

# **Rulers of the world: New book reveals what makes rich and powerful men tick**

April 16 2007

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They have been described as 'sacred monsters' by one of their own. Now a new book looks beyond the headlines to reveal that many of the world's most powerful men were shaped by remarkably similar childhood experiences.

'Ruling Class Men: Money, Sex, Power' examines the lives, childhoods, schooling, work and play, sexual activities, marriages and deaths of some of the world's wealthiest men ranging from the Packer and Murdoch dynasties to the likes of Conrad Black, J. Paul Getty and members of the British Royal family. It also exposes the nature of ruling class masculinity itself.

The authors of 'Ruling Class Men: Money, Sex, Power' found a common theme: That extremely wealthy men often missed out on loving relationships at an early age with their parents and were all too often raised in environments that discouraged intimacy.

One of the book's authors, Associate Professor, Scott Poynting, from the University of Western Sydney's School of Humanities and Languages, notes that Kerry Packer revealed he saw little of his parents when he was at school.

"He didn't see his father at all between the ages of five and nine, and his mother, perhaps half a dozen times, even though the school he attended was a stone's throw away from the family home," Associate Professor Poynting says.

"Members of royal families often suffered a similar fate. When they embarked on a tour of the Commonwealth, the Queen and Prince Philip did not see their children for six months. The Queen later revealed that when reunited with their parents, the children 'were terribly polite ... I don't think they really knew who we were,' she has said."

"For many sons of rich and powerful men, time spent with their fathers was so scarce and so tightly organised, many of the boys felt there was something lacking in their relationships with their fathers. Invariably, that lack of intimacy would affect their ability to form close relationships in later life," he says.

In researching the backgrounds, desires and fears of extremely wealthy men, Associate Professor Poynting and his co-author, Dr Mike Donaldson, from the University of Wollongong, found that ruling-class boys are toughened, hardened and disciplined within a limited social environment which isolates from everyone else who is not like them.

"In school, they learn hierarchy, bullying, distrust of closeness and determination to prevail. As adults, their ceaseless acquisitiveness, and the commodification of all facets of their lives then becomes a moral force to their mindset of superiority," Associate Professor Poynting says.

In another point of difference in the lives of extremely wealthy men, the authors found that as boys, they grow up with the knowledge that most of the nurturing they receive is provided by people whose services are paid for. Yet in having all their needs provided for, they lose the need for basic life skills.

"They may tower above the world and see themselves as monarchs, statesmen and generals, yet Kerry Packer saw himself as a man 'with a big black hole inside him'," Associate Professor Poynting says.

Source: University of Western Sydney

Citation: Rulers of the world: New book reveals what makes rich and powerful men tick (2007, April 16) retrieved 8 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-04-rulers-world-reveals-rich-powerful.html>

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