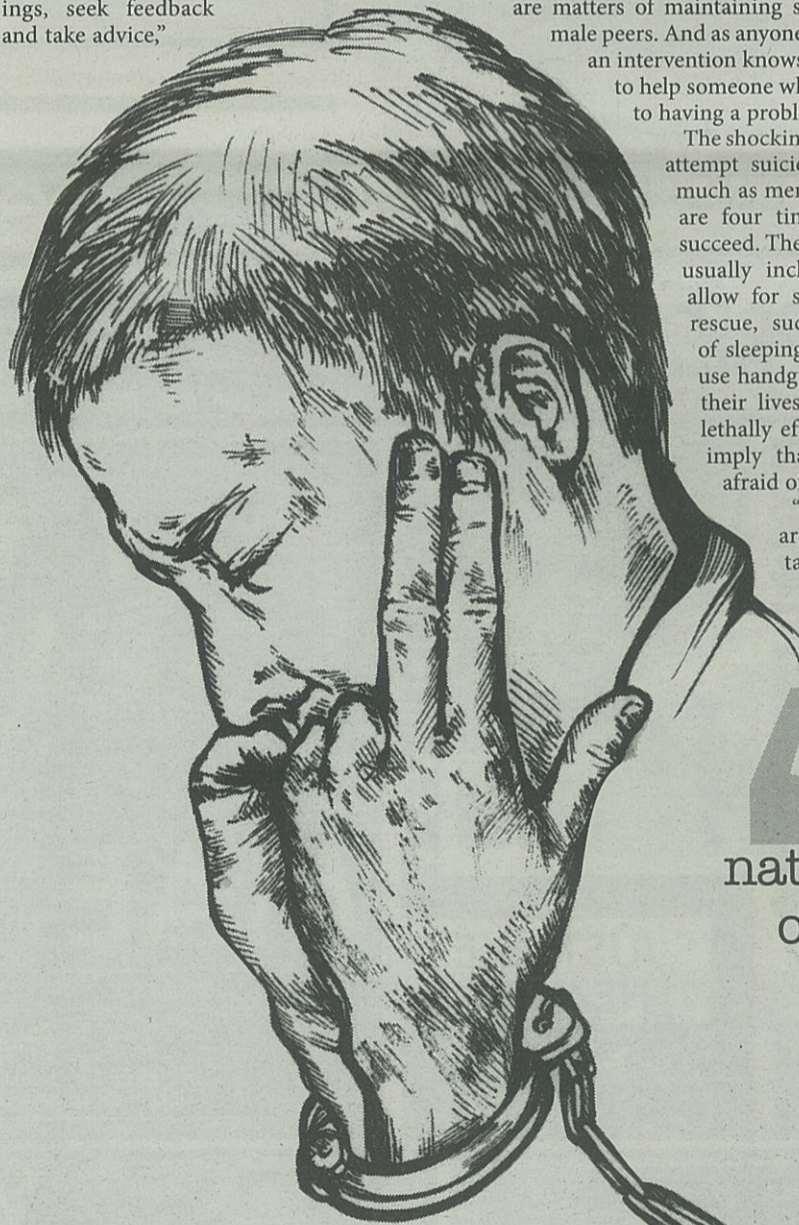
The disconnect between suicide success levels in males and females is staggering, and a person might reasonably expect that there would be all sorts of studies and foundations dedicated to eradicating it. And there are — in other countries. In the United Kingdom, the Doctor Patient Partnership, the British Medical Association and the Samaritans are working together on a campaign that targets potential male suicides by distributing literature and educating doctors on how to talk to their patients. An interview study was conducted in Cambridge and Sheffield on male masculinity and how it affected their emotional well-being. In Australia, the issue has been on the table for several years along with the potent concern that boys are continually and dramatically falling behind girls in the classroom. The "Inquiry into the Education of Boys" came out in 1999 and explored how modern methods of raising and educating boys affected the "quality of their lives as adults" and was particularly concerned with the high suicide rate among them. Yet there is little or no funding in our own country for this type of research.

Berman laments the fact that investors aren't interested in boys and men. "As much as I would love to lead the charge, try to go out and get funding for it, if there is no research money available, no academician is going to go that route," he said.

Some may argue that these stereotypes are such a central part of who we are that it is impossible to change them. But that's simply because the root of this problem lies in societal values and norms shouldn't deter people from addressing it. Just look at what the feminist movement did for feminine education and careers — the same must happen with male ideas of machismo and self-sufficiency.

But in order to change the trend, it is necessary to get people to care about the problem in the first place. The problem must be recognized and studied, solutions must be formulated and ultimately put into place. And there lies the rub: America has problems acknowledging that the naturally treasured stereotype of the rugged, independent, emotionally hard man is actually hurting us.

But acknowledge the problem we must. Research money must be given, and the hardened facades of our troubled males must be cracked.



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By Megan Durham
STAFF WRITER

JENNIFER HSU/GUARDIAN