

Pollacks spin on depression in boys: some persuasive insights



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Pollack's Spin on Depression in Boys: Some Persuasive Insights In his essay, *Why Boys Become Depressed*, William F. Pollack confronts the conventional wisdom and suggests rather strongly that psychological causes are also important to understanding adolescent depression in males. He does not criticize the conventional understanding that depression is a product of certain biological conditions, such as imbalances in neurotransmitter levels; quite the contrary, he merely argues that there are psychological factors which affect and interact with the more well-established biological causes. His thesis suggests a broadening of the inquiry into male adolescent depression rather than a refutation of other views wholesale. This essay will argue that Pollack's thesis is arguable, that it is fairly clear, and that it is carefully and appropriately qualified.

As an initial matter, Pollack's thesis is arguable. It is arguable because there is empirical evidence by reputable authorities in the field to support his thesis. Rather than relying on authorities sensitive to his particular point of view, likely to support his thesis, Pollack instead cites research by scholars more inclined to the biologically-based theories of depression in adolescent males. In his essay, for instance, he cites a study by Joan Girgus and some of her fellow researchers at Princeton University. These researchers designed research to study the biological causes of depression in adolescent males, they hypothesized that depression in adolescent girls would be far more related to popularity and self-esteem than in the case of boys, and then their research findings were more in line with Pollock's thesis than with their own original hypothesis. By demonstrating that those opposed to his particular thesis were mistaken, Pollack's thesis becomes more plausible and stronger.

He neither attempts to discredit biological causes nor seeks to supplant
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existing theories wholesale. His argument is measured, detached, and objective. His thesis is very arguable.

In addition, his thesis is fairly clear. He defines his terms, he delineates the well-established causal factors influencing male adolescent depression, and he proposes a broadening of the causal analysis using psychological factors.

The biological causes of male adolescent depression are stated explicitly and technically. The psychological causes, however, are vaguer; to be sure, Pollack identifies the differential treatment of boys and girls, and the "gender straightjacket" which he suggests contributes to the onset or the exacerbation of depression. However, while the biological causes seem well-settled, there is much less precision when he discusses the psychological factors. His thesis is not denigrated, though, because he is simply proposing an open-mind and additional research; given the nature of this plea for additional research into how psychological factors interact with biological factors, the lack of precision and clarity is natural. It cannot be otherwise and still retain its integrity. Pollack's thesis is simply setting the stage for more debate, and it will be for other researchers to lend precision and clarity to the exact nature of this interaction suggested by his thesis.

Finally, Pollack makes great efforts to qualify his thesis. He does this by choosing the words he uses very specifically and very carefully, by using research data from opposed schools of thought, and by acknowledging different points of view and that interaction between possible psychological causes and biological causes is preferable to severing the inquiry into different parts. In the aforementioned study conducted by researchers at Princeton University, he presents results which both support his thesis and which do not support his thesis entirely. In addition, he emphasizes an <https://assignbuster.com/pollacks-spin-on-depression-in-boys-some-persuasive-insights/>

interaction of causal factors rather than a displacement of causal factors.

The very way in which he has constructed his essay is by qualification. He is a careful writer and a careful and honest thinker.

In the final analysis, Pollack creates, supports, and defends his thesis very well. The thesis is arguable, as clear as it can be given the emphasis on the biological factors in the academic community, and carefully qualified to avoid overstating his position.

References