

Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture

AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO
THE COMPLEXITIES AND CHALLENGES
OF MALE IDENTITY

THOMAS KEITH



Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture

Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture offers readers a multidisciplinary, intersectional overview of masculinity studies that includes both theoretical and applied lenses. Keith combines current research with historical perspectives to demonstrate the contexts in which masculine identities have evolved. With an emphasis on popular culture—particularly film, TV, video games, and music—this text invites students to examine their gendered sensibilities and discuss the ways in which different forms of media appeal to toxic masculinity.

Thomas Keith received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California, specializing in American philosophy with an emphasis on issues of race, gender, and class. He has published numerous articles on the intersection of gender, media, and popular culture, appeared on TV and radio programs, and produced two best-selling films for Media Education Foundation: *Generation M: Misogyny in Media and Culture* (2008), and *The Bro Code: How Contemporary Culture Creates Sexist Men* (2011). In 2015, Keith released his third film for MEF entitled *The Empathy Gap: Masculinity and the Courage to Change*, and continues to speak to audiences around the country on issues of masculinity, gender violence, media, and popular culture.

With this book, Thomas Keith has captured the essence of both long existing tensions and changing notions of masculinity in American culture. This is both an interdisciplinary and intersectional account of men's lives. Easy to read, comprehensive, and even entertaining, *Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture* is the most relevant Masculinities textbook on the market.

Eric Anderson. Professor of Sport, Masculinities and Sexualities, University of Winchester, England

Tom Keith's introduction to Masculinities Studies is a most welcome addition to a growing field. Sure-handed, level-headed, both judicious and clear, he gives us the next generation of introductory text: steeped in intersectional thinking, taking diversity as its starting point, not the "problem" to be explained.

Michael Kimmel Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies, Stony Brook University

This volume offers a comprehensive compendium of the terms and concepts needed to analyze *Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture*. A valuable introduction to popular and academic approaches to understanding representations of masculinities and how men are engendered, full of up-to-date, engaging examples.

Harry Brod, Professor of Sociology and Humanities, University of Northern Iowa

Dr. Thomas Keith's new book is proof that there are a numerous amount of innovative ways to engage traditional material. With a philosopher's approach to unpacking complex material, yet through the lens of an ex-musician, Dr. Keith tells a profoundly lyrical story that feels like he himself authored the manual for making dysfunctional men, just so that he could tell us how to make repairs. If you are interested in acquiring the tools to create conversations that lead to deeper understanding, personal epiphanies, and yes, revelations for men to self-reflect and own the fact that we can actually be better, and more importantly, do better, then there is no better place to start your exploration than with Dr. Keith's intersectional approach. This is the new book that the academy will be talking about.

Dr. J.W. Wiley, Chief Diversity Officer and Lecturer, Philosophy & Interdisciplinary Studies, SUNY Plattsburgh and Author of *The NIGGER In You: Challenging Dysfunctional Language, Engaging Leadership Moments*

Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture

**An Intersectional Approach
to the Complexities and
Challenges of Male Identity**

Thomas Keith

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To my wife Leslie, my son Jordan, and to the courageous men and women who have served in the military, faced combat, and returned to a nation that needs to better support them.



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Preface

The early twenty-first century has witnessed a much more pronounced interest in issues of gender. An interest in masculinities, in particular, has emerged as desire for a more forensic account of masculinity has grown. One could say that since the arrival of the women's movement, questions about manhood and masculinity began to form around some basic concerns: Why do men dominate positions of power in America? Why do men commit far more violence than women? Why do men, on average, die younger than women? Why do men commit suicide at higher rates than women? Why are men incarcerated at higher rates than women? Why are men more emotionally stoic and less likely to seek out counseling than women? Why do men have difficulties going to a doctor for a routine checkup? As time passed, more questions arose: Why are men seemingly more homophobic than women? Why do men make up the majority of homeless people in America? Are men happy with their lives? These questions and others continued to be asked so that it was a foregone conclusion that, at some point, courses in men and masculinities would appear alongside courses in women's studies. Today, most universities have courses in gender studies that also include at least one course on men and masculinities. This text has been written to construct a disciplinarily diverse, intersectional account of masculinities that explores these forensic questions. The examination of men and masculinities, like the study of women and femininities, is complex and cannot be reduced to investigating only sociological, psychological, or theoretical accounts, although these disciplines provide important insight into American masculine construction. An understanding of the multiple factors that construct the various masculine performances and identities we witness today require an integration of a variety of disciplines that include sociology, psychology, anthropology, biology, communications and media studies, education studies, cultural studies, history, philosophy, political theory, economics, religious studies, and no doubt other areas of inquiry not taken up in this text. In fact, the word 'masculinity' is pluralized in the title of this text to acknowledge the fact that there is no one, guiding set of traits or influences that account for 'masculinity'. Increasingly, what is considered to be 'masculine' is undergoing nuanced changes in American culture that incorporates both traditional and nonconforming masculinities that are also responsive to differences in culture, religion, political alliance, generational variation, levels of education, socioeconomics, diverse gender identities, and sexual orientation. Needless to say, the notion of a traditional gender binary into which people can be neatly divided is no longer tenable if it ever was.

So, what accounts for the multitude of masculinities? As the multidisciplinary approach suggests, there is a complex set of influences that construct masculinities. From parental and family influence to the influences of media, sports and music culture, to niche cultural influences, to biology and more, masculine identities are rich, subtle, and diverse. This is not to say that hegemonic versions of masculinity do not continue to exist. There are, in fact, certain masculine templates that dominate popular culture, but

these templates are becoming more varied and are seen more prominently within masculine subcultures than throughout American culture at large. Media is a good reflector against which to approximate the multiplicity of masculine styles on display in America. Even a casual look at media representations of men makes this point about masculine diversity abundantly clear. From the hyper-aggressive tough guys of action-adventure films to wealthy playboys who wield great power over others, media representations of men lionize affluent, powerful men as one of the most common masculine templates in contemporary popular culture. But there are also plenty of media depictions of men that diverge from the hypermasculine archetype and could even be considered antithetical to the tough-guy prototype found in most action-adventure, summertime movies aimed at teen audiences. Many if not most boys and young men actually do not connect with the prototypical media tough-guys that proliferate mediated popular culture, and for these boys and young men, alternate and sometimes nonconforming versions of masculinity feel more comfortable. So, at a time when issues of gender and sexuality have exploded onto college and university campuses, the many issues bound up in manhood and masculinities have found an equally robust interest among college students and academicians alike. This text is designed to stimulate, explore, and respond to the increase in interest over men and masculine identities that is intriguing students and faculty across America today. In so doing, an emphasis on intersectionality will be made to better understand the complexities and challenges that attend men of color, ethnic diversity, nonconforming gender identities, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class.

Ideas on How to Use This Text

Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture: An Intersectional Approach to the Complexities and Challenges of Male Identity has been crafted to work as either a stand-alone textbook that takes students on a journey through the complexities of masculine identities or as a work that can be supplemented with readings from appropriate anthologies. The chapters are designed to provide requisite contemporary research on men and masculinities along with some historical perspective to better understand the contexts in which masculine identities have come about and evolved over time. This is particularly true in the chapter on patriarchy and the media chapters. But the text is also designed to spark discussion and thought on the many questions that remain for scholarship on masculinities, questions that students can address in organized class discussion and coursework. Throughout the text, “Thought Boxes” are found that can assist instructors in devising homework or in-class group work or individual assignments that can also create discussion topics for wider student participation. In addition, Inset Boxes are provided to highlight certain movements, individuals, streams of research, or specialty topics around which in-class discussions can be framed. The goal of the text is to integrate fact and theory within an intersectional framework so that the diversity of masculine expression and identities can be appreciated from both perspectives. Theory in the absence of fact becomes a labyrinth of speculation, while fact in the absence of theory can create a disparate collection of points in need of coherence. So, a profitable approach to using this text is to frame certain issues around several theories of gender and masculinities and to then use the research as support for or in opposition to certain theories as the case may be.

One of the most salient features of this text that makes it both original and relevant to young people is the emphasis placed on popular culture, and particularly the areas of popular culture that resonate with college-aged people, which include film, TV, video games, and music. This feature of the text allows students to bring into class instances of pop cultural media that appeal to them or that they view as toxic to issues of gender

and masculinities in particular. Instructors can take advantage of student interest in this area to show and discuss TV or film clips, scenes from popular video games, or music videos and lyrics from popular songs or rhymes for analysis. Exercises can include group projects, media presentations, and actual debate in some cases. Since many college students qualify as media experts in terms of the number of hours they spend using media, this element of the text draws young people into discussions that a course steeped in complicated theory and technical terminology will not. In fact, since the visual aspect of gender identity is so pronounced, visual media partners well with pedagogy and course assignments to create a classroom environment ripe for student interaction.

The fact that this text has taken an intersectional approach to issues of masculinities also provides classroom opportunities for discussion and course work. Entire weeks of a quarter or semester can be devoted to analyzing LGBTQ and gender-nonconformist issues as they relate to men and masculinities. The ongoing evolution of popular culture is itself favorable to class discussions on the ways that masculinities are changing and adapting to the nuances of cultural change occurring in education, career, politics, international studies, military culture, social media, journalism, sports culture, fatherhood, fraternity and sorority life, sex, pornography, and many other areas of interest to students who are already immersed in gender studies as well as for those students for whom the course may be their first contact with issues of gender and masculinities.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter one begins with an investigation of patriarchy and the male privileges that men enjoy in patriarchal cultures. When men control governmental and economic power to the exclusion of most or all women, a society is patriarchal in nature. A patriarchal culture is not dependent on laws that mandate male power, but, as witnessed in America, can be the result of a *de facto* set of circumstances that maintain male power. In American culture, for instance, men outnumber women in governmental and executive business positions, including those industries such as banking, finance, and brokerage, where large sums of money are made and invested. Men also dominate certain occupations and enjoy executive positions in far greater number than women in almost every field of employment other than those considered to be traditionally female-centered careers such as nursing and primary school education. So, patriarchal cultures need not be cultures where men exclusively control power, but where men overwhelmingly control power. But it is not the case that all men enjoy male privilege to the same degree, since socio-economics, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, bodied-abilities, cognitive status, and a host of potential factors influence and mitigate male privilege. But with these caveats in mind, the first chapter traces both the historical and contemporary factors that maintain patriarchy in America along with the many advantages that males enjoy in patriarchal cultures.

Chapter two takes up one of the most common explanations for higher levels of aggression and violence in men than witnessed in women: biology. In trying to understand why, on average, men are more violent than women, the default answer that springs from some quarters is the view that men possess more testosterone than women. This biological fact along with other biological and evolutionary factors purport to explain aggression as male dominant. The nature–nurture debate has been around for a long time when attempting to explain human behavior, but with men there has been less examination of the environmental factors that may be contributing to high levels of aggression and violence. The phrase “boys will be boys” sums up the most common way that biology-based explanations are expressed whether wittingly or not. This phrase serves

as a conversation stopper that purportedly reveals why boys seem to play rougher than girls and then subsequently why men are more violent than women. Challenges to nature-based explanations for gendered behavioral differences have been around for a long time as well, but have had to wait until science created a body of evidence to see whether one explanation was better supported than the other. Today, the biological research into gendered behavior comes largely from endocrinology and neuroscience. Longitudinal studies have now been conducted to see whether higher rates of testosterone equate to higher rates of aggression and antisocial behavior. Similarly, neuroscientists have squared off over whether male brains and female brains are significantly different enough to account for gendered behavioral differences. This particular line of research has produced sharp and contentious disagreement. The chapter ends by attempting to understand why biological accounts are both fatalistic and defeatist in terms of successful intervention. If male brains are wired for violence, then little beyond surgical intervention can bring about progressive changes in male behaviors. If, on the other hand, observed gendered behaviors can be explained in terms of culture and environment, opportunities arise that increase the chance of more successful circumstantial intervention. In fact, even if gendered behaviors turn out to be the product of both nature and nurture, there would be greater variance in modes of intervention to counteract problematic behaviors than working from the assumption that biology is the lone efficacious factor in determining male aggression and violence.

Chapter three investigates men's organizations, starting with a critical examination of college fraternities, which have come under great scrutiny over the past couple decades for episodes of hazing and high rates of sexual assault. From there, the chapter takes up organizations that cater specifically to boys such as the Boy Scouts of America. It is important to understand the origins of the Boy Scouts, since it was founded on the view that cosmopolitan life was undermining masculinity. The idea was that city and suburban lifestyles were destroying the toughness associated with uncultivated, rural manliness. These sorts of views are still very much around today and are politicized with conservative pundits claiming that contemporary culture "wussifies" men by coddling boys too much, while also discouraging what they take to be natural aggressive play in boys. A more politically liberal perspective on masculine construction is the view that violence can be decreased only if boys are raised without aggression and violence as the presumed approach to conflict resolution. Given this background, the chapter goes on to examine a variety of contemporary men's groups, some of which can be identified as pro-feminist and others as anti-feminist, including men's rights activists who angrily defend the idea that men are under attack today by women and particularly feminist ideals that they view as undermining male authority. Pro-feminist men's groups respond by arguing that patriarchy is unjust and harmful to both women and men. There are other men's groups that straddle positions of feminism and anti-feminism, but the importance of this chapter lies in understanding how and why these groups formed along with the implications these groups have to the future of masculinities.

Chapter four takes up what many have called a "boy crisis" in America. Statistics suggest that compared to girls, boys are failing out of school, getting lower overall grades, entering colleges and universities at lower rates, getting into more trouble with the law and abusing substances at higher rates. Books have now been written that attempt to explain this boy crisis with ideas about how to turn it around. Some of the analysis places blame on education, claiming that current pedagogy is biased against boys. Others argue that an anti-feminist sentiment is to blame by getting boys to view education as having a softening effect on masculinity, that real men pursue careers of physical labor or specialized technical labor such as plumbing, electrical, construction, contractor, and other areas of the workforce that are dominated by men. Not everyone believes the boy crisis is as bad as critics make it out to be, and that the problems boys are facing have much more

to do with boys living in socioeconomically-depressed environments than they do with educational pedagogy.

Chapter five takes up fatherhood and the many challenges and rewards that face fathers today. Beginning with teen fathers, the chapter traces the more common elements that place teen boys at risk for becoming teen dads and the associated issues that commonly arise for these young men. As with other chapters, the chapter on fatherhood takes an intersectional approach to fatherhood by noting some of the cultural differences in the ways that fatherhood is viewed and practiced. In addition, the challenges of being a single father are explored, including the complaints made by fathers' right groups. Many of the men who gravitate toward fathers' rights groups are angry in the wake of a contentious divorce coupled with what they believe to be injustice in the family court system. This chapter also covers the critiques of fathers' rights groups and most notably the criticisms of sociologist Michael Flood.

Beyond the many challenges for teen and single fathers, this chapter also takes up special challenges for black, Latino, Asian, and Native fathers who struggle with multiple identities beyond the status of "father." Those fathers who are gay also face numerous and unique challenges, not the least of which is dealing with a homophobic society that often condemns gay parenting. In addition to the challenges gay men face in being parents in homophobic America, the challenges can be intense for the sons and daughters who come out to their parents. This is also true for young transgender men and women who fear the reactions of their parents upon learning the gender identities of their children.

Chapter six is the first of three chapters on men and media. In chapter six, the focus turns to heteronormative male representation that also treats violent and aggressive masculinity as a mediated cultural norm. From the hypermasculine portrayals of John Wayne characters in the mid-twentieth century through the more contemporary versions of hypermasculine tough guy characters in action-adventure media, a particular brand of heteronormative masculinity has proliferated American media for generations. Leaning on the work of George Gerbner, chapter six traces the ways that media representation has had an effect on audiences and in this case male audiences. In line with Gerbner's *cultivation theory*, this chapter takes up the ways in which the notion of gender-normality is culturally constructed. If 'normal' is a social construct and if media play a role in shaping this construction, what does the research show about media's effect on boys and men?

In particular, chapter six explores how different versions of heteronormative masculinity are marketed to men of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Whether men hail from working, middle, or wealthy classes, the common themes found in the marketing of masculinity are power, control, autonomy, and an assumed sexual entitlement over women's bodies. Author and antiviolence educator Jackson Katz argues that many boys and men are conditioned by a variety of influences, including media, to adopt a hypermasculine performance Katz terms, *the tough guise*, which is found throughout American culture. The tough guise bifurcates gender and instructs boys that they are defined in large part by what they are not or should not aspire to be: feminine in any way. As boys and men are conditioned to define themselves through the prescription of non-femininity, a conspicuous concern immediately arises: how are boys and men trained to view girls and women?

Chapter six ends with an examination of gendered comedy, and particularly those comedies that purport to appeal to men. Infamously, some male comedians are on record claiming that men are funnier than women. Beyond this sexist quip, chapter six takes up some of the more insidious elements of so-called *guy humor*, a brand of humor that celebrates everything from dangerous risk-taking behaviors to unending vulgarity to homophobia to both mild and violent sexism and rape. In this way, comedy can actually be quite serious. It allows boys and men to bully others who do not enjoy alpha-male privilege and then excuse the bullying by claiming "it's just a joke."

Chapter seven continues the investigation of masculinities and media by focusing on the ways that differing media influence boys and men with respect to their views, choices, and behaviors. From adopting what author Richard Majors terms *the cool pose* to more readily accepting *rape myth* narratives, this chapter traces the various ways media affect men in their views about women. This latter point can be seen most vividly in advertisement, as the marketing of products through sexually objectifying women is commonplace. Authors such as Jean Kilbourne, Mary Pipher, and others have documented the many ways that ads of this kind hurt women; this chapter takes up how these sorts of ads influence men.

However, media as well as American culture in general have witnessed slow, progressive movement toward more diversity of male representation including more diverse depictions of gay and transgender men. At the same time, there has been a backlash to the greater media acceptance of gay and transgender men, and what has been termed the *metrosexual*. A decidedly indignant response to metrosexual masculinity has emerged through shows like *Duck Dynasty*, where a distinctly rustic masculine throwback version of manhood has come to represent a prevailing conservative view about what proper masculine identity in America should be. In a less direct way, some male comedians have found success by appealing to gender and sexual orientation stereotypes to a largely young, male audience.

Chapter seven then takes up video games and gamer culture, which continues to draw its main support from boys and young men. Video games notoriously gender their characters and avatars in wildly stereotypical ways. The male characters are inordinately muscular and violent, while the female characters are hypersexual and often violent as well. Beyond the physical and behavioral stereotypes of the avatars, this section examines gamers themselves to try to better understand whether games and gaming have an effect on the thinking and behaviors of gamers, and in particular whether male gamers internalize the sexist narratives embedded in the games they play.

The chapter ends by explaining the concept of media literacy and why proponents of media literacy believe it is crucial to teach children at the youngest ages the critical thinking tools they need to better understand the gendered messages they receive from media. Currently, primary education avoids discussions about media almost entirely, while children consume media each day at levels never before seen. The concern is that if media contain normative messages, while underage media consumers lack the critical thinking tools to process and understand these messages, how are young people able to critically examine these messages to parse out the regulating gender directives from the product endorsements, and how are these images and directives influencing their lives?

Chapter eight takes up the intersection of masculine identities, masculine performance, and music with an emphasis on the evolving nature of male music artists, lyrics, visual styles, attitudes, and artists' influence on boys and men in wider culture. Music has been and continues to be enormously popular and influential with young people, but the gender dichotomy and masculine representation found in lyrics, video, and artist persona is rarely examined. This chapter redresses this neglect by featuring a lengthy investigation of masculine expression and representation in music. Analyzing both the history and textual accounts of popular music artists, this section of the chapter intends to expose how music plays a normative role in constructing and reinforcing masculine archetypes, some of which are profoundly sexist, homophobic, and consistent with a pervasive cultural code of hypermasculine posturing and heteronormativity. But like all forms of media, music is diverse and male representation has been and continues to be disparate, particularly in some genres of music more than others.

Chapter nine takes up sports culture, beginning with the many ways that sports enhance the lives of boys and men. Beginning in childhood, many boys gravitate or are guided toward sports as part of a typical male upbringing and these experiences can have

a decidedly positive effect on their lives. However, this chapter also investigates some of the negative facets of sports in men's lives, such as the line that some men cross in developing a sports obsession. There is scholarly speculation as to why some men form sports obsessions, while others place fandom in balance with other, more important aspects of their lives. What are the consequences for men who are preoccupied with sports fandom?

This chapter also takes up traumatic brain injury in sports and most notably in football and boxing. Beyond the medical concerns of head trauma and performance enhancing drug use, an important question for this section of the text is whether certain forms of normative masculinity play a role in encouraging men to engage in risk-taking athletic activities. Again, this particular issue like other issues involving men creates some political wrangling over whether boys are being weakened by being diverted away from contact sports. The resistance by many to mitigating sports injury, as one example, may be yet another sign of the conservative backlash to perceived male weakness in contemporary culture.

Another longstanding concern about sports is the locker room environment, where sexism and homophobia in the conversations, taunting, and joking between male athletes are thought to have free reign. The question is whether male team sports promote a sexist, homophobic environment where men feel comfortable to express what otherwise would be considered hateful and politically incorrect speech. A more expansive concern is whether male team sports promote an approval of sexism with cheerleaders that are hypersexualized for male viewing consumption along with the reinforcement of homophobia with the acceptance of slurs as a recognized part of male athletic banter. Several NFL teams have taken a stance against sexualizing cheerleaders and some cheerleaders themselves have expressed disdain for the ways they are treated. The NBA recently broadcast a PSA against the use of homophobic slurs in recognition of the fact that there has been and continues to be a problem, as part of acknowledging that male athletes have an influence on boys and young men.

A final concern for male team sports is the way that intimate partner violence and sexual assault have been handled by league and college officials around the country. With rates of intimate partner violence and sexual assault at exceedingly high levels, if male athletes are role models to boys and young men, how should university and league policy address cases of athletes who commit violence, including sexual violence? Is the answer to this question consistent with the ways that university and league policy currently address violence perpetrated by athletes?

Chapter ten takes up the intersection of men and violence. It is uncontroversial that men commit the lion share of violence in societies around the world. This chapter investigates why experts believe that men, starting in adolescence, engage in more violent acts than women. Since chapter two takes up some of the biological theories for male aggression and violence, this chapter focuses more on the theories that come from psychologists and child-development experts. If violence is not simply the product of biological factors over which little can be done, the obvious question is whether violence can be mitigated through cultural intervention. Specifically, this chapter investigates the power-control theory of delinquency and how hegemonic masculinity may contribute to rates of male violence.

In addition to violence in general, this chapter more specifically investigates sexual violence both in military and civilian populations, where men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators. The chapter continues by examining the interconnections between certain hegemonic forms of masculinity, alcohol usage, sexual assault, and rape. The chapter ends by examining intimate partner violence and how statistics are gathered including the deceptive ways that men's rights activists assemble and report statistics to make it appear that violence is gender equal. What is known is that men commit intimate partner violence at much higher rates than women and perpetrate on average much more

severe levels of injury. Yet, a controversial scale is often used to document cases of intimate partner violence that make it appear as though violence between partners is not a gendered matter. Sociologist Michael Kimmel exposes the many flaws of this scale and explains why the conclusions drawn by men's rights activists are not only erroneous, but dangerous.

Chapter eleven takes up the relationship between men and pornography. The pornography industry has historically been an industry made by men for men. Beginning with the Playboy empire created by Hugh Hefner to today's internet pornography, this chapter begins by tracing the history of pornography in America and the early cultural and political backlash. But the main focus of the chapter is on the ways that pornography usage affects men and relationships. From the many forms of gonzo-pornography that exist online to the forms of rape-porn and other violent forms of pornography available today, the more prevailing questions include why so many men find this sort of porn entertaining and what effects might result from ritualized usage of these forms of pornography.

There are those, of course, who defend pornography and this chapter will take up the debates between pro-pornography feminists and anti-pornography feminists. But ultimately the chapter focuses on how porn usage affects men. From those who argue that pornography serves as a catharsis for sexual violence to those who claim that pornography is useful to couples, porn supporters continue to defend pornography on grounds of utility and agency, while critics view porn use by men not unlike substance abuse with similar sorts of fallout for men, women, and relationships.

The chapter ends with a brief examination of gay pornography along with the phenomenon of "gay for pay" pornography where heterosexual men engage in sex with other men for pay. Gay male scholars tend to view gay male pornography differently than their heterosexual colleagues view heterosexual porn. In most cases, although certainly not all, those scholars who are themselves gay men, and who have written about pornography tend to view it in a positive light. The reasons for this support are investigated along with the arguments offered by gay, male scholars who dissent from this majority view.

Chapter twelve closes out the text with an examination of men, health, and aging, beginning with an examination of the close relationship between men, capitalism, and the ways that material wealth are thought to define masculine success. For generations men were considered to be the bread-winners of the nuclear family, but in the twenty-first century the benchmark for success has increasingly been associated with personal wealth. As wealth and masculinity have been connected in popular culture, high levels of stress and the associated illnesses that are considered stress-related impact men's health. For decades, men have been pushed into believing that a defining role for men is found in their earning ability. Material success was also accompanied by the idea that one needed an outgoing, assertive, "Type-A" personality in order to succeed at peak efficiency. But critics have noted that there have been and continue to be a host of negative consequences for men who push themselves to conform to certain contemporary standards of masculine success.

Today, we also witness an increase in men who are concerned about their physical appearances as the "beauty industry" has begun targeting men with products and services. What was once an industry devoted to appealing to women is now trying to profit from men's insecurities about aging and losing sexual appeal. One of the more interesting parts of this redirection is that an industry that has targeted women has had to find ways to appeal to men without threatening their sense of masculinity. That is, because men have been socialized to view masculinity as non-femininity, and this is particularly true of older men, the beauty industry has had to meet the challenge of getting men to view beauty products and services as being consistent with a masculine identity.

Chapter twelve also focuses on the very high levels of male suicide in America. Men commit suicide at four times the rate of women. Health care professionals, psychologists, and psychiatrists have been trying to understand this phenomenon to see whether the way men are socialized to think of themselves as men is contributing to this problem. We see the same concerns in the military, where suicide rates are extremely high when compared to rates in civilian populations. Military commanders and those within the Pentagon who are entrusted to investigate the health of military personnel are seeking answers to this crisis, and some are taking a harder look at the ways that young men and women are being trained to cope with the pressures of being soldiers and the aftermath of having experienced combat.

The chapter ends with an analysis of what has been termed “mid-life crisis,” which experts agree affects men more than women. The ages that most experts associate with mid-life crisis are mid-30s to late 50s, but individual contingencies make it difficult to narrow to any specific ages or birthdays. There are several identifiable triggering events that can cause some men to experience a more intense mid-life crisis, while others experience very little disruption or anxiety as they travel through middle-age and on to their senior years. One common concern that scholars agree is a constant for many men is the worry that with age they will lose independence, autonomy, and relevance. When asking men to identify some of the things that concern them as they cross certain pivotal birthdays, a frequent worry is that retirement will bring a loss of purpose and identity. One thing scholars agree upon is that when turning to the subject of men and aging, very little research has been conducted, so that almost all experts conclude that much more scholarship needs to be devoted to understanding the challenges that men face as they reach middle-age and beyond. In a culture that seems to worship youth, the current model for older men who are approaching their senior years through the lens of media and popular culture is one of genderless dependency, where their opinions and worth have less value than when they were younger. The challenge for older men is to find relevance and purpose in new, engaging ways.

*Many of the topics raised in one chapter of the text overlap with material covered in other chapters of the text for good reason; when covering patterns of male violence, for instance, the material in the chapter on biology will seep into the chapter on violence. In these cases, footnotes are often employed to refer the reader to other chapters where a topic is taken up again or taken up in more detail or from a different perspective. In covering the many theories in this textbook, many of the cited scholars themselves reviewed and approved of the explication and analysis of their work.



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Patriarchy, Male Privilege, and the Consequences of Living in a Patriarchal Society

*In us colored folks was the great desire to be able to read and write. We took advantage of every opportunity to educate ourselves ... the plantation owners were very harsh if we were caught trying to learn or write. ... Our ignorance was the greatest hold the South had on us.*¹

~excerpt from an interview with Dr. John W. Fields, ex-slave of the Civil War era

*However much it may have been resented, women accepted the idea of their intellectual inequality. In education, in marriage, in religion, in everything disappointment is the lot of women. It shall be the business of my life to deepen that disappointment in every woman's heart until she bows down to it no longer.*²

~abolitionist and nineteenth-century feminist Lucy Stone

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students should be able to respond to the following questions with an understanding of the terms and expressions employed:

- *What is patriarchy? What is male privilege? How are the two related? What is the Marxist theory of patriarchy? How do radical feminist theories of patriarchy differ from Marxist theories? What is the post-structural solution to patriarchy? How do dual-systems feminists view patriarchy?*
- *What are female masculinities? How do they stand as a challenge to maleness, heteronormativity, and heterosexism?*
- *What is earned and unearned privilege? What is the common sense view of privilege? How does privilege differ between men and women? How do class distinctions affect privilege? How does patriarchy affect men and women of color? What is "benevolent patriarchy" and "violent patriarchy"? What is*

“repressed intersectionality”? What are some of the factors that account for why white men earn more money than black men?

- *What are the origins and early justifications for patriarchal practices? How did patriarchy manifest itself in colonial America? How did women respond to being subjected to patriarchal authorities and practices that deprived women of a multitude of rights possessed by men? What are the factors today that provide advantage for white men over men of color in the workforce?*
- *What are the effects of patriarchy in the workforce? How are women influenced by patriarchy today? What is “patriarchal capitalism”? Is there a contemporary pay gap between men and women, and how does patriarchy influence this gap?*
- *What is conscious and unconscious bias? How do these biases reinforce male privilege in academia? What is the difference between descriptive and prescriptive bias? With respect to businesses and law firms, what is meant by an inverse pyramid? What are some of the elements that sustain male privilege in politics, business, law, and academia?*
- *What is benevolent sexism?*
- *What is “the glass ceiling” versus “the glass escalator”?*
- *How does patriarchy and male privilege manifest themselves in language, visual media, and the representations of male and female politicians in journalism?*
- *In what ways is patriarchy being challenged today? Why do some deny the existence of male privilege? What does humanities professor Harry Brod mean by terming masculinities studies, “superordinate studies”?*

Before embarking on the material covered in this textbook, it is important to note that when evaluating boys, men, and issues of masculinity, along with matters of patriarchy and male privilege, the material in this text is not designed to attack boys and men. To the contrary, in many ways boys and men face challenges due to the existence and reinforcement of the same patriarchal structures that harm girls and women. In addition, as we work through the material in this text, it can seem that there is an attempt to point out the worst parts of male culture, particularly when covering media representation, violence, crime, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. While the text uncovers some of the forces that help shape these cultural problems, these same forces harm and limit men in untold ways. It is also important to note, when examining male privilege, that not all males receive privilege to the same degree or in the same way. Many boys grow up being bullied in school or abused at home, and these boys understandably do not connect with the idea that boys and men receive privilege simply from the fact that they are male. In some ways, bullying and other forms of coercion and violence are part of what has been termed *toxic masculinity*, a form of masculinity that creates hierarchies favoring some and victimizing others. Disrupting these forms of toxic masculinity benefits boys and men, rather than attacks and blames men for these behaviors. In fact, issues of masculinity are not always about boys and men. In the case of *female masculinities* we see that masculinity can be attributed to women. Furthermore, non-binary or nontraditional masculinities raise a host of issues that span far beyond mainstream masculinities. In addition, boys and men of color deal with obstacles and challenges that are not as pronounced or even present for most white boys and men. Socioeconomic factors also greatly impact one’s opportunities, and these factors will be taken up in appropriate places in the text. Moreover, boys and men who are gay, queer, or transgender also face challenges that heterosexual, cis-males rarely face, unless as part of bullying, hazing rituals, or violence that can affect anyone. But there are also

subjective differences in the ways boys and men, just like girls and women, are treated based on physical features such as height, weight, complexion, athletic abilities, and being able-bodied. In general, this text examines the many influences and pressures placed upon boys and men to conform, confront, and contend with gender-normative, culture-driven factors that face them throughout various stages of their lives. In essence, the criticism found in this text is aimed at patriarchal power structures, not individual men.

It is also important to note that “male” and “female” are not static, binary categories as covered in sections below. As transperson Jacob Anderson-Minshall notes, “transpeople, along with intersex people, threaten the conservative assumption that there are two, and only two, classes of human being—men and women—and radical assumptions that gender classes are entirely socially created, rather than having some biological roots.”³ This chapter, while taking up the concepts of patriarchy and male privilege, is looking only at a cultural and historical tradition of men possessing power over women along with the many consequences that flow from such a power differential without assuming that ‘men’ and ‘women’ are tightly defined naturally existing dualities. On the contrary, the longstanding assumption that such dualities are natural and immutable has been part of what has made patriarchy and male privilege such tenacious states of being. The gender essentialist notion that gender is established by nature will be examined and challenged in chapter two of the text. We begin, however, by understanding the concepts of patriarchy, male privilege, and the many ramifications of living in a patriarchal culture.

Patriarchy and Male Privilege

It is the law of nature that woman should be held under the dominance of man.

~ Confucius⁴

What is Patriarchy?

There are several prominent theories about what patriarchy is and how it maintains itself in contemporary society. One of the most cited explanations of patriarchy is the **Marxist theory** which claims that patriarchy is a power-structure whereby one group of people (men) controls another group of people (women), and that this control depends on capitalism, since the control group holds financial power over the controlled group. According to Friedrich Engels, the nuclear family is predicated on a power dynamic:

According to the division of labor within the family, it was the man’s part to obtain food and the instruments of labor necessary for the purpose. He therefore also owned the instruments of labor, and in the event of husband and wife separating, he took them with him, just as she retained her household goods. Therefore, the man was also the owner of the new source of subsistence, the cattle, and later of the new instruments of labor, the slaves ... in proportion as wealth increased, it made the man’s position in the family more important than the woman’s ...⁵

This power dynamic between men and women that became the contemporary, monogamous family was, according to Marx, a development that came about after earlier versions of family structure receded in the wake of capitalism. In the Marxist model of family, women were responsible for bearing and raising children, which, while recognized as necessary work, was not valued under a capitalist structure of economics. As Engels explains, as agriculture and the domestication of animals became a chief source of economic prosperity, a division of labor was created. Men possessed land and controlled

the means of cultivating the land, leaving women in the subordinated category of domestic servant. These (male) land owners became the forbearers of the bourgeoisie class, and patriarchy was established as a fundamental outgrowth of capitalism.

Radical feminist theories of patriarchy, while in no way exhaustive of feminist views of patriarchy since there exist Marxist or *materialist* feminists, reject the Marxist idea that patriarchy is dependent on capitalism, for, they argue, Marxism falsely assumes that exploitation takes place only under the capital/labor exchange. Radical feminists argue that another form of exploitation takes place under the patriarchal division of reproductive/productive labor binary. The feminist model accuses Marx of not recognizing the significance of reproductive labor as unpaid labor and that this fundamental inequality is a product of an unequal dynamic between working class men and women, independent of capitalism. In fact, a workforce, in the Marxist sense of the idea, is not possible without the unpaid reproductive work of women. Therefore, it is argued, the inequality between men and women is antecedent to the inequalities derived through capitalism.⁶ In tandem with radical feminist critiques of patriarchy, **post-structural feminist** critiques of patriarchy emphasize the notion that all identities are contingent such that all gendered relationships are socially constructed. Gender inequalities, then, are not the product of any natural dominance/submission taxonomy. If correct, patriarchy can be overturned through a radical restructuring of society.

In an attempt to syncretize Marxist accounts with feminist accounts of patriarchy, **dual systems feminism** views the economic system of capitalism and the sex/gender system of patriarchy as interrelated concepts. The dual systems view considers patriarchy to be universal, but specialized in capitalist societies. The argument goes that the domestic division of labor restricts a woman's ability to receive pay in cases where her time and energies are bound to child bearing and raising, which converts into a woman's economic dependency on men who have no such limitations. Therefore, the two systems reinforce one another. In critical response, sociologist Silvia Federici agrees that capitalism depends on the exploitation of women as sources of unpaid labor, but that patriarchy proper has as a goal keeping women out of the paid workforce to assure their reliance on men.⁷ When capitalist forces are required to employ women, the forces of patriarchy aim to keep them in positions of subordination by placing women in low-paying jobs or by creating glass ceilings that prevent women from economic upward mobility. Patriarchal policies and practices are, therefore, responsible for an unbalanced workforce where men hold greater authority and where a pay gap exists between men and women such that women receive less money for the same work regardless of equal or superior qualifications.

Male privilege is the logical outgrowth of patriarchy. With systems in place that assure the continued subordination of women in a host of ways and degrees, males gain advantages unavailable or less available to women. Advantages may be economic, political, social, educational, and even temporal and psychological if women are expected to work for a wage, care for children, and tend to housework at the same time, while men focus only on their revenue-earning jobs. In many cases, women find it more difficult to obtain high-paying jobs, despite qualifications, or to move higher within the ranks of their chosen occupations than men. This is the essence of male privilege, having advantage due solely to being born male as a result of structures in place that benefit men over women.

Male privilege can be found in a multitude of settings. Commerce, for example, until very recently has been controlled exclusively by men throughout cultures around the world for the entirety of human history. The power wielded by those who own and control land, capital, and other forms of wealth is perhaps the greatest source of power in any society. Those who possess wealth have a great deal of authority over employment and therefore a great deal of influence over the working classes. This means that in the absence of regulations to keep businesses in check with respect to hiring and firing

practices, men have been able to hire other men, including through nepotistic traditions, for centuries, which is precisely what is witnessed when surveying the history of commerce around the world. Furthermore, when women are expected to bear sole responsibility for child care while working for companies that do not provide child care services, a burden is placed directly on women that is not placed on men and this unequal burden places women at much greater risk of being fired or simply not being advanced in their professions. Changes in gendered expectations of child care along with institutional changes to provide child care services would certainly mitigate the unequal burden, but those are not the present realities in which women live. As long as circumstances remain in place, these realities constitute a male privilege.

FEMALE MASCULINITIES

When writing of masculinities, most assume that the work will be exclusively about men. But in the book *Female Masculinity*, University of Southern California Professor Jack “Judith” Halberstam argues that a distinctive female masculinity is almost always left out of discussions about masculinity.¹ Female masculinity is typified by a masculine lesbian who, Halberstam reports, is often vilified in motion pictures and larger culture as well. Recognizing female masculinity opens the door to four realizations: (1) female masculinity challenges the notion that masculinity belongs solely to the domain of maleness, (2) female masculinity detaches misogyny from maleness and social power from masculinity, (3) female masculinity represents a

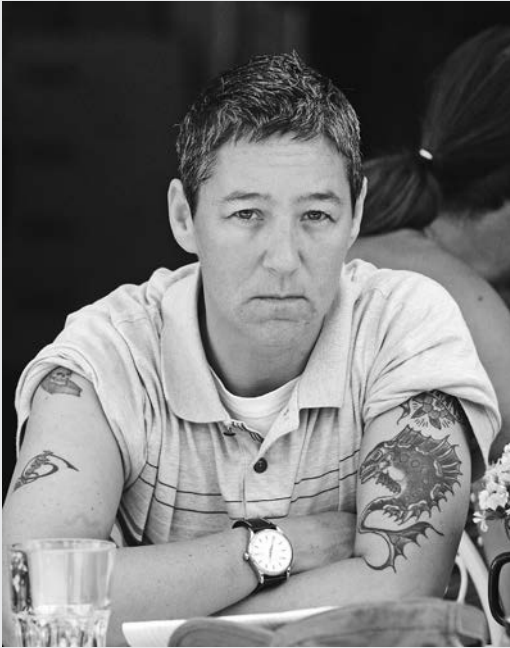


FIGURE 1.1: Jack Halberstam

Continued

disruption to compulsory heterosexuality, while offering a powerful model of what “inauthentic masculinity” can look like, and (4) female masculinity may force another look at male femininities and challenge the new politics of manliness that “has swept through gay male communities in the last decade.”²

One of the interesting ways that Halberstam reveals the cultural resistance to female masculinity is in the ways that motion pictures depict the masculine lesbian. In particular, Halberstam exposes a theme found in certain romantic comedies or romantic dramas he terms “heterosexual conversion fantasies.”³ In these films a heterosexual person is attracted to a presumably unattainable gay person, yet in the end the conversion takes place. This conversion fantasy occurs in films such as *Chasing Amy* and *The Opposite of Sex*. But one particular version of this narrative introduces a heterosexual man, a bisexual woman, and a masculine lesbian with a plot of the heterosexual man and masculine lesbian competing for the affections of the bisexual woman, a plot found in the Wilkie Collins novel *The Woman in White*.⁴ What is striking about this version of the heterosexual conversion fantasy is that the masculine lesbian character (Marian) is described as follows:

Never was the old conventional maxim, that Nature cannot err, more fully contradicted – never was the fair promise of a lovely figure more strangely and startlingly belied by the face and head that crowned it. The lady’s complexion was almost swarthy and the dark down on her upper lip was almost a moustache. She had a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute brown eyes; and thick, coal-black hair, growing unusually low down on her forehead.⁵

Here, the starkness of the heteronormativity and heterosexism is astonishing. But the description of “Marian” reinforces a heteronormative view that lesbians should please the male gaze as much as cis-gender heterosexual women such that female masculinity is castigated as strange and unseemly. What are your thoughts?

1 Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity* (Duke University Press, 1998).

2 Halberstam, Judith. “The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly: Men, Women, and Masculinity,” in *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory: New Directions*, Judith Kegan Gardiner, ed. (Columbia University Press, 2002).

3 Ibid. 347.

4 Ibid. 359.

5 Ibid. 360.

In cultures dominated by religion, men have occupied positions of power within the vast majority of churches around the world. Liturgical authority, along with the rules of morality that influence the creation of law within many non-secular societies, has been exclusively in the hands of men. The role of women within religious hierarchies has been and continues to be limited to supporting roles to men. While there is movement toward women taking more egalitarian roles in certain splinter denominations of major religions,⁸ and with the controversial exception of possible matriarchal religions in prehistory,⁹ the vast majority of world religions continue to find men holding the highest positions of liturgical power and authority throughout the world.

Politics and law are other areas that have historically been controlled by men, and like religion, have a profound effect on the lives of individuals. Those who are empowered to

create law and those empowered to enforce law obviously possess an incredible amount of power over the populace of any society. Lawmakers construct behavioral rules, the violation of which can lead to the imposition of penalties small and large. Members of law enforcement have been imbued with the ability to use physical force, if necessary, to uphold law. In both the construction and enforcement of law, men have enjoyed overwhelming authority. When nations collide, military forces are often called upon to wage war, and, again, overwhelmingly these forces are led and fought by men. Some view this part of male dominance as being a count against male privilege, since soldiers lose limbs, suffer from innumerable traumas, and die in battle in the service of their countries. If soldiering is numerically dominated by men, critics point out that there is little enviable about this aspect of male dominance. But the spoils of war, as they are often called, usually flow to men in political power who order war, as well as to those in positions of military command in terms of multiplied and solidified regional, national, or international power. It is also the case that war is fraught with instances of rape, which means that even though men suffer greatly in war, women are often targeted by soldiers who view them as part of the gains of military occupation.

Science and technology are also areas that have been historically dominated by men. Most of the early explorers, along with the great majority of scholars who populated the bygone academic halls of science have been men. Various fields of technology that are the practical outgrowth of the theoretical sciences have been and continue to be populated largely by men, who then benefit both in terms of professional stature and financial remuneration as patents are established and a consumer base is roused into purchasing the many products that come to market. Early inventor and industrialist Henry Ford became famous and wealthy by designing the Model-T automobile and installing an automated assembly line for mass production.¹⁰ Thomas Edison held more than 1,000 patents for the many inventions he devised, inventions that also generated him great fame and fortune.¹¹ But the fact that men have dominated these areas of endeavor, as we will see in chapter two of this text, have little to do with the notion that men are endowed with certain natural capacities for science and technology, and more to do with the access and opportunities that have attended male privilege for centuries.

Earned and Unearned Privilege

In principle, a privilege of one kind or another is usually considered to be either earned or unearned, although in practice, it is much more complex. In a great oversimplification, earned privileges are advantages gained through effort, while unearned privileges are advantages not gained through effort. If, for example, someone is able-bodied, while another person suffers from a physical disability of some kind, it is overwhelmingly likely that the able-bodied person possesses an unearned privilege. It is extremely unlikely that the able-bodied person, through some effort on his part, earned his able-bodied stature. Likewise, it is usually the case that someone who possesses a disability did not do something to deserve that disability. On the other hand, if a person rode a motorcycle over 100 miles per hour in the rain without wearing a helmet and subsequently crashes and suffers a traumatic brain injury, his recklessness contributes to his injury. But if someone is afflicted with muscular dystrophy, her illness is not due to some negligence on her part. The question is whether these straightforward examples apply to other examples of privilege.

It is commonly thought that it is unproblematic to assume that privileges are earned if one's advantages are the result of one's labor. If, for instance, someone receives good grades in school and subsequently attends an Ivy League law school, graduates with honors, and afterward lands a partnership position at a major law firm, the *common sense* view of privilege considers this to be an earned advantage. But what if the young person in question comes from an extremely wealthy family with political connections

within the university or within American politics at large? Add to this the further stipulation that this person is white and male. In the first case, coming from a family of wealth and political connection is an unearned advantage, although it is clearly an advantage. A young person of inherited wealth has access to a vast array of educational resources the young, working class person almost certainly does not possess. For example, if the wealthy family decides to donate a large sum of money to the university, the young person will receive donor preferences, an advantage the working class person's family will be unable to match. Furthermore, the young person of wealth would be able to take advantage of legacy preferences at his target university if one of his parents is an alumnus, an advantage few working class, young people enjoy.

But what of being white and male? The fact that a young person is white and male is also unearned, but does that constitute an advantage? Imagine your target university is Harvard. Statistically, Harvard University admits approximately 18% black, Latino, and Native American total applicants each year, but only 7% of those admits are accepted under legacy policies.¹² Nationally, underrepresented ethnic minorities make up approximately 28% of the collective university student applicant pool, but less than 7% of legacy admits come from that same pool.¹³ This means that, statistically, it is much more likely that white students will receive legacy points than underrepresented minority students, and being a legacy student matters. In 2009, Princeton University admitted 41% of its legacy candidates, which is 450% higher than the admittance rate for non-legacy candidates.¹⁴ Some have defended legacy policies by arguing that children of alumni have a better chance of performing at high levels, but one study of Duke University legacy candidates revealed that legacy students underperformed non-legacy students in their first year, and other studies revealed similar patterns at a number of elite universities.¹⁵ In 2013, 62% of students at Yale University were white, while 8% of students were African-American, even though 13.5% of Americans are African-American.^{16 17} What about being male? It turns out that only 18% of senior law partners nationwide are women,¹⁸ and only 31% of American Bar Association members are women.¹⁹ Only 19% of attorneys sitting on executive boards are women.²⁰ This means that our hypothetical young, male, white law school graduate has statistics in his favor over a hypothetical black, female law school graduate, even if they both work hard and graduate in similar places in their class.

This unearned advantage for white males is not arbitrary or mysterious. In the 1930s, sociologist, historian, and social activist W.E.B. DuBois coined the term **psychological wage** to mean special status or social compensation that divided labor such that low-earning white laborers felt superior and received perks not available to low-earning black laborers.²¹

This privilege was imparted to low-earning white laborers strictly due to the color of their skin, and hence the expression *white-skinned privilege* has since been used to emphasize the fact that the advantage is unearned. The ways that white-skinned privilege found expression was in the fact that although socioeconomically these white workers were on a par with black laborers who occupied similar jobs, white laborers were admitted to “public functions, public parks, and the best schools ... the police were drawn from their ranks [and] treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness.”²² Peggy McIntosh, associate director of the Wellesley Centers for Women, follows this theme and applies it to both race and gender. In what McIntosh terms the *invisible knapsack*, those who enjoy unearned privilege are often oblivious to the fact that they possess this privilege and will commonly deny it.²³ Of all the invisible knapsacks in existence, the weightiest of them all belongs to white males:

The weightless and invisible backpack carried by white males is the largest and most expansive of all, granting them access to the most spaces with the least doubts about their sense of place or authority.²⁴



FIGURE 1.2: W.E.B. DuBois (1868–1963)

Throughout the history of America, McIntosh argues, the opinions of white men have been considered more credible and important than those of any other group, regardless of the value of the opinion itself. This is not to say, of course, that every white male has identical privilege, since white males as a group can be parsed into subgroups where those, for instance, with greater physical strength, athletic ability, wealth, or social status will possess greater advantage than white males who do not enjoy these privileges. Working class, white males have less privilege than wealthy white males, but all white males tap into a legacy and heritage that extends advantage to them for no reason other than their gender and white skin. This entails, as cited above, that being male and black, Latino, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or other non-white ethnic categories does not bestow the same degree of privilege on one as being male and white. But the stratification of male privilege also means that there are men who have far less privilege within cultural boundaries. If you are a black, homosexual, working class male dealing with disabilities, you enjoy far less privilege than an able-bodied, black, heterosexual male of wealth. Thus, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, gender, being able-bodied and other traits that distinguish individuals from one another mitigate or accentuate privilege.

If McIntosh is correct, male privilege should be viewed as an outgrowth of patriarchy. It is privilege that comes about through an accident of birth in the context of living in a patriarchal culture. It means that being male gives men a statistical advantage over women with respect to how much money they earn as compared to women in the same job, or their ability to rise to and hold positions of authority and financial power. Male privilege also means that as a man, your opinions will probably be taken more seriously than the opinions of women. It means that when looking to role models, men will see many more men than women in positions of authority, including a history of men exclusively holding the office of President or Vice President of the United States, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and Senate Majority Leader or Whip. It means that almost all athletic icons in America are men. It means that for



FIGURE 1.3: Peggy McIntosh, Wellesley Centers for Women

*The “thought boxes” are possible in-class or homework exercises for students. They can also be used to organize class discussions around topics raised in chapters, or simply to provide food for thought.

THOUGHT BOX

The following *Huffington Post* article documents that very few women occupy management positions in Fortune 500 companies: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/11/women-in-leadership-roles_n_4418725.html. Before reading the remainder of this chapter, discuss why you believe so few women are in executive positions today.

the majority of organized faiths in America, if you are a man of faith, you have the ability to rise in the ranks of a church or denomination that will exceed any heights to which women may rise. It means that for adherents of Western religions, it is to be told all your life that God is male. It means that as a man, your character will not be questioned nearly as much as will be true of a woman if you are suspected of having multiple sex partners. It means that as a man, you will not be called “a slut” based on what you are wearing, or be blamed for having been sexually assaulted based on how much alcohol you consumed. It includes the knowledge that, statistically, the likelihood of a man being raped is less than it is for women. It means that it is less likely that as a man, you will be sexually harassed at work or on the street. It means that, as a man, your likelihood of being a victim of intimate partner violence is less or less severe than it is for women. This is, of course, only a partial list of the perks that come with being male in America.

Patriarchy and Repressed Intersectionality

Even though white men have enjoyed the most advantage through patriarchal policies and practices, that does not mean that men of color do not also gain advantage through patriarchy. Race and gender scholar Moya Bailey coined the term ‘**misogynoir**’ to mean “hatred of black women.” It is a type of misogyny that denotes the cultural fact that blackness has been placed at the bottom of the cultural hierarchy in America as a matter of white supremacist policies and practices, while also noting that women have struggled under the yoke of patriarchy. The consequence of misogynoir is that black women, and other women of color, have suffered more than white women under white, capitalist, patriarchal conditions.

To understand how patriarchy became a part of American, black masculinity, author, cultural scholar, and social activist bell hooks explains that patriarchy was taught to African men by witnessing the ways that white, male slave-owners treated women and then mimicking these white men, which included a combination of **benevolent patriarchy** (controlling women psychologically and economically without the use of physical force) and **violent patriarchy** (controlling women by use of force). hooks writes:

Transplanted African men, even those coming from communities where sex roles shaped the division of labor, where the status of men was different and most times higher than that of women, had to be taught to equate their higher status as men with the right to dominate women, they had to be taught patriarchal masculinity. They had to be taught that it was acceptable to use violence to establish patriarchal power. The gender politics of slavery and white-supremacist domination of free black men was the school where black men from different African tribes, with different languages and value systems, learned in the new world, patriarchal masculinity.²⁵

By the twentieth century, black, male intellectuals were calling on black men to support gender equality rather than taking on the patriarchal norms of American culture. In 1920, influenced by black, female activist Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. DuBois implored black men to think about the ways they were treating black women,

We cannot abolish the new economic freedom of women. We cannot imprison women again in a home or require them all on pain of death to be nurses and housekeepers. ... The uplift of women is, next to the problem of color and the peace movement, our greatest modern cause.²⁶

hooks notes that sexist black people believed that slavery and racist indignity emasculated “Afro-American” men and that black women had the responsibility to revitalize black men by supporting and submitting to them.²⁷ The result has been termed **repressed intersectionality**, whereby one is “unable to understand how one’s own identity is intersectional. It prevents individuals from realizing that the experience of marginalization is not unilateral across an oppressed population, and it obscures the recognition of internal differences within a group that suffers from sociopolitical domination.”²⁸ The revitalization of black men, if it was to happen at all, would come at the price of subordinating black women.

It is this fundamental awareness of subordination within subordinated groups that fueled the **womanism** movement. Coined by author and poet Alice Walker, womanism acknowledges the oppression that black women, and other women of color, face that is not faced by white women. The roots of this movement find expression in the words of nineteenth-century abolitionist and women’s activist Sojourner Truth, who in 1851 at a women’s convention in Akron, Ohio, delivered a speech that reminded listeners that patriarchy was a double-bind for women of color:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, “intellect”] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?²⁹

(excerpt from “Ain't I A Woman?”)

By noting that “yours holds a quart” while “my cup won't hold but a pint”, Truth scenically and forcefully makes the point that the plight of white women and women of color were struggles that did not begin at the same place. While all women were subjected to patriarchal proscriptions against voting, owning property, or receiving a college education, Truth reveals a great difference in treatment white women enjoyed that women of color, due strictly to skin color, did not enjoy.

Today, concerns about the mistreatment of women of color continue, including worries about high rates of domestic and sexual violence.³⁰ In addition, while pay gaps between men and women will be discussed later in the chapter, for women of color the pay gaps are wider than between men and white women.³¹ In 2012, ABC News show *20/20* posted identical resumes on a widely used career website, but used the “blackest” and “whitest” names as determined by the book *Freakonomics* as the names attached to each resume. The results revealed that the resumes with “white names” were downloaded at a 20% higher rate than those with “black names.” According to *Forbes magazine*, two women, one African-American, and one Latina, after experiencing frustration at their highly qualified resumes not receiving much attention, changed their names on the resumes to reflect “whiter-sounding” names and received much more attention.³²

But patriarchal practices in America also favor white men over men of color. Between white men and men of color, a pay gap exists due to a host of factors that include educational disparities, occupational distribution disparities (white and Asian men occupy more executive and managerial occupations, while black and Latino men occupy more blue-collar, low-wage skilled and service industry jobs), outsourcing of labor-industry jobs overseas, the redistribution of manufacturing jobs outside of inner-city locations creating a commute problem, client-channeling (white employers assigning white employees to white clients and minority employees to minority clients), and, of course, racial discrimination in hiring. The consequences to race-based socioeconomic disparity are great. The median annual income level for black men in America is \$23,738 compared to the annual median income level for white men at \$36,785.³³ College-educated Hispanic men earn wages at roughly 80% of college-educated white men.³⁴ For Native Americans, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that one in four live in poverty, as compared to one in eleven white people.³⁵

Early Justifications for Patriarchy and Male Privilege

There is really no adequate way to discuss the male privileges that flow from patriarchy without also discussing the female paucity of privilege, since the two are inseparably linked. But it has often been asked, on what basis can patriarchy be defended? In one of the more scathing indictments of patriarchy and the subordination of women that accompanies patriarchal systems, nineteenth-century British philosopher John Stuart Mill in

collaboration with his wife Harriet Taylor Mill authored the piece “The Subjection of Women” to expose the poverty of ethical support for men’s subordination of women by comparing it to slavery,

the slavery of the male sex has in all countries of Christian Europe at least been at length abolished, and that of the female sex has been gradually changed into a milder form of dependence. But this dependence, as it exists at present ... is the primitive state of slavery lasting on ... the inequality of rights between men and women has no other source than the law of the strongest.³⁶

Invoking the specter of slavery was meant to emphasize the proprietary nature of the most familiar relationships between men and women. Men were in positions of ownership while women were in positions of being property. Mill could find only one reason why men have subordinated women to a lower stratum of power and importance for the majority of human history: the physical ability to do so. In ethics, this principle is abbreviated *might makes right*, which Mill notes had long ago been abandoned as a reputable premise in moral argumentation. It is the kind of thinking that permeates prison environments, where physical strength and prowess command respect and obedience from those who are physically weaker. And yet few cultures around the world have not employed this sort of thinking in their support of the enslavement and subordination of people who did not enjoy social, political, and economic privileges. This unequal gendered exchange of power went unchallenged from ancient human history through the eighteenth century, except in limited and highly contested forms,^{37 38} and certainly found its way into the fiber of early American culture.

With the justification of male supremacy exposed as fraudulent, Mill and Taylor-Mill called for a complete enfranchisement for women, not as a courtesy, but as a demand. As Harriet Taylor Mill forcefully states:

the fact which affords the occasion for this notice makes it impossible any longer to assert the universal acquiescence of women in their dependent condition. In the United States at least, there are women, seemingly numerous, and now organized for action on the public mind, who demand equality in the fullest acceptation of the word, and demand it by a straightforward appeal to men's sense of justice, not plead for it with timid depreciation of their displeasure.³⁹

The fight for gender equality that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was met with great resistance. America’s history itself is a history of arduous upheaval in the pursuit of social justice with patriarchy being high on the list of roadblocks. Each attempt or even suggestion at gender equality experienced a backlash from those who enjoyed advantage. Men created and maintained the patriarchal systems that ruled American society with unchallenged authority and were not going to allow women access to that authority without a fight.

A Truncated History of American Patriarchy

As long as she thinks of a man, nobody objects to a woman thinking.

~ Virginia Woolf⁴⁰

America was built on the principles of liberty and equality, but not for all. From the earliest moments of the European colonization of what would become the United States of America, women were placed in subordinate positions to men. Gender discrimination, many would argue, was woven into the fabric of Jefferson’s *Declaration of Independence*, the second paragraph of which begins, “We hold these truths to be self-evident,

that all men are created equal...⁴¹ *The Declaration's* concept of equality has long been considered problematic in the face of slavery and the unequal treatment of men who were not land owners, along with the so-called "three-fifths compromise" included in Article I, section 2 of the U.S. Constitution.⁴² But the exclusion of women from every position of political power when, in 1776, 56 men signed *The Declaration* speaks to a gender-literal interpretation of the phrase, "all men are created equal."

In the wake of the signing of the *Declaration of Independence*, discussions grew about the proper role of women in this new political alliance. Thomas Jefferson steadfastly refused to entertain the idea of women holding political office, claiming, "The appointment of a woman to office is an innovation for which the public is not prepared, nor I."⁴³ On education, Jefferson noted, "a plan for female education has never been a subject of systematic contemplation with me. It has occupied my attention so far as only the education of my own daughters occasionally required."⁴⁴ On the occasion of his oldest daughter's wedding, Jefferson wrote, "The happiness of your life now depends on continuing to please a single person. To this all other objects must be secondary, even your love for me."⁴⁵ In what he believed to be a compliment to American women, Jefferson stated, "Our good ladies, I trust, have been too wise to wrinkle their foreheads with politics. They are contented to soothe and calm the minds of their husbands returning from political debate."⁴⁶

Jefferson was, of course, not alone in his views about women. When Abigail Adams, wife of second U.S. president John Adams, wrote to her husband to get him to consider giving voice and representation to women, John Adams sarcastically responded, "As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems and rather than give up this, which would completely subject Us to the Despotism of the Petticoat, I hope General Washington and all our brave Heroes would fight."⁴⁷ John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States and son of John Adams, was known generally to have a dismissive attitude about the intelligence of women,⁴⁸ although in a speech given in 1838, he touted the right of people, men *and women*, to petition the government.⁴⁹ The inclusion of women into Adams's speech on rights and freedoms reveals a tension within the thinking of some colonial men of leadership with respect to their views on women. For instance, in a letter written to educator Albert Picket upon Picket's inquiry to James Madison about educating women in light of plans to build a women's college in Maryland, Madison wrote, "The capacity of the female mind for studies of the highest order cannot be doubted, having been sufficiently illustrated by its works of genius, of erudition, and of science."⁵⁰ Like today, there were men in colonial America who went against the tide of male, majority opinion, although those dissenting voices did not garner enough strength to bring about enfranchisement for women or an opening of doors to women in academia. The wheels of progressive change moved very slowly over the next several decades as patriarchy dominated almost every aspect of the early American political landscape.

By 1848, 68 women and 32 men signed *The Declaration of Sentiments* at the first women's rights convention to be organized by women, often referred to as the Seneca Falls Convention.⁵¹ Along with key organizers Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Coffin Mott, and Martha Coffin Wright, abolitionist Frederick Douglass attended and signed the *Declaration* in solidarity with women as individuals who, like people of African descent, suffered oppression and discrimination in America. As an attempt to point out the discriminatory content of the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Declaration of Sentiments* begins with the lines:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men *and women* are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed.⁵²

The *Declaration* goes on to list the many rights and liberties denied to women by men, including voting rights, property rights, and rights to an education.⁵³ But against this call for equality, many voices rose in opposition to the notion that women should possess the same rights and privileges enjoyed by men. The most common reasons offered against women's suffrage included themes of male supremacy mixed with vague warnings about the alleged dire consequences of political power getting into the hands of women:

It means competition of women with men.

In some states more voting women than voting men will place the government under petticoat rule.

It is unwise to risk the good we already have for the evil which may occur.⁵⁴

Referring to a woman's undergarment, the expression "petticoat rule" was coined to derisively describe a gynocentric government where men were under the political dominion of women, which, it was assumed, would weaken men in incalculable ways. To add greater insult to women, anti-suffrage pamphlets were handed out to women that included statements like, "You do not need a ballot to clean out your sink spout."⁵⁵ Depicting suffragettes as angry, man-hating women was also a common theme to anti-suffragist propaganda.

University of Northern Iowa professor of communications and women's and gender studies Catherine Palczewski argues that even though concerns about men being feminized was not one of the central points being made against the suffrage movement,⁵⁶ postcards of the era were disseminated showing men taking on domestic work considered to be proper to women with the clear connotation that women would now be found running the household, placing men in subordinate and dignity-defying domestic positions.

The anti-suffrage propaganda was supposed to serve as a scare tactic to get men to fear what may happen if women receive voting power, but also points to the unapologetic



FIGURE 1.4: Anti-suffrage Propaganda Poster, circa late nineteenth century

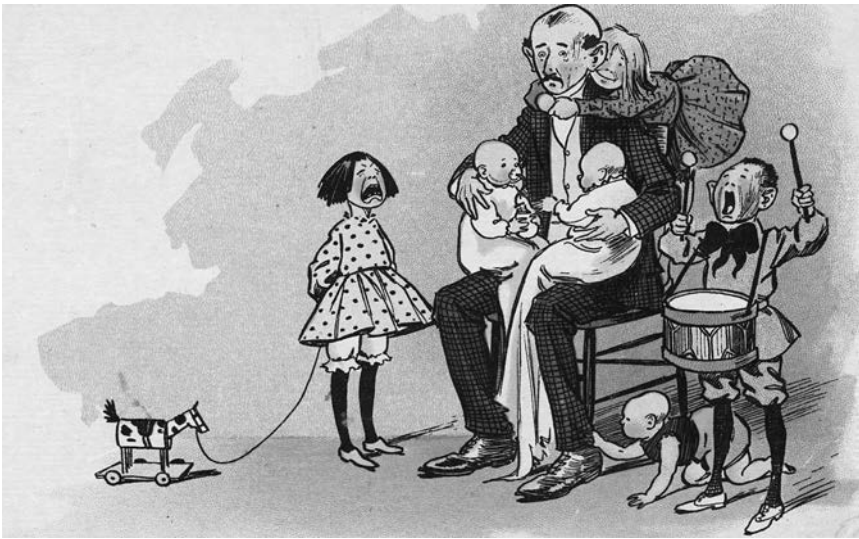


FIGURE 1.5: Anti-Suffrage Postcards, circa early twentieth century

patriarchy of the day, since men thought nothing of their wives having to do the very same household chores considered to be work beneath their dignity as men.

In 1870, in the wake of the end of the Civil War and as part of the Reconstructionist Amendments, the fifteenth amendment to the constitution was ratified after a contentious debate ensued over extending voting rights to those who had previously been denied those rights due to “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”⁵⁷ Excluded from this debate and newfound enfranchisement were women, sparking a 50-year-long debate on women’s suffrage that, in 1920, would terminate in the ratification of the nineteenth amendment to the constitution.⁵⁸ What was once thought to be a naïve dream was finally a reality: women had achieved the constitutional right to vote. But, of course, sexism and gender exclusionism did not end with the ratification of the nineteenth amendment. The right to vote was only a prelude to women’s ongoing struggles to gain political, economic, educational, and social empowerment. It was not until 1949 that a woman served as a U.S. District Judge,⁵⁹ and as covered in chapter three of this text, many American universities did not admit women until the latter part of the twentieth century.⁶⁰

Among the many legal watershed moments that have continued to push America toward greater levels of gender equality is the 1963 Equal Pay Act, which requires employers to provide equal pay for equal work regardless of gender.⁶¹ Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned gender discrimination by private employers,⁶² and contraceptives became available to married women in 1965⁶³ and to single women in 1972.⁶⁴ Also in 1972, The Equal Rights Amendment, which declared, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex,” passed through Congress, but fell three state votes short of ratification.⁶⁵ In 1973, the historic decision to grant a woman the right to an abortion was made in the now famous case of *Roe v. Wade*.⁶⁶ The slow march toward gender equality continues today, but as with runners held back in a race, there is a documented lag-effect that many work to bridge. The categories in the remainder of this chapter represent some of the more salient areas of inequality that continue to exist between women and men, and that are considered by many to be the accumulative effects of centuries of patriarchy.

MARGINALIZED MASCULINITIES

When we speak about masculinities, it is important to note that there are many versions of masculinity that do not enjoy dominant, hegemonic status. That men enjoy privilege in many areas of cultural life is abundantly clear and will be discussed in sections below. But as covered in sections above, this does not mean that all men share equally in privilege. There are hierarchies of privilege that are mitigated or enhanced by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other factors that are not always part of the mainstream discussions about male privilege, such as being able-bodied, enjoying cognitive health, being tall in stature in a culture that prizes tall men, being athletic in a culture that values athletics, being cis-gender in a culture that denigrates trans and queer identities or those who identify as agender.

For many boys and men who do not conform to culturally approved masculine standards, life can be difficult. American culture has long reinforced a very specific gendered-binary structure. As a thought experiment, how many different traits can you list that are considered to be favorable male traits in American culture and how many different traits can you list that are considered to be adverse male traits in American culture? Are there cultures within cultures that view these traits in a more positive or negative light? When looking at the following images, are some male representations considered to be more acceptable than others by mainstream, contemporary cultural standards? Why? Who within American culture, in your opinion, are making these rules?

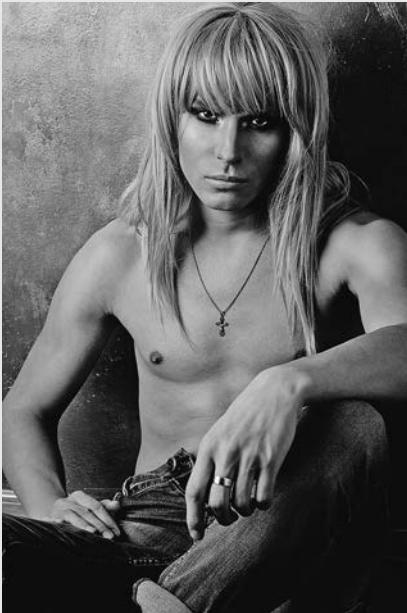


FIGURE 1.6:



FIGURE 1.7:

Continued



FIGURE 1.8:



FIGURE 1.9:

If you acknowledge that gender nonconformist men are often mistreated, why do you believe this is? Why is gender conformity so important to mainstream culture? More importantly, what must happen, in your opinion, for these marginalized masculinities to be accepted and respected in American culture?

Male Dominance in Business and Economics

Rail as they will about ‘discrimination,’ women are simply not endowed by nature with the same measures of single-minded ambition and the will to succeed in the fiercely competitive world of Western capitalism.

~ Pat Buchanan, senior advisor to Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan⁶⁷

When you mix the patriarchal value of placing men in favored positions in society with the survival of the fittest values of free-market economics, you get **patriarchal capitalism**, whereby the rich tend to get richer and the rich tend to be men. Surveying the Fortune 500 companies in America, there are currently 25 that have a female CEO, which equates to 5% of all F-500 corporations.⁶⁸ Another way of stating it is that 95% of Fortune 500 corporations are run by men. If we examine the finance and insurance industry, we find that 23.1% of all senior officers are women, while 76.9% are men.⁶⁹ While these levels

actually represent strides that women have made in business as compared to percentages a decade ago,⁷⁰ the gender gap in business and finance is tremendous. Additionally, according to statistics compiled by the Bureau of Labor, the median weekly salary for men who occupy full-time management positions is \$1,349 as opposed to women who earn \$973 weekly in the same positions.⁷¹ This means that women earn approximately 72% of what men earn for doing the same job.⁷² If we calculate these numbers out to represent annual salaries, men in full-time management positions average approximately \$70,148 per year as opposed to women in the same positions who earn \$50,596 per year.

Breaking these numbers down into more specific fields, male chief executive officers in the U.S. earn a median weekly income amount of \$2,266, while female chief executive officers earn a median weekly income amount of \$1,811.⁷³ Male financial managers earn a median weekly amount of \$1,518, while female financial managers earn a median weekly amount of \$1,064.⁷⁴ These amounts represent 79% and 70% respectively for women who are doing the same job as their male counterpart despite the legal precedents set in the past. Male human resource managers earn a median weekly salary of \$1,536 compared to female human resource managers who earn a median weekly salary of \$1,240.⁷⁵ Male marketing and sales managers earn a weekly median salary of \$1,658, compared to females in the identical job who earn \$1,124 per week.⁷⁶ In fact, in every category of employment that has to do with business and financial management taken collectively, women earn approximately 75 cents on the dollar that men earn.⁷⁷ Multiplied out over an entire year, men who work in business and financial management average approximately \$73,424 in wages, while women in identical jobs earn approximately \$54,548.⁷⁸

Many women's advocates have been pointing out for years that there is a pay gap for women who hold identical jobs to men, but have been largely ignored or ridiculed. One way that skeptics attempt to undermine the pay gap is to purport that women work fewer hours than men,⁷⁹ or that women pursue low-paying jobs in fields where there is already a glut of women,⁸⁰ or that women having children impedes their earning potential,⁸¹ or that women do not possess as much ambition as men or do not push as hard as men for raises and career advancement.⁸² This latter assessment was offered by Chief Operating Officer for social media giant Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, in her 2013 book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*.⁸³ Sandberg argues that both external and internal obstacles conspire to prevent women from achieving the goals in business that men routinely enjoy. Sandberg's advice on overcoming the internal obstacles is for women to be more proactive in pursuing goals, less concerned with appearing to be pleasant, taking greater risks for greater rewards, and "not checking out of work mentally" when planning a family.

The criticisms of Sandberg's advice to women have been numerous. But one of the more persistent objections comes from those who argue that the rules of corporate America are the same rules that govern most patriarchal systems,⁸⁴ and that Sandberg is informing women that the key to women's success is for women to play a man's game by men's rules that were invented to sustain men's power. NYU sociologist Robert Max Jackson explains that to understand male power in the corporate realm is to first understand that the history of capitalism and industrialization is a history of men having a monopoly over capital and resources, so that anyone who hopes to ascend to economic prominence must receive the support of those men who control capital and resources.⁸⁵ Referring to "powerful men" as distinguished from "ordinary men," Jackson argues that "gender inequality is an instance of status inequality."⁸⁶ For inequality to maintain itself, systems must be in place to "deny subordinate people the means to overcome their disadvantages," without which, inequality becomes unstable.⁸⁷ A problem for "powerful men" is that subordinated people will inevitably attempt to overcome their subordinate status.

However, the early advances into corporate America by women were principally into positions of dead-end jobs that did not promise upward mobility, as a result of stereotypical thinking about women by the men who held corporate power.⁸⁸ A persistent view held by

many corporate executives in 1965, for instance, according to a Harvard Business Review survey, was the view that women are not capable of commanding the necessary respect and confidence to lead a corporation, while half of the men surveyed went even further to state that women were “temperamentally unfit for management.”⁸⁹ These sorts of preconceived notions about women do not exist in a vacuum. Jackson sites three main social conditions that historically kept women from achieving positions of economic power, and which many argue continue to obstruct women from achieving professional success:

1. Men were unwilling to promote women into positions of power due to concerns about their own futures, based in large part on prejudiced views about women’s abilities to lead.
2. Discriminatory views about women have a cumulative effect. Each step up the corporate ladder eliminated a round of male candidates. The upward mobility of men into positions of power was usually the result of competition between men, which creates a disadvantage for women who, by the end of the competitive process, make up less than 1% of those men still in the running for an upper management position.
3. Women did not aspire to positions of political and economic power because they were not socialized as were men to prove themselves in this way.⁹⁰

This three-pronged account created a cycle of male privilege that systematically prevented women from reaching leadership positions in government and business. But the third of these accounts, that women are not socialized to compete in the same ways as are men, speaks to the advice given by Sandberg. If women are taught to be reticent in challenging male power from girlhood to adulthood, it would make sense that they would not feel comfortable asserting themselves into positions historically and presently dominated by men. But this does not discount the fact that men’s power is due in part to men’s continued prejudicial belief, whether consciously or unconsciously, that women are not designed to lead or to make quick, sharp decisions in the face of complicated predicaments or under the pressures of demanding deadlines. If men sustain these views about women, it would explain why men tend to offer advancement more readily to other men, even if a woman is as qualified or even more qualified than her male counterpart.

With respect to jobs that are traditionally or predominantly held by men, research has shown that women with identical qualifications are routinely evaluated lower than men.⁹¹ One of the more visible areas of male domination in the workforce is found on Wall Street, where women make up only 16% of senior management and 0% of Chief Executive Officers.⁹² Former stock analyst for Paine Webber, Margo Epprecht reports that women were cut substantially in the wake of the 1987 stock market crash, cuts that have been painstakingly slow to rehabilitate in the wake of the market recovery.⁹³ According to Epprecht, “on Wall Street, to advance, women must fit into the male-dominated, hierarchical world of Wall Street—or leave.” Epprecht cites the many anecdotal stories of women who worked in Wall Street careers and later left after dealing with sexism and outright harassment.⁹⁴ Business psychologist Sharon Horowitz agrees stating, “Wall Street is a specific culture; it is a specific culture of men.”⁹⁵ When critics note that there are many women working jobs on Wall Street, Epprecht points to the fact that the EEOC reports that more than half of those jobs are in a clerical capacity, while only 16% of those jobs are in positions of management.⁹⁶ When other critics claim that men are better suited for the fast-paced, fast-thinking environment of Wall Street, Epprecht notes that when Wall Street legend Jack Rifkin instituted a gender-egalitarian policy of management hiring in the equity research division of Lehman Brothers, many more women were hired, sending Lehman Brothers in four years from the fifteenth ranked research department to

the number one ranked research department on Wall Street. Boris Groysberg of Harvard Business School, citing the Rifkin case as one example, states:

The biggest beneficiaries of having more women are men. If you embrace diversity of perspective, you will get more men and women with fresh perspectives. If we think about performance of an organization, we are going to do so much better if we embrace different perspectives.⁹⁷

Yet when men on Wall Street are asked why a gender gap persists at the management level, they report that there are not enough qualified women to occupy the available positions, to which Groysberg scoffs, “We cannot find a couple of hundred qualified women to sit on boards? I think it’s outrageous.”⁹⁸

In fact, the number of women taking the GMAT exam (the admissions test for entry into MBA programs and other business graduate programs) is at all-time highs.⁹⁹ *Fortune* magazine reports that the number of women pursuing graduate degrees in business has increased as business schools actively recruit women to address the shortages of female students in business programs overall.¹⁰⁰ Women now make up approximately one-third of MBA recipients each year, which represents a substantial increase from a decade ago, but still points to an overall underrepresentation of women receiving graduate business degrees compared to men.¹⁰¹ Yet even after graduating, women are receiving job offers at half the rate of men despite submitting 20% more job applications than men.¹⁰²

One of the many ways that corporations remain male-centric is found in the interviewing process, where different questions are asked of female versus male job candidates. One study uncovered familiar trends in interviewing practices that create an uneven playing field for women.¹⁰³ Even though it is unlawful under Title VII to ask a female job applicant if she has children or is planning to have children,¹⁰⁴ women are routinely asked about their family lives and whether the demands of their families would impede their ability to give their all to the job for which they applied, questions that male applicants rarely if ever face. Those in positions of hiring often violate the law by asking women about their families or potential families, because they know that it is virtually impossible to prove that not receiving a job was the result of discrimination along with the fact that there are no recording devices in place during interviews to document the questions being asked.

But even in the absence of actual legal infractions, there are other aspects of the interviewing process that favor men over women. In an *ABC News* report citing a Yale University hiring experiment, actors were employed to go into job interviews with identical resumes and identical interview scripts to see whether the applicants would be evaluated differently on the basis of gender.¹⁰⁵ For instance, in one rehearsed answer to questions about computer operating system literacy, both the male and female applicants responded to hiring personnel, “I know the Windows operating system like the back of my hand.” In hundreds of evaluations by those in hiring positions, the female job applicant was later assessed as being arrogant, aggressive, and bossy, while the male job applicant was viewed as being competent, knowledgeable, and more hireable. The fact that both males and females in positions of hiring evaluated the male candidate as being superior to the female candidate suggests that gender bias is engrained in the perceptions of both men and women in advance of interviews taking place, and that gender bias in hiring is an equal opportunity discriminatory practice.

There is little doubt that a gender gap exists both in human resource percentages, salary range in the fields of business and finance, and the ways that women are treated in the workplace as opposed to men. When asked “why?” many note that patriarchal systems infused with prejudicial beliefs about women must be ranked high on the list of candidates for an answer. If money equals power in capitalist America, and if men

overwhelmingly occupy positions of economic power, while viewing women as mentally inferior, overly emotional, or at least unsuited for fast-paced, competitive environments, then as long as men of these kind occupy positions of leadership in high finance, the strides women make into management fields, where multi-million or multi-billion dollar accounts are considered to be commonplace, change will be slow and arduous.

Male Privilege, Politics, and Law

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion or empire, above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature; it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.

~ sixteenth-century theologian John Knox¹⁰⁶

Often going hand-in-hand with business and finance are the realms of politics and law where political and legal decisions regularly impact business. Many people today view politics as a changing, gendered realm that can no longer be considered in the control of men, while others note that men continue to be greatly overrepresented in U.S. politics. A joint study conducted by American University professor Jennifer L. Lawless and Loyola Marymount University professor Richard L. Fox, shows current percentages of women in government to be as shown in Table 1.1.¹⁰⁷

In their study, Lawless and Fox identify seven factors they believe contribute to the ongoing gender gap in politics:

1. Women are substantially more likely than men to perceive the electoral environment as highly competitive and biased against female candidates.
2. Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin’s candidacies aggravated women’s perceptions of gender bias in the electoral arena.
3. Women are much less likely than men to think they are qualified to run for office.
4. Female potential candidates are less competitive, less confident, and more risk averse than their male counterparts.
5. Women react more negatively than men to many aspects of modern campaigns.
6. Women are less likely than men to receive the suggestion to run for office—from anyone.
7. Women are still responsible for the majority of childcare and household tasks.

TABLE 1.1

| | |
|--|-------|
| U.S. Senate: | 18% |
| Members of the House of Representatives: | 16.8% |
| State Governors: | 12% |
| Statewide Elected Officials: | 22.4% |
| State Legislators: | 23.6% |
| Mayors of the 100 largest U.S. Cities: | 8% |

Lawless and Fox conclude that women are turned off by the toxic, negative campaign ads, the gendered scrutiny female candidates receive, and the overall hostile climate of contemporary, American politics. These things, coupled with a general lack of support, lead fewer women to climb into the political arena.

An example of the blowback some women receive who become politically active can be illustrated in the case of Sandra Fluke, a social justice attorney who in 2012 testified before congress about the importance of contraception coverage in health insurance.¹⁰⁸ Within days, right-wing radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh took to the airwaves calling Ms. Fluke a “slut” and a “prostitute” for what Limbaugh viewed as her promotion of casual sex.¹⁰⁹ Limbaugh was castigated for this sexist and mean-spirited attack and later apologized to Fluke, although many viewed the apology as insincere.¹¹⁰ Yet, in a report by *USA Today*, the effects of sexist name-calling have been linked to voter approval ratings.¹¹¹ In a survey of 800 likely voters who were asked to evaluate two hypothetical congressional candidates, one male, one female, after sexist name-calling was used by the male to refer to his female opponent, including characterizing her as a “prostitute,” the female candidate lost twice as much support as she had before the sexist taunts.¹¹² The use of sexist name-calling, then, may have a two-pronged effect: (1) fewer women will want to jump into politics, knowing that they will be subjected to this sort of personal attack, and, (2) fewer female candidates will win elections if sexist name-calling has an efficacious effect on voters.

In terms of international percentages of women as national legislators, the U.S. ranks ninety-first in the world, three percentage points lower than the international average of all nations taken collectively.¹¹³ Cynthia Terrell, chairperson for the Representation 2020 Project, notes that given the extremely slow rate of progress, “women won’t achieve fair representation for nearly 500 years.” Columbia University economist Howard Steven Friedman agrees and reports:

It took more than 130 years for American women to gain the right to vote and it wasn't until 1933 that the U.S. saw its first female Cabinet secretary, yet there still hasn't been a female vice president or president.¹¹⁴

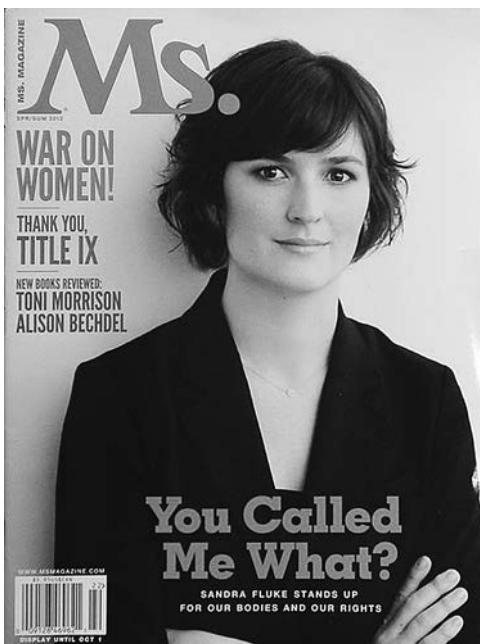


FIGURE 1.10: Sandra Fluke on the cover of Ms. Magazine

Friedman wonders whether advancement for women in American politics may actually be in decline and admits that gender quotas will not be accepted in American politics as they are in Belgium, Korea, Portugal, and Spain, nor voluntary party quotas as found in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, and the U.K. What he proposes is the idea of a voting process that adopts a **proportional representation** method, whereby “the number of seats won by a party or group of candidates is proportionate to the number of votes received,” which might encourage more women to enter politics, instead of the current winner-takes-all approach.¹¹⁵

Turning to the legal profession, according to the American Bar Association, men outnumber women in the legal profession by a ratio of two to one, and women are receiving J.D. degrees at slightly less than half the rate of men.¹¹⁶ When turning to federal court judges, three of the nine Supreme Court justices are women, 31% of Circuit Court of Appeals judges are women, and 24% of Federal Court judges are women.¹¹⁷ Turning to state courts, 27% of all state court judges in the U.S. are women.¹¹⁸ Taking all judges in the U.S. collectively, at both state and federal levels, women make up 27.1%.¹¹⁹ The *Wall Street Journal* reports that women make up only 17% of equity partners with ownership stakes at the 200 top-grossing law firms in America and that, overall, female attorneys earn approximately 25% less than their male counterparts.¹²⁰

Joan C. Williams, professor at the University of California, Hastings College of Law asks us to imagine a law firm partner.¹²¹ So let’s do so. Our typical image, Williams suggests, is that of a white man. In fact, white men make up the majority of law firm partners in America. But this means that many people will judge an individual against this ideal, which is a case of what Williams terms **descriptive bias**, forming a preconceived image.¹²² One concern about descriptive bias is that it can often convert into **prescriptive bias**, whereby one may come to believe that a law firm partner *ought* to resemble the preconceived image. If white males are the default presumption of what law partners should look like, the consequences to women and men of color is fairly obvious. Williams also informs readers that in a survey of 700 female law firm partners conducted by the Project for Attorney Retention and the Minority Corporate Counsel Association, one-third of the women reported having been bullied, threatened, or intimidated out of origination



FIGURE 1.11: