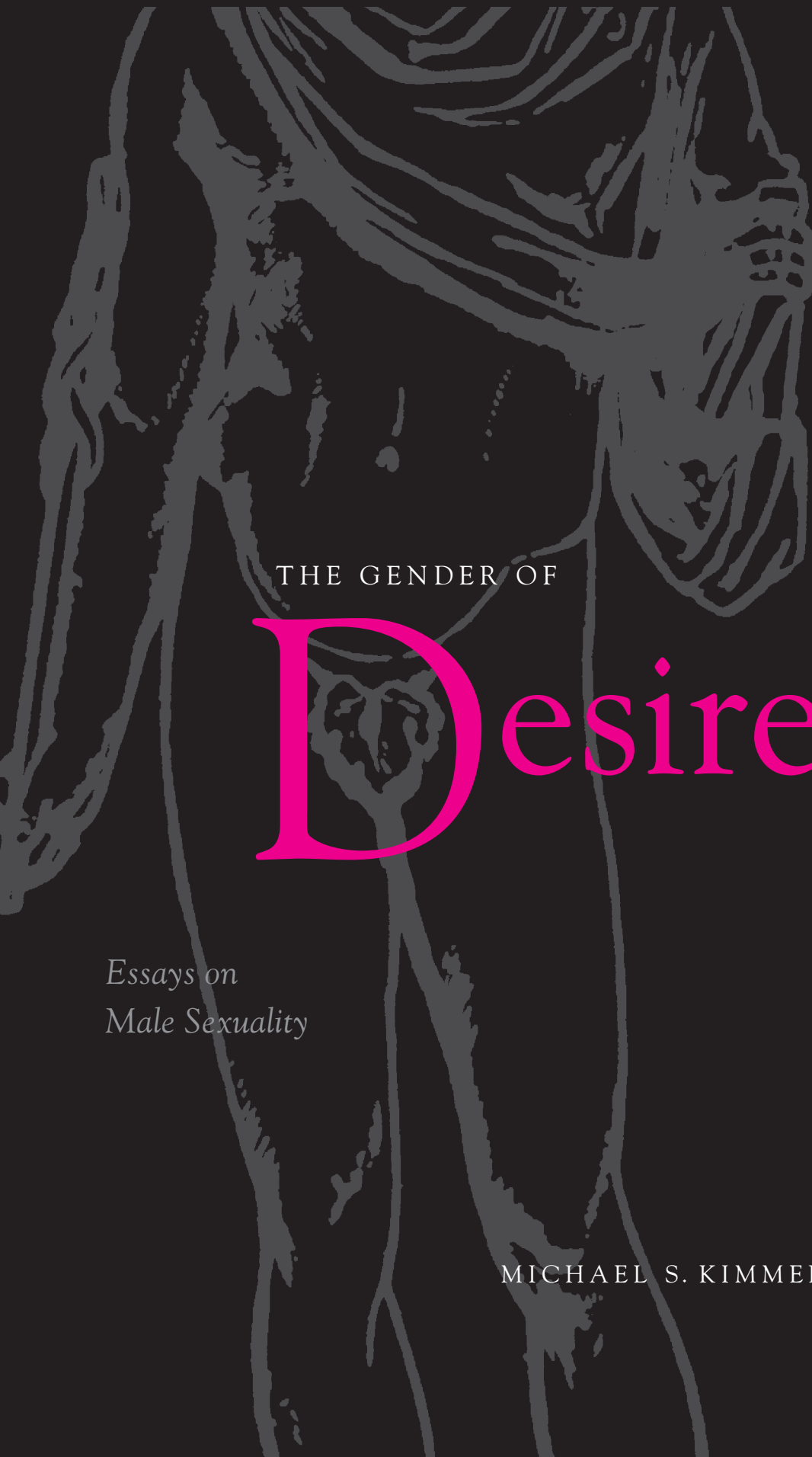

THE GENDER OF Desire

Essays on Male Sexuality

MICHAEL S. KIMMEL

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For Marty Duberman,
and twenty years of friendship

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Coitus can scarcely be said to take place in a vacuum; although of itself it appears a biological and physical activity, it is set so deeply within the larger context of human affairs that it serves as a charged microcosm of the variety of attitudes and values to which culture subscribes. Among other things, it may serve as a model of sexual politics in an individual or personal place.

—Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (1970)

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Preface

One could hardly have been sentient during the past few decades without noticing how much cultural turmoil and transformation has been about sex. It's everywhere you look these days—well, everywhere, that is, except sex education classes, where "abstinence only" models demand that one discuss "everything but." So like everyone else, it's fair to say that I came to the study of sexuality first as a practitioner, and only later began to reflect—politically and personally—on my own experiences.

And, like those of many other people, my thoughts about sexuality were transformed by the women's movement and the gay and lesbian movement. Feminism and gay liberation shook the sexual status quo to its foundation, and both threatened and hoped to rebuild sexual possibilities on entirely new foundations, in which equality and exuberance would replace suppression and shame.

These two movements certainly shook the foundations of my life. But as they did so powerfully, they also did so indirectly. Heterosexual and male, I had not had my sexuality suppressed and shrouded in shame; indeed, "my" sexuality was plastered all over the world as normal and natural.

At the same time, though, the women's movement and the gay and lesbian movement offered powerful critiques of heterosexual masculinity and male sexuality, critiques I slowly, fitfully, unevenly, and only partially took to heart.

After all, feminism certainly had something to say about male sexuality—both in the ways that male sexuality overshadowed and silenced the expression of women's authentic sexual voice and agency, and also in the way that male sexuality could be experienced by women as a form of political terrorism. Feminism sought to empower women to express their sexual agency, claim their sexual entitlement, speak in their own sexual voice, while, at the same time, also seeking to protect women from the ravages of men's violence that was often attendant upon some expressions of male sexuality. So while women were experimenting with sexual freedom—exploring their own bodies, both literally and symbolically—they were also seeking support and refuge from rape, violence, and battery.

The gay and lesbian movement approached these questions from a different angle, but with similar impulses. As with women's sexuality, gay sexuality had been long suppressed, and the gay movement sought to allow gays and lesbians to tear down the walls of legal and moral opprobrium and express their own sexualities openly, publicly, and lovingly. And the movements also offered a safe haven for those who had been victimized by homophobic violence, discrimination, and fears. In recent years, these two themes merged during the HIV crisis, as gays mobilized to express their outrage at homophobic public and governmental indifference as well as to openly love and care for those who were infected.

At first, it seemed easy to support these movements. It's not hard to say you support gender and sexual equality. Who could say they support rape or gay bashing? Most Americans do support gender equality, although we tend to split on sexual equality (the single great tear in the coherent moral fabric that commentators like Alan Wolfe observe in *One Nation After All;* on this issue, we are two nations).

It felt easy to support feminism and gay liberation because they seemed to be about "them," about those whose sexualities needed liberating. One could support "them" because it seemed reasonable, fair, and just—indeed, it felt like the definition of America itself to support "liberty and justice for all," just make that *sexual* liberty and *gender* justice. And besides, if the pundits were right, we straight men were definitely going to benefit from all these legions of feminist women who were exploring their own sexualities. Liberation wouldn't be a struggle, it would be fun!

But the secretly subversive thing about feminism and gay liberation was that they also promised changes for heterosexuals and for men. Feminism offered a critique about the ways in which men were sexual—of men's sexual entitlement to women's bodies, of the objectification of those bodies, and the equation, whether in representation or reality, of violence with sexual pleasure. And gay liberation offered a vision of a kind of genderless sexual utopia in which gender would no longer be the single permissible basis for sexual attraction.

Uh oh. Feminism and gay liberation were about me after all. Or, rather, not exactly "about" me, but they would definitely challenge my own sexual assumptions. That shook things up—and continues to do so.

At first, I became politically active with fledgling organizations that were organizing men to support women's equality. I was among the founders of Santa Cruz Men Against Rape in the late 1970s and an early organizer of what became the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS), the national pro-feminist men's organization. I met men who had begun to support each other in the arduous processes of self-examination and change and also to challenge each other, lovingly engaged in a process of exploring the ways in which sexism, racism, and homophobia have distorted our vision and disfigured our lives.

At first I thought I could keep everything neat and tidy—and separate. Typical, huh? I dutifully pursued my comparative and historical research on seventeenth-century French social and political movements and wrote a dissertation on two mid-seventeenth-century revolutions (the Fronde in France and the English Civil War) that does not have the words "gender," "masculinity," or "sexuality" in it at all.

But those issues—sexuality, gender, masculinity, feminism—were simply too pressing, both personally and politically, to be kept at the margins, and the impulse to bring my personal interests to bear on my academic life was too insistent to be ignored. In my first year of full-time teaching at Rutgers, after earning my PhD at Berkeley, I gave a speech about men and rape at a Take Back the Night Rally. A student in my Classical Sociological Theory class came up to me afterward and said, "Hey, that was really interesting. Why don't you teach a class about men and masculinity?" The idea had never crossed my mind.

Off to the library I went, to try and pull together a reading list that could serve as such a course's foundation. My department chair and Dean were immensely supportive, and I offered what I believe was the first course on Men and Masculinity in the state of New Jersey the following fall.

The reading list was a hodgepodge, cobbled together from classic sociological and psychological studies of "youth" (in which only boys were studied), magazine articles, and popular books. Taking our lead from feminist courses, we re-read canonical works such as *The Red Badge of Courage* as meditations on masculinity. We even read *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche,* a work that eloquently expressed a certain tremulous terror at women's increased agency. Suddenly everyone needed to read about what a "real man" was—because we no longer knew.

My research on sexuality grew out of that course. When we began to discuss male sexuality, and especially the ways in which men are socialized to become sexual in certain ways, the class was more animated, and more anxious, than at any other time in the semester. Since then, I've developed a separate course on sexuality and society that I teach at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. At times, the course has had over 400 students enrolled—a course on intimacy! Students are eager to think about and understand sexuality, especially, as they enter the course, the sexuality of "others."

The essays in this book grow out of my continued scholarly interest and research in sexuality. The three essays in part 1 are more or less programmatic, an attempt to map the contours of male sexuality from within a perspective that sees gender as the organizing principle of sexual expression. Particularly, I try to explore the links between male sexuality and aggression, as well as to understand the connections between sexism and homophobia.

Part 2 presents a sample of my thinking about pornography and sexual representation. In an article in *The Village Voice* in 1982, feminist film critic B. Ruby Rich offered a challenge. If "the legions of feminist men" wanted to do something useful, find "a proper Subject," they could "undertake the analysis that can tell us why men like porn (not, piously, why this or that exceptional man does *not*)." As the feminist debate about pornography seemed to rage all around me, I took Ruby's general challenge as a personal inspiration and embarked on the process that led to *Men Confront Pornography*. Chapter 4 in this volume fuses both the introduction and conclusion of that book. The three coauthored essays represent efforts to empirically explore the gendering of sexual desire and test some of the questions raised by the feminist debate about pornography.

The essays in part 3 revolve around questions concerning the sexual identity and behavior of actual people, not about representations. I critique a creeping essentialism in both feminist and gay movements, try to map a gendered understanding of bisexuality, and explore some issues of masculinity that are raised by men with sexual problems.

Part 3 concludes with a piece that begins to sketch out the relationship between masculinity, sexuality, feminism, and Judaism. This inquiry has begun

to engage me in a conversation I had largely avoided or ignored, having been a secular Jew for much of my adult life. This essay is more schematic, and I hope it portends a deeper inquiry to come.

Finally, in part 4, I turn my attention to the issue that brought me into this discussion in the first place: violence. I address the ways in which masculinity becomes entangled with questions about violence and critique those who would either explain men's violence away by pretending that women are equally violent or claim that sexual violence is an evolutionary adaptation to gain sexual and reproductive access to inconsiderate, uncooperative females.

The final essay, "Reducing Men's Violence," offers the hope that by exploring the gender relationships in societies in which there is little sexual violence, we can begin to refashion our own sexualities away from control, aggression, and violence and toward mutuality and equality—a loving lust that is as playful as it is passionate, equal parts heat and heart.

Acknowledgments

Since these essays represent my movement from political and personal engagement with the issues of sexuality into a more theoretical and empirical examination of these issues as research problems, it is important to thank some of the many friends and allies who have sustained me.

My colleagues, first at Rutgers and later at Stony Brook University, State University of New York, have always been indulgent, if not fully supportive. The fact that this book is being published by the State University of New York Press, the marvelous press at my "home" institution for the last fifteen years, makes me very happy. I am grateful to all my colleagues and students at Stony Brook, as well as my various editors at the State University of New York Press, including Ron Helfrich and Jane Bunker.

Many friends and allies have been mainstays of support and engagement, among them: Øystein Holter, Lars Jalmert, Michael Kaufman, Terry Kupers, Jorgen Lorentzen, Mike Messner, Mary Morris and Larry O'Connor, Lillian and Hank Rubin, Don Sabo, Julia Sokoloff, Mitchell Tunick, and Pam Hatchfield.

Amy Aronson daily reminds me that the connections between body and soul, sex and love, are the deepest and richest of life's pleasures. And while the exhilaration and exhaustion of having a lively five-year-old may occasionally mute its expression, Zachary has also brought an indescribable joy to our lives.

Why just recently he said something that again made me hopeful about the future he will help create. Occasionally, Zachary and I play a game called "opposites" in which I tell him a word and he tells me its opposite. This game is incredibly simple, and he loves it. One evening, my mother was visiting and she played with us. Scratchy/smooth, tall/short, high/low, ugly/beautiful, fast/slow—well, you get the idea. Then my mother asked, "Zachary, what's the opposite of boy?"

I clenched. Every fiber of my gender-theorizing body tensed up. Uh oh, I thought, here it comes, gender binarism, heterosexual dimorphic reasoning, gender schematized ideation. I braced myself. Zachary took a few seconds. "Man," he said.

Twenty-two years ago, in 1983, I met three men who influenced my thinking about sexuality in countless ways. As a colleague, mentor, friend, collaborator, and coauthor, John Gagnon encouraged me to see how sexuality had historically come to occupy a central place in the sociological investigation of the self. And my 10-year friendship and collaboration with Marty Levine, until he died of AIDS in 1993, was as sustaining and loving as any. Having described this friendship in the preface to his book, *Gay Macho,* I won't repeat it here.

I first met Marty Duberman twenty years ago in a "men's group" that had been organized to explore the commonalities and differences between gay men

and straight men (four of each)—all of whom supported feminism. I had read several of his books before, especially the masterful *Black Mountain*, which had spoken to my own interests in educational reforms that would embrace the entire person. I admired his work enormously.

I didn't know who he was when we went around the room that first night to introduce ourselves. I was nervous and mumbled something about what brought me there—most likely a mixture of grandiosity and self-effacement, which is what I typically do when I'm anxious and want to make a good impression.

I was drawn to one man in particular, an older man who struck me as both dramatically handsome and sexually powerful. When he spoke, I was astonished. I had read his books! What he said, though, unnerved me. He asked if this was going to be a "real" group, or simply a support group. "If the latter, I'm not interested," he said. "I want to know if it's going to be a place where we can really talk about our feelings, really push each other. Because I have to say, I already have very strong negative reactions to one man in this group and I need to know if it is going to be OK to talk about it."

"Please let it not be me, please let it not be me," I immediately began chanting silently to myself. It wasn't. And after the initial confrontation between Marty and the other group member, I was so relieved I blurted out that I was so afraid that he hated me instantly, when I was quite drawn to him. "Not you," he said with characteristic bluntness. "You seem quite authentic, but quite frightened of it."

Our friendship was born that evening. We exchanged phone numbers and had dinner the next week. And now, twenty years later, our friendship has weathered so many changes in our lives—relationships, loneliness, divorce, tenure, writing, political feuding, and the slower, no less urgent crises of aging. Twenty years later, each of us has fallen in love and lived, at least for the most part, happily ever after. I had a child (he's Zachary's godfather), he and Eli have a dog, who is only slightly less demanding.

Through it all, he has been my most relentless and implacable critic, always pushing harder for more depth, more authenticity, more of me to spill out on the page, in my interactions. And he's shown me what that might look like himself, relentlessly reexamining his own feelings and ideas, pushing himself for the same depth he wants from others. One could not ask more from a friend.

The author acknowledges the following journals and edited volumes, in which several of the chapters of this volume originally appeared: Chapter 3, volume 6 of *Gendered Sexualities;* chapter 4, *Men Confront Pornography* (Crown, 1990); chapter 5, *The Journal of Sex Research, 37(2),* May 2000; chapter 6, *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality, 8(3),* 1996; chapter 7, *Social Research, 60(3),* 1993; and chapter 8, *Bisexualities: The Ideology and Practice of Sexual Contact with Both Men and Women* (Continuum, 1998).

I
The Construction of Male Sexual Desire

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1
Gendering Desire

Nowhere in our intimate lives is there greater expression of gender difference than in our sexual relationships. "She" may make love "just like a woman," as Bob Dylan famously sang, but "he" would make love just like a man. Though we often think that sexual orientation is the great dividing line in our sexual expression—if one is gay or straight one knows all one needs to know about their sexualities—the evidence points decidedly the other way, toward an understanding that gender, not sexual orientation, is the dividing line along which sexual expression, desire, and experience is organized. Gay men and straight men think and act sexually in similar ways, as do lesbians and straight women. In that sense, sexually speaking, gay men and lesbians are gender conformists.

There are, of course, some signs of change. Women are reconstructing the traditional view of female sexuality as passive and receptive; the fertile combination of feminism, technological and medical breakthroughs, and general cultural transition have ushered in an age of more casual female sexual expression, of women increasingly claiming their own sexual agency, their own entitlement to pleasure, an era in which Victoria's "Secret" is now shopping mall fare, and in which *Sex in the City* describes more than the lifestyles of four very silly and seductive young women. In that sense, sexuality has become increasingly "masculinized." The "masculinization of sex"—including the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake, the increased attention to orgasm, the multiplication of sexual partners, the universal interest in sexual experimentation, and the separation of sexual behavior from love—is partly a result of the technological transformation of sexuality (from birth control to the Internet) and partly a result of the sexual revolution's promise of greater sexual freedom with fewer emotional and physical consequences.

Much of that sexual revolution was a rejection of the Victorian double standard. According to writers of that era, women and men were different species. As the celebrated French historian Jules Michelet put it in 1881:

This chapter is a revised version of "Gendered Sexualities," chapter 10 of *The Gendered Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

> [Woman] does nothing as we [men] do. She thinks, speaks, and acts differently. Her tastes are different from our tastes. Her blood even does not flow in her veins as ours does, at times it rushes through them like a foaming mountain torrent . . . She does not eat like us—neither as much nor of the same dishes. Why? Chiefly, because she does not digest as we do. Her digestion is every moment troubled with one thing: She yearns with her very bowels. The deep cup of love (which is called the pelvis) is a sea of varying emotions, hindering the regularity of the nutritive function. (cited in Gardetto, 1988, p. 18)

Sex was invariably seen as bad for women—unhealthy and immoral—while it was tolerated or even encouraged for men. "The majority of women (happily for them) are not much troubled with sexual feelings of any kind," wrote one physician (obviously male) in the 1890s (cited in Ehrenreich & English, 1974).

Even when Alfred Kinsey undertook his pioneering studies of sexual behavior in the decade following the Second World War, this double standard was still firmly in place. As he wrote in 1953:

> [W]e have not understood how nearly alike females and males may be in their sexual responses, and the extent to which they may differ. We have perpetuated the age-old traditions concerning the slower responsiveness of the female, the greater extent of the erogenous areas on the body of the female, the earlier sexual development of the female, the idea that there are basic differences in the nature of orgasm among females and males, the greater emotional content of the female's sexual response, and still other ideas which are not based on scientifically accumulated data—and all of which now appear to be incorrect. It now appears that the very techniques which have been suggested in marriage manuals, both ancient and modern, have given rise to some of the differences that we have thought inherent in females and males. (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, p. 376)

Kinsey believed that males and females have basically the same physical responses, though men are more influenced by psychological factors. Note in the passage above how Kinsey suggests that the advice of experts actually *creates* much of the difference between women and men. One study of gynecology textbooks published between 1943 and 1972 bears this out. The authors found that many textbooks asserted that women could not experience orgasm during intercourse. One textbook writer observed, "sexual pleasure is entirely secondary or even absent" in women; another described women's "almost universal frigidity." Given such assumptions, it's not surprising that women were counseled to fake orgasm; after all, they weren't capable of real ones. "It is good advice to recommend to the women the advantage of innocent simulation of sex responsiveness; as a matter of fact many women in their desire to please their husbands learned the advantage

of such innocent deception," was the way one text counseled gynecologists to raise the issue with their female patients (cited in Bart, 1974, pp. 6–7).

The double standard persists today—perhaps less in what we actually do and more in the way we think about sex. Men still stand to gain status and women to lose it from sexual experience: he's a stud who scores; she's a slut who "gives it up." Boys are taught to try to get sex; girls are taught strategies to foil the boys' attempts. "The whole game was to get a girl to give out," one man told sociologist Lillian Rubin. "You expected her to resist; she had to if she wasn't going to ruin her reputation. But you kept pushing. Part of it was the thrill of touching and being touched, but I've got to admit, part of it was the conquest, too, and what you'd tell the guys at school the next day." "I felt as if I should want to get it as often as possible," recalled another. "I guess that's because if you're a guy, you're supposed to want it" (1991, pp. 28, 42). The sexual double standard is more than a case of separate but equal sexual scripting, more than a case of complementary "his" and "her" sexualities, like a matching set of bathroom towels.

The sexual double standard is itself a product of gender inequality, of sexism—the unequal distribution of power in our society based on gender. Gender inequality is reinforced by the ways we have come to assume that men are more sexual than women, that men will always try to escalate sexual encounters to prove their manhood, and that women—or, rather, "ladies"—either do not have strong sexual feelings, or that those who do must be constantly controlled lest they fall into disrepute. With such a view, sex becomes a contest, not a means of connection; when sexual pleasure happens, it's often seen as his victory over her resistance. Sexuality becomes, in the words of feminist lawyer Catharine MacKinnon, "the linchpin of gender inequality" (1996, p. 185).

Women are raised to believe that to be sexually active or promiscuous is to transgress the rules of femininity. These rules are enforced not just by men, of course, but also by other women, and institutionalized by church, state, and school. The pursuit of sex transforms good girls into bad girls, so most women accept the cultural standard of sexual minimalism—few partners, fewer positions, less pleasure, less sex without emotional commitment. Such an ideology keeps a woman waiting for her Prince Charming to liberate her, to arouse her with his tender kisses, and release the passion smoldering beneath her cooler surface.

Examples of these different scripts abound—from what we think about, what we want, and what we actually do. For example, consider what "counts" as sex. When they say the word "sex," women and men often mean different things. In one study, monogamous heterosexual couples in their mid-40s were asked, "How many times did you make love last week?" Consistently, the researchers found, the men reported slightly higher numbers than the women. What could this indicate—better memories? masculine braggadocio? clandestine affairs? solitary pleasures? When the researchers asked more questions, they found the difference was the result of women and men counting different experiences as "making love." The women would count one sexual encounter once, while the men tallied up the

number of their orgasms. Thus, while a woman might say, "Hmm, we made love three times last week," her husband might say, "Hmm, let me see, we did it three times, but one of those times we did it twice [meaning that he had two orgasms], so I guess the answer is four."

The differences in counting criteria reveal deeper differences in the understanding of sexual expression. Women's understanding that sex equals the entire encounter gives them a somewhat broader range of sexual activities that count as sex. Men's focus on orgasm as the defining feature of sex parallels their tendency to exclude all acts except intercourse from "having sex." Oral or manual stimulation are seen as "foreplay" for men, as "sex" for women. Men cannot tally the encounter on their mental scorecard unless intercourse also occurs. This often results in complex rules about what constitutes a "technical virgin." (The recent public seminar on what counts as "sexual relations" in the impeachment trial of President Clinton bears this out. Since he and Monica Lewinsky did not have sexual intercourse, and instead did what girls in my high school used to call "everything but," Clinton argued that he did not lie when he denied having sex with Lewinsky. In his mind, as one of my pals in the locker room explained it to me, "it only counts if you put it in." And some recent medical evidence bears this out; a recent article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that only intercourse "counted" as sex for nearly two-fifths of those surveyed. Fifty-nine percent of respondents believed that oral-genital contact did not constitute "having sex") (Sanders & Reinisch, 1999, p. 281).

Intercourse and orgasm are more important forms of sexual expression for men than they are for women. This leads to a greater emphasis on the genitals as the single most important erogenous zone for men. If men's sexuality is phallocentric—revolving around the glorification and gratification of the penis—then it is not surprising that men often develop elaborate relationships with their genitals. Some men name their penis—"Willie," "John Thomas," or "Peter"—or give them cute nicknames taken from mass-produced goods like "Whopper" and "Big Mac." Men may come to believe that their penises have little personalities, (or, perhaps, what feel like big personalities), threatening to refuse to behave the way they are supposed to behave. If men do not personify the penis, they objectify it; if it is not a little person, then it is supposed to act like a machine, an instrument, a "tool." A man projects "the coldness and hardness of metal" onto his flesh, writes one French philosopher (Reynaud, 1983, p. 41).

Few women name their genitals; fewer still think of their genitals as machines. Can you imagine if they called their clitorises "Shirley" or their labia "Sally Ann"? In fact, women rarely refer to their genitals by their proper names at all, generally describing vulva, labia, and clitoris with the generic "vagina" or even the more euphemistic "down there" or "private parts." And it would be rare indeed to see a woman having a conversation with her labia (see Tavris, 1992 and Lerner, 1998).

So when they think about sex, men and women are often thinking about different things. Actually, thinking about sex at all seems to be a gendered activity. Men tend to think about sex more often than women. Over half of the men surveyed (54 percent) in the most recent large-scale sex survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago reported that they think about sex very frequently, compared with 19 percent of the women. Two-thirds of the women report that they think about sex less frequently, compared with 43 percent of the men. And 14 percent of the women say they rarely or never think about sex, compared with only 4 percent of the men (Laumann et al., 1994).

Forty years earlier, Alfred Kinsey and his colleagues had found that 89 percent of men who masturbated fantasized, while only 64 percent of women did. And what they "use" for their fantasies differs. Today, nearly one-fourth (23 percent of men and 11 percent of women) use X-rated movies or videos; 16 percent of men and 4 percent of women use sexually explicit books or magazines (Laumann et al., 1994, p. 135). And what they fantasize about differs dramatically. A research assistant and I have collected over 1,000 sexual fantasies from students over the past decade. In those fantasies, definite gender patterns emerged. Men tend to fantasize about strangers, often more than one at a time, doing a variety of well-scripted sexual acts; women tend to fantasize about setting the right mood for lovemaking with their boyfriend or husband, but rarely visualize specific behaviors (see chapter 3, of this volume).

Men's fantasies are idealized renditions of masculine sexual scripts: genitally focused, orgasm centered, and explicit in the spatial and temporal sequencing of sexual behaviors. We know exactly who does what to whom in what precise order. Physical characteristics of the other participants are invariably highly detailed; these are most often strangers (or famous models or actresses) chosen for their physical attributes. Rarely do they include the physical setting for the encounter. Women's fantasies, on the other hand, are replete with descriptions that set the scene—geographic and temporal settings, with elaborate placement of props like candles, rugs, and wine glasses. They often involve present or past partners. Explicitly sexual description is minimal and usually involves vague references to lovemaking.

Thus we might say that women's *sexual* imaginations are impoverished at the expense of highly developed *sensual* imaginations; by contrast, men's sensual imaginations are impoverished by their highly developed sexual imaginations. (These differences hold for both heterosexual and homosexual women and men, a further indication that the basic component in our sexual scripts is gender, not sexual orientation.) While there has been some evidence of shifts in women's fantasies toward more sexually explicit scenes, and increasing comfort with explicit language, these fantasies do reveal both what we think and what we think we are supposed to think about when we think about sex (see Hariton & Singer, 1974;

Goleman, 1983; May, 1980; Chick & Gold, 1987–88; Mednick, 1977; Follingstad & Kimbrell, 1986; Knafo & Jaffe, 1984).

Where do these dramatically different mental landscapes come from? One place, of course, is sexual representation. Pornography occupies a special place in the development of men's sexuality. Nearly all men confess to having some exposure to pornography, at least as adolescents; indeed, for many men, the first naked women they see are in pornographic magazines. And pornography has been the site of significant political protest—from an erotophobic right wing that considers pornography to be as degrading to human dignity as birth control information, homosexuality, and abortion, to radical feminist campaigns that see pornography as a vicious expression of misogyny, on par with rape, spouse abuse, and genital mutilation (see chapters 4–6 in this volume).

While the right wing's efforts rehearsed America's discomfort with all things sexual, the radical feminist critique of pornography transformed the political debate, arguing that when men looked at pornographic images of naked women, they were actually participating in a culture-wide hatred and contempt for women. Pornographic images are about the subordination of women; pornography "makes sexism sexy," in the words of one activist. Here is one pornographic director and actor, commenting on his "craft":

> My whole reason for being in the [pornography] Industry is to satisfy the desire of the men in the world who basically don't much care for women and want to see the men in my Industry getting even with the women they couldn't have when they were growing up . . . So when we come on a woman's face or somewhat brutalize her sexually, we're getting even for their lost dreams. I believe this. I've heard audiences cheer me when I do something foul on screen. When I've strangled a person or sodomized a person or brutalized a person, the audience is cheering my action, and then when I've fulfilled my warped desire, the audience applauds. (Stoller, 1991, p. 31)

The claims of antipornography feminists—that pornography causes rape, or that it numbs us to the real effect of real violence in women's lives—have been difficult to demonstrate empirically. Few studies have shown such an empirical relationship, though several have documented some modest changes in men's attitudes immediately after exposure to violent pornography. Yet whether or not there is *any* empirical evidence that the pornography alone causes rape or violence, there remains the shocking difference between us: On any given day in the United States, there are men masturbating to images of women enduring sexual torture, genital mutilation, rape, and violence. Surely, this points to a dramatic difference between women's and men's sexualities—one can hardly imagine many women masturbating to reenactments of Lorena Bobbitt's ministrations to her husband. Violence is rarely sexualized for women; that such images can be a routine and casual turn on for many men should at least give us pause.

Pornography also exaggerates the masculinization of sex. In typical porn video scenes, both women and men want sex—even when women don't want it, when they are forced or raped, it turns out that they wanted it after all. Both women and men are always looking for opportunities to have sex, both are immediately aroused and ready for penetration, and both have orgasms within fifteen seconds of penetration. Which gender's sexuality does that sound like? As a result, as antipornography activist John Stoltenberg writes, pornography "tells lies about women," but it "tells the truth about men" (1990, p. 121).

Given men's and women's different sexual mentalities, it's not surprising that we develop different sexualities, as evidenced in our attitudes and behaviors. "For sex to really work for me, I need to feel an emotional *something*," one woman told Lillian Rubin. "Without that, it's just another athletic activity, only not as satisfying, because when I swim or run, I feel good afterward" (p. 102). Women's first sexual experiences are more likely to occur in the context of a committed relationship (Tavris & Wade, 1984, p. 111). Since women tend to connect sex and emotion, it makes sense that they would be less interested in one-night stands, affairs and nonmonogamy. In one survey, women were about 20 percent more likely to agree that one-night stands are degrading (47 percent of the men agreed; 68 percent of the women agreed). Men are more likely to be unfaithful to their spouse, though that gender gap has closed considerably in the past two decades. And, of course, the separation of sex and emotion means that men are more likely to have had more sexual partners than women, although this gender gap has also been narrowing over the past few decades (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983, p. 279; Schwartz & Rutter, 1998, pp. 60–61).[1]

Men's wider sexual repertoire usually includes desiring oral sex, about which women report being far less enthusiastic. As one woman explained:

> I like going down on him. It makes him feel good, truly good. I don't find it unpleasant. I don't say I wish I could do it all the time. I don't equate it with a sale at Bloomingdale's. That I could do all the time. But it's not like going to the dentist either. It's between two extremes. Closer to Bloomingdale's than to the dentist. (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983, p. 234)

But perhaps this has less to do with the intrinsic meaning of the act, and more to do with the gender of the actor. For example, when men describe their experiences with oral sex, it is nearly always from the position of power. Whether fellatio—"I feel so powerful when I see her kneeling in front of me"—or cunnilingus—"being able to get her off with my tongue makes me feel so powerful"—men experience the giving and receiving of oral sex as an expression of their power. By contrast, women perceive both giving and receiving oral sex from the position of powerlessness—not necessarily because they are forced to do so, but because "it makes him happy" for them to either do it, or let him do it. So oral sex, like intercourse, allows him to feel "like a man," regardless of who does what to whom.

Where does the sexual gender gap come from? Though we are constantly bombarded with sexual images in the media and receive lessons about sexual morality from our parents, our teachers, and our religious institutions, most of our sexual learning comes during adolescence, and most of our adolescent sexual socialization is accomplished by our peers. We teach ourselves, and each other, about what feels good and why, and then we practice performing those activities until they do feel the way we're told we're supposed to feel.

Remember, for example, those junior high school "wrestling matches"—two adolescents trying to negotiate, usually without words, the extent of their sexual contact. Both the boy and the girl have goals, though they may be very different. "His" object, of course, is to score—and toward that end he has a variety of maneuvers, arguments, and other strategies his friends have taught him. "Her" object may be pleasure, but it is also to preserve and protect her reputation as a "good girl," which requires that she be seen as alluring but not "easy." "Young men come to sex with quite different expectations and desires than do young women," the NORC sex survey declared. "Young women often go along with intercourse the first time, finding little physical pleasure in it, and a substantial number report being forced to have intercourse" (Laumann et al., 1994, p. 347).

By the time we get to be adults, this socialized distance between women and men can ossify into the different experiences we are said to have. Each gender is seeking to express different feelings, for different reasons, with different repertoires, and so it may appear that we are from different planets. In the British film *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid,* a lesbian character suggests that heterosexuals are to be pitied. "The women spend all their time trying to come, and they're unsuccessful, and the men spend all their time trying not to come, and they're unsuccessful also."

She has a point. Since many men believe that adequate sexual functioning is being able to delay ejaculation, some develop strategies to prevent what they consider to be premature ejaculation—strategies that exaggerate emotional distancing, phallocentrism, the focus on orgasm, and objectification. Here's how Woody Allen once put it in a stand-up comedy routine from the mid-1960s. After describing himself as a "stud," Allen says:

> When making love, in an effort to [pause] to prolong [pause] the moment of ecstasy, I think of baseball players. All right, now you know. So the two of us are making love violently, and she's digging it, so I figure I'd better start thinking of baseball players pretty quickly. So I figure it's one out, and the Giants are up. Mays lines a single to right. He takes second on a wild pitch. Now she's digging her nails into my neck. I decide to pinch-hit for McCovey. [pause for laughter] Alou pops out. Haller singles, Mays takes third. Now I've got a first and third situation. Two outs and the Giants are behind one run. I don't know whether to squeeze or to steal. [pause for laughter] She's been in the shower for ten minutes already. [pause] I can't tell you anymore, this is too personal. [pause] The Giants won.

Readers may be struck by several things—the imputation of violence, how her pleasure leads to his decision to think of baseball players, the requirement of victory in the game, and the sexual innuendo contained in the sports language. The text also supplies a startling revelation of male sexual distancing. Here's a device that is so successful at delaying ejaculation (or any sexual connection) that the narrator is rendered utterly unaware of his partner's experience. "She's been in the shower for ten minutes already," Allen remarks, as if he's just noticed. Other men describe elaborate mental scripting of sports scenes, reciting multiplication tables, or, in the case of one of my students, a chemistry major, reciting, in order, the periodic table of the elements. No wonder women often wonder what men are thinking about during sex!

When it goes "right," we clearly observe the gendered qualities of sex. Another illustration of the genderedness of sex comes from research on what happens when things go wrong. For example, when men seek therapeutic evaluation for sexual problems, they rarely describe not experiencing enough pleasure. One man who experienced premature ejaculation reported that he felt like he "isn't a real man" because he "can't satisfy a woman." Another, with erectile problems, told a therapist that "a real man never has to ask his wife for anything sexually" and he "should be able to please her whenever he wants." Each of these men thus expressed a sexual problem in gender terms; each fears that his sexual problem damages his masculinity, makes him less of a real man. For these men, sexuality is less about mutual pleasuring and more about hydraulic functioning. Is it any wonder that men use the language of the workplace (in addition to using metaphors from sports and war) to describe sexual experiences. We use the "tool" to "get the job done," which is, of course, to "achieve" orgasm, or else we experience "performance anxiety." Men with sexual problems are rarely gender nonconformists, unable or unwilling to follow the rules of masculine sexual adequacy. If anything, they are overconformists to norms that define sexual adequacy by the ability to function like a well-oiled machine (see chapter 8 in this volume).

Closing the Sexual Gender Gap

Despite the persistence of gender differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors, the sexual gender gap has been closing in recent years, as women's and men's sexual experiences come to more closely resemble one another's. Or, rather, women's experiences have come to resemble men's. As I argued earlier, our experience of love has been feminized and our sexuality has been increasingly "masculinized." While men's sexual behavior has hardly changed, women's sexuality has changed dramatically, moving increasingly closer to the behavior of men. (This probably both thrills and terrifies men.)

Part of this transformation has been the result of the technological breakthroughs and ideological shifts that have come to be known as the sexual revolution.

Since the 1960s, the pursuit of sexual pleasure for its own sake has been increasingly available to women, as adequate and relatively safe birth control and legal abortion have made it possible to separate fully sexual activity from reproduction. (Men, of course, always were able to pursue sexual pleasure for its own sake; thus, in this sense, women's sexuality has come to more closely resemble men's.) "I guess sex was originally to produce another body; then I guess it was for love; nowadays it's just for feeling good," was the way one 15-year-old boy summed up the shift (Rubin, 1991, p. 13). In addition, widespread sex education has made people more sexually aware—but not necessarily more sexually active. In one recent literature review of 53 studies that examined the effects of sex education and HIV education on sexual activity, 27 found no changes in rates of sexual activity, and 22 observed marked decreases, delayed onset of activity, and reduced number of sexual partners. Only three studies found any increase in sexual activity associated with sex education. It would appear that sex education enables people to make *better* sexual decisions, and encourages more responsibility, not less (Grunseit et al., 1997).

Ideologically, feminism made the pursuit of sexual pleasure, the expression of women's sexual autonomy, a political goal. No longer would women believe that they were sexually disinterested, passive and virtuous asexual angels. Women were as entitled to pleasure as men were. And, practically, they knew how to get it, once feminists exposed what one feminist called "the myth of the vaginal orgasm." Feminism was thus, in part, a political resistance to what we might call the "socialized asexuality" of feminine sexuality. "Part of my attraction to feminism involved the right to be a sexual person," recalls one woman. Another envisioned a feminism that "validates the right for a woman to say yes instead of no" (Hollibaugh, 1996). In the past three decades, then, it's been women's sexuality that has been transformed, as women have sought to express their own sexual agency. Consider, for example, the transformation of the idea of sexual experience in the first place. While it used to be that men were expected to have some sexual experience prior to marriage, many women and men placed a premium on women's virginity. Not anymore. As Lillian Rubin writes, "in the brief span of one generation—from the 1940s to the 1960s—we went from mothers who believed their virginity was their most prized possession to daughters for whom it was a burden." Virginity was no longer "a treasure to be safeguarded"; now, it was "a problem to be solved" (pp. 5, 46).

Rates and motivations for masturbation have also begun to converge. What, after all, is masturbation but self-pleasuring—surely, an expression of sexual agency. The most recent large-scale national sex survey found that men's and women's motivations for masturbation were roughly similar (Laumann, 1994, p. 86; Schwartz & Rutter, 1998, p. 39). As are sexual attitudes. In the NORC sex survey, 36 percent of men and 53 percent of women born between 1933 and 1942 believed that premarital sex was almost always wrong. These numbers declined for both groups, but declined far more sharply for women, so that for those born between 1963 and 1974, only 16 percent of men and 22 percent of

women believed that premarital sex was almost always wrong (Laumann et al., 1994, p. 507).

Sexual behaviors, too, have grown increasingly similar. Among teenage boys, sexual experience has remained virtually the same since the mid-1940s, with about 70 percent of all high school aged boys having had sexual intercourse (the rates were about 50 percent for those who went to high school in the late 1920s). But the rates for high school girls have changed dramatically, up from 5 percent in the 1920s to 20 percent in the late 1940s, to 55 percent in 1982, and 60 percent in 1991. And the age of first intercourse has steadily declined for both boys and girls. Similarly, although the rates of teenage virgins have declined for both girls and boys, they have declined more rapidly for girls. The number of teenagers who have had more than five different sexual partners by their eighteenth birthday has increased for both sexes, the rate of increase is also greater for girls as well (Laumann et al., 1994; Schwartz & Rutter, 1998, p. 165).

For adults, rates of premarital sex and the number of sex partners seem to be moving closer. In another survey, 99 percent of male college graduates and 90 percent of female college graduates said that they had had sex before marriage. Researchers in one survey of sexual behavior from the 1970s, found far greater sexual activity and greater variety among married women in the 1970s than Kinsey had found in the late 1940s. Ninety percent of all married women claimed to be happy with their sex lives; three-quarters were content with its frequency, while 25 percent wanted more. A study in the 1980s echoed this trend. Women and men displayed similar sexual desires—both wanted frequent sex, were happiest when initiating and refusing sex in equal amounts, and became discontent when sex was infrequent (see Laumann et al., 1994; Schwartz & Rutter, 1998; Janus, 1993; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Segal, 1997).

What turns us on sexually is also similar. In the 1970s, psychologist Julia Heiman developed a way to measure women's sexual arousal. Samples of college women listened to two sorts of tapes—romantic and explicitly sexual—while wearing a tamponlike device that measured blood flow to the vagina. Like men, women were far more sexually aroused by explicit sex talk than they were by romance (Kolata, 1998, p. 3). And interest in sexual variety also appears to be converging. Experiences of oral sex have increased dramatically for both women and for men. And, if one 20-year-old college woman is to be believed, the meanings attached to oral sex seem to be shifting as well. "'I was about 16 and I had this friend—not a boyfriend, a boy *friend*—and I didn't know what to give him for his birthday, so I gave him a blow job. I wanted to know what it was like; it was just for kicks,'" is what she told an interviewer, "without a trace of embarrassment or self-consciousness" (Rubin, 1991, p. 14).

It would appear that women are having more sex and enjoying it more than ever in our history. And so women are far less likely, now, to fake orgasm. When Lillian Rubin interviewed white working-class women in the mid-1970s for her study *Worlds of Pain*, she found that over 70 percent of the women said they faked

orgasm at least some of the time. Now, she finds that the same percentage says that they never fake it (Rubin, 1991, p. 120).

The evidence of gender conversion does not mean that there are no differences between women and men in their sexual expression. It still means different things to be sexual, but the rules are not enforced with the ferocity and consistency that they were in the past. "It's different from what it used to be when women were supposed to hold out until they got married. There's pressure now on both men and women to lose their virginity," is how one 29-year-old man put it. "But for a man it's a sign of manhood, and for a woman there's still some loss of value" (Rubin, 1991, p. 58). Moreover, though both men and women feel entitled to pleasure, and both have their first sexual experience because they wanted to, men still seem to believe that that entitlement also covers acting on it—even when the woman doesn't want to. "I paid for a wonderful evening," commented one college man, "and I was entitled to sex for my effort." As a result of attitudes like these, cases of date and acquaintance rape continue to skyrocket on our campuses (Koss et al., 1988).

About 15 percent of college women report having been sexually assaulted; more than half of these assaults were by a person whom the woman was dating. Some studies have estimated the rates to be significantly higher, nearly double (27%) that of the study undertaken by Mary Koss and her colleagues (1988). And, while some pundits have expressed outrage that feminists have transformed college-aged women into "victims," it is more accurate to express outrage that predatory males have turned college women into victims of sexual assault. Any number of rapes is unacceptable. But that significant numbers of college women are forced to change their behaviors because of the behaviors of these men—where they study, how late they stay in the library, which parties they go to, whom they date—is the outrage.

Among adults, women and men report quite different rates of forced sex. While 96.1 percent of men and 77.2 percent of women say they have never been forced to have sex against their will, those who have been forced display dramatic differences. Just slightly more than 1 percent of men (1.3%), but over one-fifth of all women (21.6%) were forced to have sex by the opposite sex; only about 2 percent of men (1.9%) and just .3% of women were forced by someone of the same sex. Men continue to be the principal sexual predators. Several studies estimate the likelihood that a woman will be the victim of a completed rape to be about one in five. The figure for an attempted rape is nearly double that (Laumann et al., 1994, p. 336; Koss et al., 1994).

Women's increase in sexual agency, revolutionary as it is, has not been accompanied by a decrease in male sexual entitlement, nor by a sharp increase in men's capacity for intimacy and emotional connectedness. Thus, just as some feminist women have celebrated women's claim to sexual autonomy, others—therapists and activists—have deplored men's adherence to a "non-relational" model of sexual behavior. As with friendship and with love, it's men who have the problem, and psychologists like Ronald Levant seek to replace "irresponsible,

detached, compulsive, and alienated sexuality with a type of sexuality that is ethically responsible, compassionate for the well-being of participants, and sexually empowering of men" (1997, p. 270).

The notion of nonrelational sex means that sex is, to men, central to their lives; isolated from other aspects of life and relationships; often coupled with aggression; conceptualized socially within a framework of success and achievement; and pursued despite possible negative emotional and moral consequences. Sexual inexperience is viewed as stigmatizing. Examples of male nonrelational sexuality abound according to the critics. Men think about sex more often than women; have more explicit sexual fantasies; masturbate more often than women; buy more porn; have more sex partners; and, have more varied sexual experiences than women (Billy et al., 1993; Laumann et al., 1994).

In a recent edited volume on this problem, psychologist Gary Brooks (1995) pathologizes male sexual problems as a "centerfold syndrome." Symptoms include: voyeurism, objectification, sex as a validation of masculinity, trophyism, and fear of intimacy. Ron Levant contributes a medical neologism, *alexithymia,* to describe the socially conditioned "inability to feel or express feelings" (1997, p. 19). This problem must be serious; after all, it has a Greek name. Some authors also note the danger to women by men who have this type of "masculine" sex, who "deny the humanity of their partners, and . . . objectify and even violate the partner who is actually treated more as a prop." Others warn of "the damage ultimately done to men when they are socialized in a way that limits their ability to experience intimacy" (Johnston, 1997, pp. 79, 101).

Not all the studies of male nonrelationality are so critical. Psychologists Glenn Good and Nancy Sherrod argue that for many men nonrelational sex is a stage of development, not necessarily a way of being:

> Men progress through the NS [nonrelational sexuality] stage by mastering the developmental tasks associated with this stage . . . [which] includes gaining experience as a sexual being, gaining experience with interpersonal aspects of sexuality, developing identity, and developing comfort with intimacy. Men following this route develop internally directed senses of their behavior that allow them to form and sustain intimate, caring relationships with others.

In fact, Good and Sherrod argue, experience with nonrelational sexuality may be a positive experience, allowing adolescents "to reduce sexual tensions" and "gain sexual experiences, refine skills associated with sexual activities, and experience different partners and behaviors, thereby reducing curiosity about different partners in the future" (Good & Sherrod, 1997, pp. 189, 190).

The idea of nonrelational sex as a "problem" for men is relatively recent, and is part of a general cultural discomfort with the excesses of the sexual revolution. In the 1970s, as Martin Levine and Richard Troiden point out, the significant sexual problems were problems stemming from too little sexual

experience—anorgasmia (the inability to achieve orgasm), especially for women, ejaculatory and erectile problems for men. Now the problem is sex "addiction," a relatively new term that makes having a lot of sex a problem, and "nonrelational sex," which makes pursuing sexual pleasure for its own sake also a problem. While it may be true that nonrelational sexuality may be a problem for some men, especially for those for whom it is the only form of sexual expression, it is not necessarily the only way men express themselves sexually. Many men are capable of both relational and nonrelational sexuality. Some men don't ever practice nonrelational sexuality because they live in a subculture in which it is not normative; other men develop values that oppose it (Good & Sherrod, 1997, p. 186). One possibly worthy goal might be to enlarge our sexual repertoires to enable both women and men to experience a wide variety of permutations and combinations of love and lust, without entirely reducing one to the other—as long as all these experiences are mutually negotiated, safe, and equal.

Homosexuality as Gender Conformity

Thus far, I've been describing the ways in which men and women are socialized toward "his" and "her" sexualities. I've deliberately avoided the obvious disclaimer that I was speaking about heterosexuality and not homosexuality, because this gendering of sexuality is as applicable to homosexuals as it is to heterosexuals. In fact, it may even be *more* obvious among gay men and lesbians, because in homosexual encounters there are two gendered men or two gendered women. That is, you have masculinity or femininity multiplied by two! Gender differences may even be exaggerated by sexual orientation.

This is, of course, contrary to our commonsense understandings of homosexuality, as well as those biological studies that suggest that gay men have some biological affinity to women, as opposed to heterosexual men. Indeed, our commonsense assumption is that gay men and lesbians are gender *non*conformists—lesbians are "masculine" women; gay men are "feminine" men. But such commonsense thinking has one deep logical flaw—it assumes that the gender of your partner is more important, and more decisive in your life, than your own gender. But our own gender—the collections of behaviors, attitudes, attributes, and assumptions about what it means to be a man or a woman—is far more important than the gender of the people with whom we interact, sexually or otherwise. Sexual behavior, gay or straight, confirms gender identity.

That doesn't mean that these commonsense assumptions haven't completely saturated popular discussions of homosexuality, especially in those advice books designed to help parents make sure that their children did not turn out "wrong." For example Peter and Barbara Wyden's book *Growing Up Straight: What Every Thoughtful Parent Should Know About Homosexuality*, argued that "pre-homosexual" boys were identifiable by their lack of early childhood masculinity, which

could be thwarted by an overly "masculine" mother, that is, one who had a job outside the home and subscribed to feminist ideas (Wyden & Wyden, 1968).

A few empirical studies have also made such claims. For example, psychiatrist Richard Green tracked a small group of boys (about 55) from preschool to young adulthood. All the boys were chosen for patterns of frequent cross-dressing at home. They liked to play with girls at school, enjoyed playing with dolls, and followed their mothers around the house doing housework. Their parents were supportive of this behavior. These "sissy boys," as Green called them, were four times more likely to have homosexual experiences than nonfeminine boys. But this research has also been widely criticized: Such gender nonconformity is extremely rare (there was great difficulty in finding even 55 boys), and thus cannot be the source of the great majority of homosexual behavior. Extreme patterns of nonconformity are not equivalent to milder measures, such as not liking sports, preferring music or reading, and indifference to rough-and-tumble play. The homosexual experience may be a result of the social reactions to their conduct (persecution by other boys, or the therapy to which they were often exposed), which thwarted their ability to establish conventional heterosocial patterns of behavior. It may have been the ostracism itself, and not the offending behavior, that led to the sexual experiences. When milder forms of gender nonconformity are examined, most boys who report such behavior turn out to be heterosexual. Finally, when studies by Green and his colleagues were extended to "tomboys," it was found that there was no difference in eventual sexual preference between girls who reported tomboy behavior and those who did not. What I think Green found is that being a sissy is a far more serious offense to the gender order than being a tomboy (Green, 1986).

The evidence points overwhelmingly the other way, that homosexuality is deeply gendered, and that gay men and lesbians are true gender conformists. To accept such a proposition leads to some unlikely alliances, with gay-affirmative writers and feminists lining up on the same side as an ultraconservative writer like George Gilder, who, in his unwavering critique of masculinity—both gay and straight—writes that lesbianism "has nothing whatever to do with male homosexuality. Just as male homosexuals, with their compulsive lust and promiscuous impulses, offer a kind of caricature of typical male sexuality, lesbians closely resemble other women in their desire for intimate and monogamous coupling" (Gilder, 1985).

Since the birth of the gay liberation movement in the Stonewall riots of 1969—when gay men fought back against the police who were raiding a New York City gay bar—gay men have been particularly eager to demonstrate that they were not "failed" men, as earlier popular images portrayed them. In fact, many gay men became extremely successful as "real" men, enacting a hypermasculine code of anonymous sex, masculine clothing, and physical appearance, including bodybuilding. The "clone" as he was called, comprising about 35 percent of all gay men, was perhaps even more successful at masculinity than were straight men. By the

early 1980s, this notion had produced some curious inversions of traditional stereotypes. In one popular song from 1983, Joe Jackson commented on this:

> See the nice boys, dancing in pairs
> Golden earring, golden tan, blow wave in their hair
> Sure they're all straight, straight as a line
> All the gays are macho, can't you see their leather shine?[2]

By contrast, the sexual lives of lesbians were quite different. For many lesbians, gay liberation did not mean sexual liberation. In the lesbian community, there was more discussion of "the tyranny of the relationship" than of various sexual practices; lesbian couples in therapy complained of "lesbian bed death," the virtual cessation of sexual activity for the couple after a few years. One woman told an interviewer:

> As women we have not been socialized to be initiators in the sexual act. Another factor is that we don't have to make excuses if we don't want to do it. We don't say we have a headache. We just say no. We also do a lot more cuddling and touching than heterosexuals, and we get fulfilled by that rather than just the act of intercourse . . . Another thing is that such a sisterly bond develops that the relationship almost seems incestuous after a while. The intimacy is so great. We know each other so well. (Chapple & Talbot, 1989, p. 356)

While some lesbians did embrace a sexual liberationist ethic and sought arenas for sexual variety, most remained gender conformists.

This was underscored by the fact that feminism also played a large role in the social organization of lesbian life. During the early waves of the women's movement, lesbianism was seen as a political alternative, a decision not to give aid and comfort to the enemy (men). How could a woman be truly feminist, they asked, if she shared her life and bed with a man? The "political lesbian" represented a particular fusion of sexual and gender politics, an active choice that matched one's political commitment. "For a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynist, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture," wrote one woman, "is an act of resistance." While of course not all lesbians are feminists, even this construct of political lesbianism is a form of gender conformity. If one resists gender inequality, political lesbians argue, then one must opt out of sexual relationships with men, and choose to be sexual only with women *because they are women*. Gender remains the organizing principle of sexuality—even a sexuality that is understood as a form of resistance to gender politics (Clarke, 1996, p. 155).

The weight of evidence from research on homosexuality bears out this argument that gay men and lesbians are gender conformists. Take, for example, the number of sexual partners. In one study, sex researchers found that most lesbians

reported having had fewer than 10 sexual partners, and almost half said they had never had a one-night stand. A 1982 survey of unmarried women between the ages of 20 and 29 found an average of 4.5 sexual partners over the course of their lives. But the average gay male in the same study had had hundreds of partners, many one-night stands, and more than a quarter of them reported a thousand or more partners. Masters and Johnson found that 84 percent of males and 7 percent of females had had between 50 and 1,000 or more sexual partners in their lifetimes; and that 97 percent of men and 33 percent of women had had seven or more relationships that had lasted four months or less. While 11 percent of husbands and 9 percent of wives in another study described themselves as promiscuous, 79 percent of gay men and 19 percent of lesbians made such a claim. Among heterosexual cohabitors, though, 25 percent of the men and 22 percent of the women described themselves as promiscuous. Gay men have the lowest rates of long-term committed relationships, while lesbian have the highest, and lesbians place much greater emphasis on emotional relationships than gay men. Thus, it appears that men—gay and straight—place sexuality at the center of their lives, and that women—straight or lesbian—are more interested in affection and caring in the context of a love relationship (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1978; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983, p. 317).

Research on frequency of sexual activity bears this out. In one study, among heterosexual married couples, 45 percent reported having sex three or more times per week during the first two years of their marriage, and 27 percent of those married between two and ten years reported such rates. By contrast, 67 percent of gay men together up to two years, and 32 percent of those together two to ten years had sex three or more times per week. One-third of lesbians had sex three or more times per week in the first two years of their relationship; but only 7 percent did after two years. After 10 years, the percentages reporting sex more than three times per week were 18 percent for married couples, 11 percent for gay men, and 1 percent for lesbians. Nearly half the lesbians (47%) reported having sex less than once a month after ten years together (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). One interviewer described a lesbian couple:

> She and her roommate were obviously very much in love. Like most people who have a good, stable, five year relationship, they seemed comfortable together, sort of part of one another, able to joke, obviously fulfilled in their relationship. They work together, have the same times off from work, do most of their leisure activities together. They sent me off with a plate of cookies, a good symbolic gesture of the kind of welcome and warmth I felt in their home. (Bell & Weinberg, 1978, p. 220)

If heterosexuality and homosexuality are so similar, in that men and women express and confirm their gendered identities through sexual behavior, what then are the big differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals—aside, of course,

from the gender of the partner? One difference is that gay relationships are more egalitarian. When we ask, for example, who intiates sex, gay men and lesbians report identical rates, which are far more egalitarian than the rates for married or cohabiting couples. Because homosexuals' identities are defined by their sexuality, and because their sexuality is not procreative, gay men and lesbians have also been more sexually experimental, especially with nonpenetrative sex. As one sex therapist writes, "gay men have more ways of sexually relating than do heterosexual men" (see Nichols, 1987). And Masters and Johnson found that gay couples have longer lovemaking sessions than heterosexual couples.

One other way that heterosexuality and homosexuality are similar, actually, is in the impact of homophobia on sexual behavior. Obviously, for gay people homophobia saturates all their interactions. The systematic devaluation of homosexuality, the stigma attached to being homosexual, becomes a crucial element in one's identity. As sociologist Ken Plummer writes (1975, p. 102):

> the perceived hostility of the societal reactions that surround . . . homosexuality . . . renders the business of becoming a homosexual a process that is characterized by problems of access, problems of guilt, and problems of identity. It leads to the emergence of a subculture of homosexuality. It leads to a series of interaction problems involved with concealing the discreditable stigma. And it inhibits the development of stable relationships among homosexuals to a considerable degree.

We know how homophobia constructs gay experience, but we are less aware of the power of homophobia to structure the experiences and identities of heterosexuals. Homophobia is more than the fear or hatred of homosexuals; it is also, for men, the fear of being perceived as unmanly, effeminate, or, worst of all, gay. These fears seem less keen among heterosexual women, though many worry about the dangers of homosexuals (nearly always men) to their children. Male heterosexuals often spend a significant amount of time and energy in masculine display so that no one could possibly get the "wrong" impression about them. In one study, many heterosexual men said they had sex in order to prove they weren't gay (Muelenhard, 1988). Since our popular misperceptions about homosexuality usually center on gender inversion, compensatory behaviors by heterosexuals often involve exaggerated versions of gender stereotypic behaviors. In this way, homophobia reinforces the gender of sex, keeping men acting hypermasculine and women acting ultrafeminine. "Heterosexuality as currently construed and enacted (the erotic preference for the other gender) requires homophobia," write sex researchers John Gagnon and Stuart Michaels (1989, p. 2).[3]

With the onset of the HIV epidemic, major changes occurred in the sexual patterns of gay men, including fewer partners, less anonymous sex, and increases in the practice of safer sex and the number of gay male couples. The emphasis on "safer sex" was seen by many as an effort to "feminize" sexuality, to return it to the

context of emotional and monogamous relationships, thus abandoning the earlier gay liberationist ethic of sexual freedom. To men, the very phrase "safe sex" was experienced as an oxymoron: what's sexy—heat, passion, excitement, spontaneity—was the exact opposite of what's safe—soft, warm, cuddly. Many men feared that practicing safe sex would mean no longer having sex like men, and that programs encouraging such gender nonconformity would be doomed to failure. This is not simply an issue for gay men, of course. Heterosexual women have been trying to get heterosexual men to practice a form of safe sex for decades, finding that their own sexual expressivity is less encumbered when both partners take responsibility for birth control. Fear of pregnancy and fear of HIV transmission both require that one fuse sexual pleasure with sexual responsibility (Levine, 1998).

Critics needn't have worried. Much of the work to minimize the risk for HIV among gay men has been to reaffirm masculine sexuality, to develop ways that men could still have "manly" sex while they also practiced safe sex. Gay organizations promoted safe sex clubs, pornographic videos, and techniques. As a result, gay men did begin to practice safe sex, without disconfirming their masculinity, though there is some evidence of recent backsliding by younger gay men, especially since HIV treatments now seem to augur longer and healthier lives for HIV-positive people than they previously enjoyed.

Nonetheless, AIDS remains a highly "gendered" disease. Although women and men are both able to contract the virus that causes AIDS—in fact, women are actually more likely to contract the disease from unprotected heterosexual intercourse than are men—and despite the fact that rates of new infection among women are increasing faster than among men, the overwhelming majority (over 80%) of all AIDS patients in the United States are men. AIDS is the most highly gendered disease in American history—a disease that both women and men could get, but one that overwhelmingly disproportionately affects one gender and not the other. It would be useful to understand masculinity—risk-taking, avoidance of responsibility, pursuit of sex above all other ends—as a risk factor in the spread of the disease in the same way that we understand it to be a risk factor in drunk driving accidents (Kimmel & Levine, 1991).[4]

What Else Affects Sexuality?

While gender remains one of the organizing principles of sexuality, other aspects of our lives also profoundly influence our sexual behaviors and expectations. For one thing, sexual behavior, as we've seen, varies widely among different cultures. Margaret Mead found that in some cultures, the idea of spontaneous sex is not encouraged for either women or men. Among the Arapesh, she writes, the exceptions are believed to occur in women. "Parents warn their sons even more than they warn their daughters against permitting themselves to get into situations in which someone can make love to them" (Mead, 1935, p. 161). Another anthropologist

reported that in one southwest Pacific society, sexual intercourse is seen as highly pleasurable and deprivation as harmful to both sexes. And Bronislaw Malinowski saw significant convergence between women and men in the Trobriand Islands, where women initiate sex as often as men, and where couples avoid the "missionary" position because the woman's movements are hampered by the weight of the man so that she cannot be fully active.

In the contemporary United States, several variables other than gender affect sexuality, such as class, age, education, marital status, religion, race, and ethnicity. Take class, for example. Kinsey found that, contrary to the American ideology that holds that working-class people are more sensual because they are closer to their "animal natures," lower class position did not mean hotter sex. In fact, he found that upper- and middle-class people were more sophisticated in the "arts of love," demonstrating wider variety of activities and greater emphasis on foreplay, while lower-class people dispensed with preliminaries and did not even kiss very much.

There is evidence that race and ethnicity also produce some variations in sexual behavior. For example, blacks seem to hold somewhat more sexually liberal attitudes than whites and have slightly more sex partners, but they also masturbate less frequently, have less oral sex, and are slightly more likely to have same-sex contacts. Hispanics are also more sexually liberal than whites, and masturbate more frequently than blacks or whites; but they also have less oral sex than whites (yet more than blacks) and have fewer sex partners, either of the same or opposite sex, than whites or blacks (Laumann et al., pp. 518–29, 177, 192, 82–84, 98, 302–09).

Age also affects sexuality. What turns us on at 50 will probably not be what turned us on at 15. Not only are there significant physiological changes that augur a decline in sexual energy and interest, but age is also related to marital status and family obligations. As Lillian Rubin writes,

> On the most mundane level, the constant negotiation about everyday tasks leaves people harassed, weary, irritated, and feeling more like traffic cops than lovers. Who's going to do the shopping, pay the bills, take care of the laundry, wash the dishes, take out the garbage, clean the bathroom, get the washing machine fixed, decide what to eat for dinner, return the phone calls from friends and parents? When there are children, the demands, complications and exhaustion increase expontentially. (p. 165)

Ah, children. By far one of the greatest anaphrodesiacs—sexual turn-offs—in our society is having children. Couples—gay and straight—with children report far less sexual activity than couples without children. There's less time, less freedom, less privacy—and less interest.

You've probably heard reports that women hit their sexual peak in the late 30s and early 40s, while men peak before they turn 20, after which they are increasingly likely to appreciate softer, more sensual activities. And you've probably heard that such differences reveal biological differences in male and female

sexual anatomy. But that ignores the ways in which women's and men's sexualities are related to each other. That "his" sexuality shifts toward the more sensual just as "her" sexuality takes a sharp turn toward the explicitly sexual indicates more than a simple divergence in biological patterns, especially since it is not the case in other cultures when men and women biologically age "differently." What these reports suggest is that marriage has a pronounced effect on sexual expression, domesticating sex, bringing it into the domain historically reserved for women: the home. When men feel that sex is no longer dangerous and risky (which is, to them, exciting), their sexual repertoire may soften to include a wider range of sensual pleasures. When women feel that sex is no longer dangerous and risky (which they interpret as threatening), they feel safe enough to explore more explicitly sexual pleasures. Such an interpretation suggests, of course, that the differences we observe between women and men may have more to do with the social organization of marriage than with any inherent differences between males and females.

Yet despite this, the longer range historical trend over the past several centuries has been to sexualize marriage, to link the emotions of love and nurturing to erotic pleasure within the reproductive relationship. Thus sexual compatibility and expression have become increasingly important in our married lives, as the increased amount of time before marriage (prolonged adolescence), the availability of birth control and divorce, and an ethic of individual self-fulfillment have combined to increase the importance of sexual expression throughout the course of our lives.

Gender differences persist in our sexual expression and our sexual experiences, but they are far less significant than they used to be, and the signs point to continued convergence. It may come as a relief to realize that our lovers are not from other planets, but are capable of the same joys and pleasures that we enjoy. True, differences remain between women and men—to which we might say, "Vive les differences"—however modest and however much their significance is declining!

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2

Masculinity as Homophobia

Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity

> "Funny thing," [Curley's wife] said. "If I catch any one man, and he's alone, I get along fine with him. But just let two of the guys get together an' you won't talk. Jus' nothin' but mad." She dropped her fingers and put her hands on her hips. "You're all scared of each other, that's what. Ever'one of you's scared the rest is goin' to get something on you."
>
> —John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (1937)

We think of manhood as eternal, a timeless essence that resides deep in the heart of every man. We think of manhood as a thing, a quality that one either has or doesn't have. We think of manhood as innate, residing in the particular biological composition of the human male, the result of androgens or the possession of a penis. We think of manhood as a transcendent tangible property that each man must manifest in the world, the reward presented with great ceremony to a young novice by his elders for having successfully completed an arduous initiation ritual. In the words of poet Robert Bly (1990), "the structure at the bottom of the male psyche is still as firm as it was twenty thousand years ago" (p. 230).

In this chapter, I view masculinity as a constantly changing collection of meanings that we construct through our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with our world. Manhood is neither static nor timeless; it is historical. Manhood is not the manifestation of an inner essence; it is socially constructed. Manhood does not bubble up to consciousness from our biological makeup; it is created in culture. Manhood means different things at different times to different people. We come to know what it means to be a man in our culture by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of "others"—racial minorities, sexual minorities, and, above all, women.

Our definitions of manhood are constantly changing, being played out on the political and social terrain on which the relationships between women and

men are played out. In fact, the search for a transcendent, timeless definition of manhood is itself a sociological phenomenon—we tend to search for the timeless and eternal during moments of crisis, those points of transition when old definitions no longer work and new definitions are yet to be firmly established.

This idea that manhood is socially constructed and historically shifting should not be understood as a loss, that something is being taken away from men. In fact, it gives us something extraordinarily valuable—agency, the capacity to act. It gives us a sense of historical possibilities to replace the despondent resignation that invariably attends timeless, ahistorical essentialisms. Our behaviors are not simply "just human nature," because "boys will be boys." From the materials we find around us in our culture—other people, ideas, objects—we actively create our worlds, our identities. Men, both individually and collectively, can change.

In this chapter, I explore this social and historical construction of both hegemonic masculinity and alternate masculinities, with an eye toward offering a new theoretical model of American manhood.[1] To accomplish this I first uncover some of the hidden gender meanings in classical statements of social and political philosophy, so that I can anchor the emergence of contemporary manhood in specific historical and social contexts. I then spell out the ways in which this version of masculinity emerged in the United States, by tracing both psychoanalytic developmental sequences and a historical trajectory in the development of marketplace relationships.

Classical Social Theory as a Hidden Meditation of Manhood

Begin this inquiry by looking at four passages from that set of texts commonly called classical social and political theory. You will, no doubt, recognize them, but I invite you to recall the way they were discussed in your undergraduate or graduate courses in theory:

> The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relation with his kind. (Marx & Engels, 1848/1964)

> An American will build a house in which to pass his old age and sell it before the roof is on; he will plant a garden and rent it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he will clear a field and leave others to reap the harvest; he will take up a profession and leave it, settle in one place and soon go off elsewhere with his changing desires . . . At first sight there is something astonishing in this spectacle of so many lucky men restless in the midst of abundance. But it is a spectacle as old as the world; all that is new is to see a whole people performing in it. (Tocqueville, 1835/1967)

> Where the fulfillment of the calling cannot directly be related to the highest spiritual and cultural values, or when, on the other hand, it need not be felt simply as economic compulsion, the individual generally abandons the attempt to justify it at all. In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport. (Weber, 1905/1966)

> We are warned by a proverb against serving two masters at the same time. The poor ego has things even worse: it serves three severe masters and does what it can to bring their claims and demands into harmony with one another. These claims are always divergent and often seem incompatible. No wonder that the ego so often fails in its task. Its three tyrannical masters are the external world, the super ego and the id . . . It feels hemmed in on three sides, threatened by three kinds of danger, to which, if it is hard pressed, it reacts by generating anxiety . . . Thus the ego, driven by the id, confined by the super ego, repulsed by reality, struggles to master its economic task of bringing about harmony among the forces and influences working in and upon it; and we can understand how it is that so often we cannot suppress a cry: "Life is not easy!" (Freud, 1933/1966)

If your social science training was anything like mine, these were offered as descriptions of the bourgeoisie under capitalism, of individuals in democratic societies, of the fate of the Protestant work ethic under the ever-rationalizing spirit of capitalism, or of the arduous task of the autonomous ego in psychological development. Did anyone ever mention that in all four cases the theorists were describing men? Not just "man" as in generic mankind, but a particular type of masculinity, a definition of manhood that derives its identity from participation in the marketplace, from interaction with other men in that marketplace—in short, a model of masculinity for whom identity is based on homosocial competition? Three years before Tocqueville found Americans "restless in the midst of abundance," Senator Henry Clay had called the United States "a nation of self-made men."

What does it mean to be "self-made"? What are the consequences of self-making for the individual man, for other men, for women? It is this notion of manhood—rooted in the sphere of production, the public arena, a masculinity grounded not in landownership or in artisanal republican virtue but in successful participation in marketplace competition—this has been the defining notion of American manhood. Masculinity must be proved, and no sooner is it proved than it is again questioned and must be proved again—constant, relentless, unachievable, and ultimately the quest for proof becomes so meaningless that it takes on the characteristics, as Weber said, of a sport. He who has the most toys when he dies wins.

Where does this version of masculinity come from? How does it work? What are the consequences of this version of masculinity for women, for other men, and for individual men themselves? These are the questions I address in this chapter.

Masculinity as History and the History of Masculinity

The idea of masculinity expressed in the previous extracts is the product of historical shifts in the grounds on which men rooted their sense of themselves as men. To argue that cultural definitions of gender identity are historically specific goes only so far; we have to specify exactly what those models were. In my historical inquiry into the development of these models of manhood,[2] I chart the fate of two models for manhood at the turn of the nineteenth century and the emergence of a third in the first few decades of that century.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, two models of manhood prevailed. The *Genteel Patriarch* derived his identity from landownership. Supervising his estate, he was refined, elegant, and given to casual sensuousness. He was a doting and devoted father, who spent much of his time supervising the estate and with his family. Think of George Washington or Thomas Jefferson as examples. By contrast, the *Heroic Artisan* embodied the physical strength and republican virtue that Jefferson observed in the yeoman farmer, independent urban craftsman, or shopkeeper. Also a devoted father, the Heroic Artisan taught his son his craft, bringing him through ritual apprenticeship to status as master craftsman. Economically autonomous, the Heroic Artisan also cherished his democratic community, delighting in the participatory democracy of the town meeting. Think of Paul Revere at his pewter shop, shirtsleeves rolled up, a leather apron—a man who took pride in his work.

Heroic Artisans and Genteel Patriarchs lived in casual accord, in part because their gender ideals were complementary (both supported participatory democracy and individual autonomy, although patriarchs tended to support more powerful state machineries and also supported slavery) and because they rarely saw one another: Artisans were decidedly urban and the Genteel Patriarchs ruled their

rural estates. By the 1830s, though, this casual symbiosis was shattered by the emergence of a new vision of masculinity, *Marketplace Manhood*.

Marketplace Man derived his identity entirely from his success in the capitalist marketplace, as he accumulated wealth, power, status. He was the urban entrepreneur, the businessman. Restless, agitated, and anxious, Marketplace Man was an absentee landlord at home and an absent father with his children, devoting himself to his work in an increasingly homosocial environment—a male-only world in which he pits himself against other men. His efforts at self-making transform the political and economic spheres, casting aside the Genteel Patriarch as an anachronistic feminized dandy—sweet, but ineffective and outmoded, and transforming the Heroic Artisan into a dispossessed proletarian, a wage slave.

As Tocqueville would have seen it, the coexistence of the Genteel Patriarch and the Heroic Artisan embodied the fusion of liberty and equality. Genteel Patriarchy was the manhood of the traditional aristocracy, the class that embodied the virtue of liberty. The Heroic Artisan embodied democratic community, the solidarity of the urban shopkeeper or craftsman. Liberty and democracy, the patriarch and the artisan, could, and did, coexist. But Marketplace Man is capitalist man, and he makes both freedom and equality problematic, eliminating the freedom of the aristocracy and proletarianizing the equality of the artisan. In one sense, American history has been an effort to restore, retrieve, or reconstitute the virtues of Genteel Patriarchy and Heroic Artisanate as they were being transformed in the capitalist marketplace.

Marketplace Manhood was a manhood that required proof, and that required the acquisition of tangible goods as evidence of success. It reconstituted itself by the exclusion of "others"—women, nonwhite men, nonnative-born men, homosexual men—and by terrified flight into a pristine mythic homosocial Eden where men could, at last, be real men among other men. The story of the ways in which Marketplace Man becomes American Everyman is a tragic tale, a tale of striving to live up to impossible ideals of success leading to chronic terrors of emasculation, emotional emptiness, and a gendered rage that leaves a wide swath of destruction in its wake.

Masculinities as Power Relations

Marketplace Masculinity describes the normative definition of American masculinity. It describes his characteristics—aggression, competition, anxiety—and the arena in which those characteristics are deployed—the public sphere, the marketplace. If the marketplace is the arena in which manhood is tested and proved, it is a gendered arena, in which tensions between women and men and tensions among different groups of men are weighted with meaning. These tensions suggest that cultural definitions of gender are played out in a contested terrain and are themselves power relations.

All masculinities are not created equal; or rather, we are all *created* equal, but any hypothetical equality evaporates quickly because our definitions of masculinity are not equally valued in our society. One definition of manhood continues to remain the standard against which other forms of manhood are measured and evaluated. Within the dominant culture, the masculinity that defines white, middle-class, early middle-aged heterosexual men is the masculinity that sets the standards for other men, against which other men are measured and, more often than not, found wanting. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) wrote that in America, there is only "one complete, unblushing male":

> a young, married, white, urban, northern heterosexual, Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports. Every American male tends to look out upon the world from this perspective . . . Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself . . . as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior. (p. 128)

This is the definition that we will call "hegemonic" masculinity, the image of masculinity of those men who hold power, which has become the standard in psychological evaluations, sociological research, and self-help and advice literature for teaching young men to become "real men" (Connell, 1987). The hegemonic definition of manhood is a man *in* power, a man *with* power, and a man *of* power. We equate manhood with being strong, successful, capable, reliable, in control. The very definitions of manhood we have developed in our culture maintain the power that some men have over other men and that men have over women.

Our culture's definition of masculinity is thus several stories at once. It is about the individual man's quest to accumulate those cultural symbols that denote manhood, signs that he has in fact achieved it. It is about those standards being used against women to prevent their inclusion in public life and their consignment to a devalued private sphere. It is about the differential access that different types of men have to those cultural resources that confer manhood and about how each of these groups then develop their own modifications to preserve and claim their manhood. It is about the power of these definitions themselves to serve to maintain the real-life power that men have over women and that some men have over other men.

This definition of manhood has been summarized cleverly by psychologists Robert Brannon and Deborah David (1976) into four succinct phrases:

1. "No Sissy Stuff!" One may never do anything that even remotely suggests femininity. Masculinity is the relentless repudiation of the feminine.
2. "Be a Big Wheel." Masculinity is measured by power, success, wealth, and status. As the current saying goes, "He who has the most toys when he dies wins."

3. "Be a Sturdy Oak." Masculinity depends on remaining calm and reliable in a crisis, holding emotions in check. In fact, proving you're a man depends on never showing your emotions at all. Boys don't cry.
4. "Give 'Em Hell." Exude an aura of manly daring and aggression. Go for it. Take risks.

These rules contain the elements of the definition against which virtually all American men are measured. Failure to embody these rules, to affirm the power of the rules and one's achievement of them is a source of men's confusion and pain. Such a model is, of course, unrealizable for any man. But we keep trying, valiantly and vainly, to measure up. American masculinity is a relentless test.[3] The chief test is contained in the first rule. Whatever the variations by race, class, age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, being a man means "not being like women." This notion of antifemininity lies at the heart of contemporary and historical conceptions of manhood, so that masculinity is defined more by what one is not rather than who one is.

Masculinity as the Flight from the Feminine

Historically and developmentally, masculinity has been defined as the flight from women, the repudiation of femininity. Since Freud, we have come to understand that developmentally the central task that every little boy must confront is to develop a secure identity for himself as a man. As Freud had it, the oedipal project is a process of the boy's renouncing his identification with and deep emotional attachment to his mother and then replacing her with the father as the object of identification. Notice that he reidentifies but never reattaches. This entire process, Freud argued, is set in motion by the boy's sexual desire for his mother. But the father stands in the son's path and will not yield his sexual property to his puny son. The boy's first emotional experience, then, the one that inevitably follows his experience of desire, is fear—fear of the bigger, stronger, more sexually powerful father. It is this fear, experienced symbolically as the fear of castration, Freud argues, that forces the young boy to renounce his identification with mother and seek to identify with the being who is the actual source of his fear, his father. In so doing, the boy is now symbolically capable of sexual union with a motherlike substitute, that is, a woman. The boy becomes gendered (masculine) and heterosexual at the same time.

Masculinity, in this model, is irrevocably tied to sexuality. The boy's sexuality will now come to resemble the sexuality of his father (or at least the way he imagines his father)—menacing, predatory, possessive, and possibly punitive. The boy has come to identify with his oppressor; now he can become the oppressor himself. But a terror remains, the terror that the young man will be unmasked as a fraud, as a man who has not completely and irrevocably separated from mother.

It will be other men who will do the unmasking. Failure will de-sex the man, make him appear as not fully a man. He will be seen as a wimp, a Mama's boy, a sissy.

After pulling away from his mother, the boy comes to see her not as a source of nurturance and love, but as an insatiably infantalizing creature, capable of humiliating him in front of his peers. She makes him dress up in uncomfortable and itchy clothing, her kisses smear his cheeks with lipstick, staining his boyish innocence with the mark of feminine dependency. No wonder so many boys cringe from their mothers' embraces with groans of "Aw, Mom! Quit it!" Mothers represent the humiliation of infancy, helplessness, dependency. "Men act as though they were being guided by (or rebelling against) rules and prohibitions enunciated by a moral mother," writes psychohistorian Geoffrey Gorer (1964). As a result, "all the niceties of masculine behavior—modesty, politeness, neatness, cleanliness—come to be regarded as concessions to feminine demands, and not good in themselves as part of the behavior of a proper man" (pp. 56, 57).

The flight from femininity is angry and frightened, because mother can so easily emasculate the young boy by her power to render him dependent, or at least to remind him of dependency. It is relentless; manhood becomes a lifelong quest to demonstrate its achievement, as if to prove the unprovable to others, because we feel so unsure of it ourselves. Women don't often feel compelled to "prove their womanhood"—the phrase itself sounds ridiculous. Women have different kinds of gender identity crises; their anger and frustration, and their own symptoms of depression, come more from being excluded than from questioning whether they are feminine enough.[4]

The drive to repudiate the mother as the indication of the acquisition of masculine gender identity has three consequences for the young boy. First, he pushes away his real mother, and with her the traits of nurturance, compassion, and tenderness she may have embodied. Second, he suppresses those traits in himself, because they will reveal his incomplete separation from mother. His life becomes a lifelong project to demonstrate that he possesses none of his mother's traits. Masculine identity is born in the renunciation of the feminine, not in the direct affirmation of the masculine, which leaves masculine gender identity tenuous and fragile.

Third, as if to demonstrate the accomplishment of these first two tasks, the boy also learns to devalue all women in his society as the living embodiments of those traits in himself he has learned to despise. Whether or not he was aware of it, Freud also described the origins of sexism—the systematic devaluation of women—in the desperate efforts of the boy to separate from mother. We may *want* "a girl just like the girl that married dear old Dad," as the popular song had it, but we certainly don't want to *be like* her.

This chronic uncertainty about gender identity helps us understand several obsessive behaviors. Take, for example, the continuing problem of the school-yard bully. Parents remind us that the bully is the *least* secure about his manhood, and so he is constantly trying to prove it. But he "proves" it by choosing opponents he

is absolutely certain he can defeat; thus the standard taunt to a bully is to "pick on someone your own size." He can't, though, and after defeating a smaller and weaker opponent, which he was sure would prove his manhood, he is left with the empty gnawing feeling that he has not proved it after all, and he must find another opponent, again one smaller and weaker, that he can again defeat to prove it to himself.[5]

One of the more graphic illustrations of this lifelong quest to prove one's manhood occurred at the Academy Awards presentation in 1992. As aging, tough guy actor Jack Palance accepted the award for Best Supporting Actor for his role in the cowboy comedy *City Slickers*, he commented that people, especially film producers, think that because he is 71 years old, he's all washed up, that he's no longer competent. "Can we take a risk on this guy?" he quoted them as saying, before he dropped to the floor to do a set of one-armed push-ups. It was pathetic to see such an accomplished actor still having to prove that he is virile enough to work and, as he also commented at the podium, to have sex.

When does it end? Never. To admit weakness, to admit frailty or fragility, is to be seen as a wimp, a sissy, not a real man. But seen by whom?

Masculinity as a Homosocial Enactment

Other men: We are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval. It is other men who evaluate the performance. Literary critic David Leverenz (1991) argues that "ideologies of manhood have functioned primarily in relation to the gaze of male peers and male authority" (p. 769). Think of how men boast to one another of their accomplishments—from their latest sexual conquest to the size of the fish they caught—and how we constantly parade the markers of manhood—wealth, power, status, sexy women—in front of other men, desperate for their approval.

That men prove their manhood in the eyes of other men is both a consequence of sexism and one of its chief props. "Women have, in men's minds, such a low place on the social ladder of this country that it's useless to define yourself in terms of a woman," noted playwright David Mamet. "What men need is men's approval." Women become a kind of currency that men use to improve their ranking on the masculine social scale. (Even those moments of heroic conquest of women carry, I believe, a current of homosocial evaluation.) Masculinity is a *homosocial* enactment. We test ourselves, perform heroic feats, take enormous risks, all because we want other men to grant us our manhood.

Masculinity as a homosocial enactment is fraught with danger, with the risk of failure, and with intense relentless competition. "Every man you meet has a rating or an estimate of himself which he never loses or forgets," wrote Kenneth Wayne (1912) in his popular turn-of-the-century advice book. "A man has his own

rating, and instantly he lays it alongside of the other man" (p. 18). Almost a century later, another man remarked to psychologist Sam Osherson (1992) that "[b]y the time you're an adult, it's easy to think you're always in competition with men, for the attention of women, in sports, at work" (p. 291).

Masculinity as Homophobia

If masculinity is a homosocial enactment, its overriding emotion is fear. In the Freudian model, the fear of the father's power terrifies the young boy to renounce his desire for his mother and identify with his father. This model links gender identity with sexual orientation: The little boy's identification with father (becoming masculine) allows him to now engage in sexual relations with women (he becomes heterosexual). This is the origin of how we can "read" one's sexual orientation through the successful performance of gender identity. Second, the fear that the little boy feels does not send him scurrying into the arms of his mother to protect him from his father. Rather, he believes he will overcome his fear by identifying with its source. We become masculine by identifying with our oppressor.

But there is a piece of the puzzle missing, a piece that Freud, himself, implied but did not follow up.[6] If the pre-oedipal boy identifies with mother, he *sees the world through mother's eyes*. Thus, when he confronts father during his great oedipal crisis, he experiences a split vision: He sees his father as his mother sees his father, with a combination of awe, wonder, terror, *and desire*. He simultaneously sees the father as he, the boy, would like to see him—as the object not of desire but of emulation. Repudiating mother and identifying with father only partially answers his dilemma. What is he to do with that homoerotic desire, the desire he felt because he saw father the way that his mother saw father?

He must suppress it. Homoerotic desire *is* cast as feminine desire, desire for other men. Homophobia is the effort to suppress that desire, to purify all relationships with other men, with women, with children of its taint, and to ensure that no one could possibly ever mistake one for a homosexual. Homophobic flight from intimacy with other men is the repudiation of the homosexual within—never completely successful and hence constantly reenacted in every homosocial relationship. "The lives of most American men are bounded, and their interests daily curtailed by the constant necessity to prove to their fellows, and to themselves, that they are not sissies, not homosexuals," writes psychoanalytic historian Geoffrey Gorer (1964). "Any interest or pursuit which is identified as a feminine interest or pursuit becomes deeply suspect for men" (p. 129).

Even if we do not subscribe to Freudian psychoanalytic ideas, we can still observe how, in less sexualized terms, the father is the first man who evaluates the boy's masculine performance, the first pair of male eyes before whom he tries to prove himself. Those eyes will follow him for the rest of his life. Other men's eyes will join them—the eyes of role models such as teachers, coaches, bosses, or media

heroes; the eyes of his peers, his friends, his workmates; and the eyes of millions of other men, living and dead, from whose constant scrutiny of his performance he will never be free. "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living," was how Karl Marx put it over a century ago (1848/1964, p. 11). "The birthright of every American male is a chronic sense of personal inadequacy," is how two psychologists describe it today (Woolfolk & Richardson, 1978, p. 57).

That nightmare from which we never seem to awaken is that those other men will see that sense of inadequacy; they will see that in our own eyes we are not who we are pretending to be. What we call masculinity is often a hedge against being revealed as a fraud, an exaggerated set of activities that keep others from seeing through us, and a frenzied effort to keep at bay those fears within ourselves. Our real fear "is not fear of women but of being ashamed or humiliated in front of other men, or being dominated by stronger men" (Leverenz, 1986, p. 451).

This, then, is the great secret of American manhood: *We are afraid of other men*. Homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. Homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay. "The word 'faggot' has nothing to do with homosexual experience or even with fears of homosexuals," writes David Leverenz (1986). "It comes out of the depths of manhood: a label of ultimate contempt for anyone who seems sissy, untough, uncool" (p. 455). Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear. Fear makes us ashamed, because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend, that we are, like the young man in a poem by Yeats, "one that ruffles in a manly pose for all his timid heart." Our fear is the fear of humiliation. We are ashamed to be afraid.

Shame leads to silence—the silences that keep other people believing that we actually approve of the things that are done to women, to minorities, to gays and lesbians in our culture. The frightened silence as we scurry past a woman being hassled by men on the street. That furtive silence when men make sexist or racist jokes in a bar. That clammy-handed silence when guys in the office make gay-bashing jokes. Our fears are the sources of our silences, and men's silence is what keeps the system running. This might help to explain why women often complain that their male friends or partners are often so understanding when they are alone and yet laugh at sexist jokes or even make those jokes themselves when they are out with a group.

The fear of being seen as a sissy dominates the cultural definitions of manhood. It starts so early. "Boys among boys are ashamed to be unmanly," wrote one educator in 1871 (cited in Rotundo, 1993, p. 264). I have a standing bet with a friend that I can walk onto any playground in America where 6-year-old boys are happily playing and by asking one question, I can provoke a fight. That question is simple: "Who's a sissy around here?" Once posed, the challenge is made.

One of two things is likely to happen. One boy will accuse another of being a sissy, to which that boy will respond that he is not a sissy, that the first boy is. They may have to fight it out to see who's lying. Or a whole group of boys will surround one boy and all shout "He is! He is!" That boy will either burst into tears and run home crying, disgraced, or he will have to take on several boys at once, to prove that he's not a sissy. (And what will his father or older brothers tell him if he chooses to run home crying?) It will be some time before he regains any sense of self-respect.

Violence is often the single most evident marker of manhood. Rather it is the willingness to fight, the desire to fight. The origin of our expression that one has a chip on one's shoulder lies in the practice of an adolescent boy in the country or small town at the turn of the century, who would literally walk around with a chip of wood balanced on his shoulder—a signal of his readiness to fight with anyone who would take the initiative of knocking the chip off (see Gorer, 1964, p. 38; Mead, 1965).

As adolescents, we learn that our peers are a kind of gender police, constantly threatening to unmask us as feminine, as sissies. One of the favorite tricks when I was an adolescent was to ask a boy to look at his fingernails. If he held his palm toward his face and curled his fingers back to see them, he passed the test. He'd looked at his nails "like a man." But if he held the back of his hand away from his face, and looked at his fingernails with arm outstretched, he was immediately ridiculed as a sissy.

As young men we are constantly riding those gender boundaries, checking the fences we have constructed on the perimeter, making sure that nothing even remotely feminine might show through. The possibilities of being unmasked are everywhere. Even the most seemingly insignificant thing can pose a threat or activate that haunting terror. On the day the students in my course "Sociology of Men and Masculinities" were scheduled to discuss homophobia and male-male friendships, one student provided a touching illustration. Noting that it was a beautiful day, the first day of spring after a brutal northeast winter, he decided to wear shorts to class. "I had this really nice pair of new Madras shorts," he commented. "But then I thought to myself, these shorts have lavender and pink in them. Today's class topic is homophobia. Maybe today is not the best day to wear these shorts."

Our efforts to maintain a manly front cover everything we do. What we wear. How we talk. How we walk. What we eat. Every mannerism, every movement contains a coded gender language. Think, for example, of how you would answer the question: How do you "know" if a man is homosexual? When I ask this question in classes or workshops, respondents invariably provide a pretty standard list of stereotypically effeminate behaviors. He walks a certain way, talks a certain way, acts a certain way. He's very emotional; he shows his feelings. One woman commented that she "knows" a man is gay if he really cares about her; another said she knows he's gay if he shows no interest in her, if he leaves her alone.

Now alter the question and imagine what heterosexual men do to make sure no one could possibly get the "wrong idea" about them. Responses typically refer to the original stereotypes, this time as a set of negative rules about behavior. Never dress that way. Never talk or walk that way. Never show your feelings or get emotional. Always be prepared to demonstrate sexual interest in women that you meet, so it is impossible for any woman to get the wrong idea about you. In this sense, homophobia, the fear of being perceived as gay, as not a real man, keeps men exaggerating all the traditional rules of masculinity, including sexual predation toward women. Homophobia and sexism go hand in hand.

The stakes of perceived sissydom are enormous—sometimes matters of life and death. We take enormous risks to prove our manhood, exposing ourselves disproportionately to health risks, workplace hazards, and stress-related illnesses. Men commit suicide three times as often as women. Psychiatrist Willard Gaylin (1992) explains that it is "invariably because of perceived social humiliation," most often tied to failure in business:

> Men become depressed because of loss of status and power in the world of men. It is not the loss of money, or the material advantages that money could buy, which produces the despair that leads to self-destruction. It is the "shame," the "humiliation," the sense of personal "failure" . . . A man despairs when he has ceased being a man among men. (p. 32)

In one survey, women and men were asked what they were most afraid of. Women responded that they were most afraid of being raped and murdered. Men responded that they were most afraid of being laughed at (Noble, 1992, pp. 105–106).

Homophobia as a Cause of Sexism, Heterosexism, and Racism

Homophobia is intimately interwoven with both sexism and racism. The fear—sometimes conscious, sometimes not—that others might perceive us as homosexual propels men to enact all manner of exaggerated masculine behaviors and attitudes to make sure that no one could possibly get the wrong idea about us. One of the centerpieces of that exaggerated masculinity is putting women down, both by excluding them from the public sphere and by the quotidian put-downs in speech and behaviors that organize the daily life of the American man. Women and gay men become the "other" against which heterosexual men project their identities, against whom they stack the decks so as to compete in a situation in which they will always win, so that by suppressing them, men can stake a claim for their own manhood. Women threaten emasculation by representing the home, workplace, and familial responsibility, the negation of fun. Gay men have historically played the role of the consummate sissy in the American popular mind

because homosexuality is seen as an inversion of normal gender development. There have been other "others." Throughout American history, various groups have represented the sissy, the non-men against whom American men played out their definitions of manhood, often with vicious results. In fact, these changing groups provide an interesting lesson in American historical development.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, it was Europeans and children who provided the contrast for American men. The "true American was vigorous, manly, and direct, not effete and corrupt like the supposed Europeans," writes Rupert Wilkinson (1986). "He was plain rather than ornamented, rugged rather than luxury seeking, a liberty loving common man or natural gentleman rather than an aristocratic oppressor or servile minion" (p. 96). The "real man" of the early nineteenth century was neither noble nor serf. By the middle of the century, black slaves had replaced the effete nobleman. Slaves were seen as dependent, helpless men, incapable of defending their women and children, and therefore less than manly. Native Americans were cast as foolish and naive children, so they could be infantalized as the "Red Children of the Great White Father" and therefore excluded from full manhood.

By the end of the century, new European immigrants were also added to the list of the unreal men, especially the Irish and Italians, who were seen as too passionate and emotionally volatile to remain controlled sturdy oaks, and Jews, who were seen as too bookishly effete and too physically puny to truly measure up. In the mid-twentieth century, it was also Asians—first the Japanese during the Second World War, and more recently, the Vietnamese during the Vietnam War—who have served as unmanly templates against which American men have hurled their gendered rage. Asian men were seen as small, soft, and effeminate—hardly men at all.

Such a list of "hyphenated" Americans—Italian-, Jewish-, Irish-, African-, Native-, Asian-, gay—composes the majority of American men. So manhood is only possible for a distinct minority, and the definition has been constructed to prevent the others from achieving it. Interestingly, this emasculation of one's enemies has a flip side—and one that is equally gendered. These very groups that have historically been cast as less than manly were also, often simultaneously, cast as hypermasculine, as sexually aggressive, violent rapacious beasts, against whom "civilized" men must take a decisive stand and thereby rescue civilization. Thus black men were depicted as rampaging sexual beasts, women as carnivorously carnal, gay men as sexually insatiable, southern European men as sexually predatory and voracious, and Asian men as vicious and cruel torturers who were immorally disinterested in life itself, willing to sacrifice their entire people for their whims. But whether one saw these groups as effeminate sissies or as brutal uncivilized savages, the terms with which they were perceived were gendered. These groups become the "others," the screens against which traditional conceptions of manhood were developed.

Being seen as unmanly is a fear that propels American men to deny manhood to others, as a way of proving the unprovable—that one is fully manly.

Masculinity becomes a defense against the perceived threat of humiliation in the eyes of other men, enacted through a "sequence of postures"—things we might say, or do, or even think, that, if we thought carefully about them, would make us ashamed of ourselves (Savran, 1992, p. 16). After all, how many of us have made homophobic or sexist remarks, or told racist jokes, or made lewd comments to women on the street? How many of us have translated those ideas and those words into actions by physically attacking gay men, or forcing or cajoling a woman to have sex even though she didn't really want to because it was important to score?

Power and Powerlessness in the Lives of Men

I have argued that homophobia, men's fear of other men, is the animating condition of the dominant definition of masculinity in America, that the reigning definition of masculinity is a defensive effort to prevent being emasculated. In our efforts to suppress or overcome those fears, the dominant culture exacts a tremendous price from those deemed less than fully manly: women, gay men, nonnative-born men, men of color. This perspective may help clarify a paradox in men's lives, a paradox in which men have virtually all the power and yet do not feel powerful (see Kaufman, 1993).

Manhood is equated with power—over women, over other men. Everywhere we look, we see the institutional expression of that power—in state and national legislatures, on the boards of directors of every major U.S. corporation or law firm, and in every school and hospital administration. Women have long understood this, and feminist women have spent the past three decades challenging both the public and the private expressions of men's power and acknowledging their fear of men. Feminism as a set of theories both explains women's fear of men and empowers women to confront it both publicly and privately. Feminist women have theorized that masculinity is about the drive for domination, the drive for power, for conquest.

This feminist definition of masculinity as the drive for power is theorized from women's point of view. It is how women experience masculinity. But it assumes a symmetry between the public and the private that does not conform to men's experiences. Feminists observe that women, as a group, do not hold power in our society. They also observe that individually, they, as women, do not feel powerful. They feel afraid, vulnerable. Their observation of the social reality and their individual experiences are therefore symmetrical. Feminism also observes that men, as a group, are in power. Thus, with the same symmetry, feminism has tended to assume that individually men must feel powerful.

This is why the feminist critique of masculinity often falls on deaf ears with men. When confronted with the analysis that men have all the power, many men react incredulously. "What do you mean, men have all the power?" they ask. "What

are you talking about? My wife bosses me around. My kids boss me around. My boss bosses me around. I have no power at all! I'm completely powerless!"

Men's feelings are not the feelings of the powerful, but of those who see themselves as powerless. These are the feelings that come inevitably from the discontinuity between the social and the psychological, between the aggregate analysis that reveals how men are in power as a group and the psychological fact that they do not feel powerful as individuals. They are the feelings of men who were raised to believe themselves entitled to feel that power, but do not feel it. No wonder many men are frustrated and angry.

This may explain the recent popularity of those workshops and retreats designed to help men to claim their "inner" power, their "deep manhood," or their "warrior within." Authors such as Bly (1990), Moore and Gillette (1991, 1992, 1993a, 1993b), Farrell (1986, 1993), and Keen (1991) honor and respect men's feelings of powerlessness and acknowledge those feelings to be both true and real. "They gave white men the semblance of power," notes John Lee, one of the leaders of these retreats (quoted in *Newsweek,* p. 41). "We'll let you run the country, but in the meantime, stop feeling, stop talking, and continue swallowing your pain and your hurt." (We are not told who "they" are.)

Often the purveyors of the mythopoetic men's movement, that broad umbrella that encompasses all the groups helping men to retrieve this mythic deep manhood, use the image of the chauffeur to describe modern man's position. The chauffeur appears to have the power—he's wearing the uniform, he's in the driver's seat, and he knows where he's going. So, to the observer, the chauffeur looks as though he is in command. But to the chauffeur himself, they note, he is merely taking orders. He is not at all in charge.[7]

Despite the reality that everyone knows chauffeurs do not have the power, this image remains appealing to the men who hear it at these weekend workshops. But there is a missing piece to the image, a piece concealed by the framing of the image in terms of the individual man's experience. That missing piece is that the person who is giving the orders is also a man. Now we have a relationship *between* men—between men giving orders and other men taking those orders. The man who identifies with the chauffeur is entitled to be the man giving the orders, but he is not. ("They," it turns out, are other men.)

The dimension of power is now reinserted into men's experience not only as the product of individual experience but also as the product of relations with other men. In this sense, men's experience of powerlessness is *real*—the men actually feel it and certainly act on it—but it is not true, that is, it does not accurately describe their condition. In contrast to women's lives, men's lives are structured around relationships of power and men's differential access to power, as well as the differential access to that power of men as a group. Our imperfect analysis of our own situation leads us to believe that we men need *more* power, rather than leading us to support feminists' efforts to rearrange power relationships along more equitable lines.

Philosopher Hannah Arendt (1970) fully understood this contradictory experience of social and individual power:

> Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is "in power" we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with . . . disappears, "his power" also vanishes. (p. 44)

Why, then, do American men feel so powerless? Part of the answer is because we've constructed the rules of manhood so that only the tiniest fraction of men come to believe that they are the biggest of wheels, the sturdiest of oaks, the most virulent repudiators of femininity, the most daring and aggressive. We've managed to disempower the overwhelming majority of American men by other means—such as discriminating on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, age, or sexual preference.

Masculinist retreats to retrieve deep, wounded masculinity are but one of the ways in which American men currently struggle with their fears and their shame. Unfortunately, at the very moment that they work to break down the isolation that governs men's lives, as they enable men to express those fears and that shame, they ignore the social power that men continue to exert over women and the privileges from which they (as the middle-aged, middle-class white men who largely make up these retreats) continue to benefit—regardless of their experiences as wounded victims of oppressive male socialization.[8]

Others still rehearse the politics of exclusion, as if by clearing away the playing field of secure gender identity of any that we deem less than manly—women, gay men, nonnative-born men, men of color—middle-class, straight, white men can reground their sense of themselves without those haunting fears and that deep shame that they are unmanly and will be exposed by other men. This is the manhood of racism, of sexism, of homophobia. It is the manhood that is so chronically insecure that it trembles at the idea of lifting the ban on gays in the military, that is so threatened by women in the workplace that women become the targets of sexual harassment, that is so deeply frightened of equality that it must ensure that the playing field of male competition remains stacked against all newcomers to the game.

Exclusion and escape have been the dominant methods American men have used to keep their fears of humiliation at bay. The fear of emasculation by other men, of being humiliated, of being seen as a sissy, is the leitmotif in my reading of the history of American manhood. Masculinity has become a relentless test by which we prove to other men, to women, and ultimately to ourselves, that we have successfully mastered the part. The restlessness that men feel today is nothing new

in American history; we have been anxious and restless for almost two centuries. Neither exclusion nor escape has ever brought us the relief we've sought, and there is no reason to think that either will solve our problems now. Peace of mind, relief from gender struggle, will come only from a politics of inclusion, not exclusion, from standing up for equality and justice, and not by running away.

II
In Our Dreams
Sexual Fantasy and Sexual Representation

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3

The Gender of Desire

The Sexual Fantasies of Women and Men

with Rebecca F. Plante

My sex fantasy is pretty straightforward: having sex with a porno star. All out, no holds barred, continuous sex with someone who obviously knows what she's doing. It doesn't really have to be in any specific place, and scenery isn't too important. Sorry to all of you who are into the scenery thing. [man]

It's having sex on the beach. Very romantic setting, very sweet, caring experience. The "sociological" part would be, I guess, that it includes being "the woman," i.e., being carried, not being the "aggressor," rather, being passive. [woman]

I've always had the fantasy of having sex with three or more beautiful blonde babes. It would take place on a huge waterbed in a big white room overlooking the ocean. Lesbian activity would be fine. I would try to please them at the same time (up to four) two hands, mouth, and groin and they would try to please me. One on top with the others massaging and kissing my body. Two women pleasing each other orally would be a nice enhancement. Oh yes, beforehand we would cover each other in Huskers "corn" oil and no condoms would be used. [man]

Not have a favorite fantasy "scene" more just an overwhelming feeling of tenderness and complete emotional unity between myself and my partner/husband. Loving actions that lead to sex (never really fantasize about the act), i.e., kissing (hand, arm, body), massage, being on an island (Caribbean) with no distractions. Or perhaps spontaneity in location: not in the bedroom on the bed. [woman]

These are actual sexual fantasies from a sample of nearly 350 collected from undergraduates at several universities during the past decade. Gender differences are visible in every aspect of these sexual fantasies—from language to sexual activities, in both content and form. Sexual fantasies

can be viewed as illustrations of socially constructed gender differences and of the landscape of intrapsychic sexuality. In fantasies, we may see more about gendered conceptualizations of sexuality than if we look at actual sexual conduct, which often involves culturally expected gendered compromises.

The most basic element in the social construction of sexualities is gender. In both sexual fantasies and sexual conduct, men and women imagine and enact different sexual scripts, the culturally articulated blueprints we use to shape "appropriate" sexual conduct (Simon & Gagnon, 1973). Sexual scripts also help to confirm gender identities, consequently expressed in both fantasies and conduct.

Contrary to earlier studies of sexuality, researchers now understand fantasy to be a "normal" component of sexual experience (Kaplan, 1974; Masters & Johnson, 1966, 1970). Sexual fantasy has assumed an increasingly salient place in sexualities research, so that it is now understood that:

> Sexual fantasy is hypothesized to have links to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral systems as erotic fantasies can contain factual information, affective reactions, and lead to overt responses. Sexual fantasies can also serve as the stimulus leading to physiological arousal, the subsequent cognitive and affective evaluation, and ultimately, overt behavior. In short, sexual fantasies may be the driving force for human sexuality. (Chick & Gold, 1988, p. 62)

Some researchers even claim that sexual fantasy "provides a clearer picture of male and female sexual natures than does the study of sexual action" (Ellis & Symons, 1990, p. 551). As evidenced by their phrase "male and female sexual natures," Ellis and Symons offer a sociobiological analysis of fantasy, arguing that fantasies are rooted in evolutionary, sex-based strategies.

But how do we begin to conceptualize and operationalize possible connections between fantasies and (inter)actions? And are there sociological explanations for gender (not sex) differences? Using respondent-written fantasies, we explore gender differences in active and passive language, sexual and sensual content, and emotional and romantic imagery. We propose some sociostructural explanations for the differences we document and discuss some links between fantasies and behaviors.

Gender Differences

Freud believed that fantasy was central to individual sexualities, writing that "the motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes . . . [and further] these motivating wishes vary according to . . . sex" (Freud, 1975, p. 146). Other researchers have explored the components of fantasy during partnered sexual activity, masturbation, and typically nonsexual activities and have consistently found that gender differences exist in all these possible fantasy moments. Kinsey et al. (1953), for

example, found that women's fantasies during masturbation were similar to their overt sexual behaviors, so that, for example, women who were not totally active rarely had fantasies of intercourse. Men's fantasies did not seem to be as dependent on their actual experiences, relating more to hoped-for future experiences or taboo experiences (Kinsey et al., 1948).

More recent research confirms that gender differences persist. Men's fantasies detail more sexual activities, more sexual organs, and a greater variety of visual content than do women's fantasies (Follingstad & Kimbrell, 1956; Barnes, 1998). Men tend to pay more attention to the minutiae of partners' physical appearance and are far more likely to fantasize multiple and/or anonymous partners (Barclay, 1973; Iwawaki & Wilson, 1983; Knafo & Jaffe, 1984; Wilson, 1997).

By contrast, women's sexual fantasies are more likely to contain familiar partners and to include descriptions of context, setting, and feelings associated with the sexual encounter (Barclay, 1973; Kelley, 1984). Women are more likely to be emotionally aroused by their fantasies, which contain more themes of affection and commitment than do men's. Women are more likely to imagine themselves as the recipients of sexual activities from fantasized partners, while men are more likely to imagine themselves as sexual initiators and their imagined partners as the recipients of sexual activities (Barclay, 1973; Iwawaki & Wilson, 1983; Knafo & Jaffe, 1984; Mednick, 1977). According to Knafo and Jaffe, "Being acted upon by her partner seems to encourage the woman to depict herself as being acted upon in fantasy as well" (1984, p. 460).

One could say that women have stereotypically "feminine" sexual fantasies and men have stereotypically "masculine" sexual fantasies, and that each uses sexual fantasy to confirm gender identity (Chick & Gold, 1988). Men's sexual fantasies tend to be "more ubiquitous, frequent, visual, specifically sexual, promiscuous, and active." Women's sexual fantasies tend to be more "contextual, emotive, intimate, and passive" (Ellis & Symons, 1990, p. 529). Most, if not all research results confirm many of these gender differences (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995).

Previous Research Strategies

Virtually all previous research uses the terms "male" and "female" instead of "men's" and "women's" to describe the genders' fantasies. This follows Kinsey et al.'s historical conflation of biological sex with socially constructed gender categories. (Kinsey's books should more accurately have been titled, *Sexual Behavior Among Some Men in the United States* and *Sexual Behavior Among Some Women in the United States*.) However, use of these biological adjectives implies that fantasies are linked to innate differences, rather than socialized, enculturated differences.

Methodologically, previous research has largely been divided into studies in which respondents answered a sexual fantasy questionnaire (for example, Ellis & Symons, 1990; Mednick, 1977; Knafo & Jaffe, 1984) or were presented

with a "fantasy checklist" and asked how many or how often various items were present in their own fantasies (for example, Iwawaki & Wilson, 1983; Knafo & Jaffe, 1984; Wilson & Lang, 1981).

However, Mednick (1977) combined respondent-generated fantasies with a "Sexual Fantasy Questionnaire" and found that men were much more likely than women to imagine themselves as the sexual initiators. Women fantasized themselves as "the recipients of sexual activity from fantasized sexual objects." More recently, Dubois (1997) used college students' written fantasies to quantitatively explore the emotional tone of "activation and evaluation." Her research relied on written fantasies but utilized no qualitative analysis of any kind. In other studies, respondents were given prewritten sexual fantasies to read and then were measured for levels of physiological arousal, either by self-reporting, or by measuring blood flow to the genitals (Follingstad & Kimbrell, 1986). In the first study, women read 112 fantasies, rated how arousing they were, and then reported how often they had had such fantasies in the past year.

Such methods, however, could skew the data. Closed-ended survey questions forced respondents to limit answers to the choices on the instrument. Those with fantasies that fell outside the list were unable to code them, and respondents who were unable to summon their own fantasies could have had one suggested by a fantasy checklist. Such methods also tend to minimize affective dimensions of fantasies and maximize overt conduct by primarily asking about activities, not emotions, context, mood, et cetera.

Our study focuses on the rich utility of respondent-written fantasies. Using respondents' own words allows us to explore emotional and romantic content, activity and passivity, and other thematic elements of their fantasies. This research thus diverges from previous research due to our study methodology and our explicitly sociological analysis of sexualities.

Methods and Data Collection

For this research, we collected 340 usable responses (249 women and 91 men) to an open-ended question about sexual fantasies. Usable responses were defined as: only one fantasy mentioned, with sex of the respondent clearly indicated. We simply asked respondents to write a sexual fantasy that they consistently found arousing, perhaps the one they thought about most often. We gave no instructions about whether or how to specify details of the fantasy; respondents were free to be as descriptive or vague as they wished. Also, respondents may have provided masturbatory or coital fantasies, or daydreams, as we did not specify. The open-ended design enabled us to obtain fantasies expressed in the language, tone, and descriptive depth that each respondent chose. We collected these fantasies in seven social science classes at two colleges and one public university in

suburban Long Island, New York. The lack of representation in this sample, along with other methodological considerations, is extensively discussed later.

Respondents were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. If respondents did not wish to participate for any reason, we asked them to state something to the effect of "I do not wish to participate"; some did so and also explained why. These were collected along with the fantasies. In all, nine men (7%) and 46 women (18.5%) did not wish to participate. After analyzing the fantasies, a researcher returned to each class and discussed methods, findings, and how to sociologically interpret the results.

We were particularly interested in four themes in the collected fantasies:

1. narrative description: the use of language, linguistic explicitness vs. vagueness, use of slang;
2. emotional description: relationship of affective behaviors to sexual behaviors, explicitness of emotional/intimate feelings;
3. sensual imagery: scene setting, use of props, level of nonsexual detail, geographical and temporal settings; and
4. sexual imagery: elaborateness, specificity, and vagueness of sexual activities.

In men's fantasies: we expected to find more explicit discussion of sexual conduct, vague or unspecified emotional content, little sensual imagery and romance, and diverse sexual imaginations. In women's fantasies, we expected to find vague or unspecified descriptions of sexual conduct, detailed emotional connections with partners, descriptive sensual imagery and romantic content, and less diverse sexual imaginations.

We also expected to find that men's fantasies, compared with women's, employed more "active" language. For example, except when specifically describing sexual or mental submission to a partner, we expected men to use language like, "I took off her clothes." We expected women to use language like, "He took off my clothes," unless explicitly describing a fantasy of dominance.

While our primary analysis is qualitative, the fantasies were also quantitatively content analyzed using a simple coding scheme and gamma, a measure of association and order in dichotomous variables (see Table 3.1). We coded each fantasy based on presence or absence of 33 variables, including partner types (significant other, "Mr[Ms] Right," taboo person, etc.); romantic/emotional content; sensual content (place, time described, etc.); sexual content (coitus, fellatio, cunnilingus, etc.); language (use of slang, "make love," etc.); and references to physical characteristics. Kappa, a statistic for assessing interrated reliability, yielded average interrated agreement of 96.52% agreement for the 33 coded variables (range = 82.8% to l00%). Values for kappa ranged from 0.51 to 1, indicating substantial to "almost perfect" agreement (Table 3.2).

Table 3.1 Gamma and Descriptive Statistics.

Variable Name	Gamma	% of men mentioning	% of women mentioning
Partner Type:			
significant other	0.6596	15.38	46.99
famous person	-0.6243	6.59	1.61
taboo person	-0.3047	12.09	6.83
multiple partners	-0.7522	40.66	8.84
"mr (mrs) right"	0.6732	3.3	14.86
Fantasy Dimensions:			
romance/romantic	0.6911	7.69	31.33
emotions/emotional	0.6208	10.99	34.54
place mentioned	0.3108	24.18	37.75
time/moment specified	0.5071	45.05	71.49
time described	0.4896	16.48	36.55
sensual props?	0.031	17.58	28.51
intercourse occurred	-0.3039	78.02	65.46
fellatio occurred	-0.5714	12.09	3.61
masturbation occurred	-0.4303	7.69	3.21
lesbian acts mentioned	-0.5	13.19	4.29
Explicit Mention Of:			
man as aggressor	0.4974	4.4	12.05
woman as aggressor	-0.7512	20.88	3.61
slang for "make love"	-0.5687	41.76	16.47
physical appearance	-0.6019	48.35	18.88
body type, parts, etc.	-0.549	23.08	8.03

Note: these are variables with gamma values of +/-0.30 or greater.

Table 3.2 Kappa Values for Interrater Reliability.

Variable Name	Kappa	% of men mentioning	% of women mentioning
Partner Type:			
significant other	0.9104	95.7	51.99
famous person	0.7947	98.92	94.76
taboo person	1	100	86.08
multiple partners	0.9698	98.92	64.45
"mr (mrs) right"	0.8771	97.85	82.5
Fantasy Dimensions:			
romance/romantic	0.7729	92.47	66.85
emotions/emotional	0.7617	93.55	72.92
place mentioned	0.93	96.77	53.9
time/moment specified	0.6782	83.87	49.88
time described	0.5131	82.8	64.67
sensual props?	0.8577	94.62	62.23
intercourse occurred	0.8656	93.55	51.99

Table 3.2 (continued)

Variable Name	Kappa	% of men mentioning	% of women mentioning
fellatio occurred	1	100	93.76
masturbation occurred	1	100	93.76
lesbian acts mentioned	0.9275	98.92	85.17
Explicit Mention Of:			
man as aggressor	0.9173	98.92	86.99
woman as aggressor	0.7543	95.7	82.5
slang for "make love"	0.8028	93.55	67.28
physical appearance	0.9723	98.92	61.19
body type, parts, etc.	0.9504	98.92	78.32

Note: these are variables with gamma values of +/–0.30 or greater. (See Table 3.1).
Kappa values are as follows:
0.41–0.60 moderate interrater agreement
0.61–0.80 substantial interrater agreement
0.81–1.00 almost perfect interrater agreement

Findings

Narrative and Sexual Elements

Narrative strategies differed for women and men. Everything from length of fantasies to descriptions of sensual and sexual elements to actual language employed varied according to gender of respondent. Take, for example, these men's fantasies:

> "Menage-a-trois."
>
> "2 hot babes and myself going at it."
>
> "To have sex [crossed out, with "make love" substituted] with an older woman 10 or so years older."
>
> "Have sex on the beach."

These are not *excerpts* from fantasies—they are the *entire* fantasies. Overall, we found that men's fantasies were shorter than women's, word for word, largely due to amount of emotional and sensual scenery women tended to describe (discussed later). This differs from Follingstad and Kimbrell's finding that men wrote more words and longer single fantasies than did women (1986).

Other language differences appeared when considering the explicitly sexual aspects of the fantasies. Both genders used the following terms for intercourse: "make love," "have intercourse," "have sex," "do it," "fuck," and "make mad passionate love." However, there were more extensive gender differences.

Some terms for intercourse in men's fantasies were "going at it," "having her way with me," "have, perform, inflict extreme pleasure on," "knocking boots," "satisfying them," "penetration," and "thrusting." Women's fantasies used terms such as "get intimate," "doing his dishes," "jumping him," "have me," "be together," "become one," "impalement," "sexual experience/situation," "rolling and thrusting," "it goes from there, you can guess the rest," "pelvic thrust," "inside me."

The terms men used had more "active" connotations than the terms women used. Women's terms were gentler, vaguer, and less precise than men's, exemplified by "you can guess the rest" versus "inflict extreme pleasure on." Notably, not one of the 249 women in the sample referred to male genitalia as anything other than a "penis." However, both men and women reserved their most creative language for coitus. Frank and Anshen (1983) noted the profusion of sex-marked verbs, particularly for the stereotypic male role in coitus (conversely, there is a dearth of terms for the stereotypic female role). They concluded that, "Women are thus assigned passive roles in sex by our language" (1983, p. 68). Richter's 1987 analysis of English language sexual slang would support this. He notes terms for women's anatomy such as "waste pipe," "hole," "slit," and "teats." Terms for men's anatomy include "tassel," "prick," "ladies' delight," "bollocks," and rather "active" words like "pile-driver," "hair-divider," and "live rabbit."

Perhaps in correspondence with these differences in sexual language and slang, we found that men's descriptions of specifically sexual activities were direct, active and clear:

> "The women would wipe my cum all over themselves and lick it off one another."
>
> "She says, 'Put your cock in my ass.'"
>
> "I'll be more interest[ed] if she started playing with those beautiful tits she has and starts fingering herself."
>
> "She falls down, slowly landing directly on my penis, moving in a motion I have never witnessed before. She makes me have orgasms I never had before."

In describing what *may* be sexual activities, women tended to be more vague:

> "We do not make love genitally, but whole bodily."
>
> "We begin to have intercourse."
>
> "One thing leads to another."

These differences in sexual explicitness hint at what we suggest is the underlying cultural sexual script. Women's fantasies subtly and overtly depicted the relatively standard foreplay-then-intercourse script, even when telling the reader to use the imagination to envision what happens next. Men's fantasies incorporated more description of sexual acts, particularly those that culminated in orgasm.

Table 3.3 Language Examples from Fantasies.

Examples of Women's Passive Language	Examples of Women's Acive Language	Examples of Men's Passive Language	Examples of Men's Acive Language
being caressed	giving him pleasure	whatever the person's into	at my beck and call
turns me on	forced to eat me out	relate to me sexually	I watch them
knows where to touch me	tie up	get dominated	involve myself with them
man-handled	whip	he mounts and rides me	they fight for my penis
completely controlled	take photos of	taken control of	I perform anal sex
whatever happens, happens	watch	humiliated	going at it
be stranded	give oral sex	enslaved	I'm with two women
he enters me	tease	doing things to me	she falls down onto my penis
he creates the scenery	undress him	I'm a sex slave	I push her onto her back
he makes me feel things	I have multiple orgasms		I give her/him orgasms
he has me touch/lick/suck	I make love to him		my orgasm is the high point
he carries me	someone is watching		I satisfy her/him
he pulls me close	it's rough sex		I flip her over
he takes advantage of me			she's bent over the desk
he saves me from rape			I make love to
he wants me			inflict extreme pleasure on
I'm in danger			undress her
I pretend innocence			I press her against me
tied up			
he lays his body on mine			
we become one			
he shows me how to satisfy			
I experience/encounter			

For these variables, qualitative analysis of differences in sexual slang and description of sexual conduct is crucial, because quantitative analysis cannot capture the extent of these differences. For example, 78% of men and 65% of women offered fantasies that implied or specified intercourse. About 12% of the men and 3% of the women described or implied fellatio. Half of the men and 56% of the women used the term "make love" in their fantasies. But simple frequencies do not show that men tended to specify, describe, and rhapsodize about intercourse, while women tended to imply and sidestep the event. We return to the sexual imagery and content of these fantasies after exploring the more emotional and sensual themes we observed.

Emotional and Romantic Elements

Our research revealed gender differences in the emotional content and tone of the sample's fantasies as well. Women often specified that the fantasy partner was a significant other, and typically used the words "boyfriend" or "husband" (47% of women), while only 15% of men referred to partners who were significant others. Moreover, 15% of the women specifically described opposite sex partners whom they called "Mr. Right," the "man of my dreams," or "wonderful in every way," while only 3% of men did so. Instead, men offered fantasies that involved a celebrity (6.5% vs. 1% of women), a taboo partner (teacher, employer), or multiple partners. Only 12% of men mentioned taboo partners (6% of women did so), but fully 40% of men's fantasies involved two or more partners. About 9% of the women's fantasies included multiple partners.

Typical women's fantasies instead included romantic and emotional ideas like these:

> "He would hold me close and cater to my every need. He would treat me like a princess."
>
> "I want this to be my honeymoon. I want this to be the first time that I make love."
>
> "Finally he comes right out and says really sensitively and emotionally how he needs me as more than a friend and we get into this huge fight and then he suddenly pins me against the wall, and starts kissing me and then stops and says he's sorry but he couldn't help it."

Women's fantasies were generally stories of love, affection, and romance. Men's fantasies involved less description of emotional or romantic themes and provided less emotional context. A few men's fantasies were, for this sample, gender-transgressive narratives, where the man described a loving, committed relationship with

a significant other or "the woman of his dreams." Gender-transgressive fantasies for women in this sample described sexually active, ardent, assertive women, searching for multiple partners, who had multiple orgasms and multiple contexts for sexual expression.

Such differences conform to traditional gender stereotypes. Women learn to associate emotional commitment and affection with sexuality (Athanasiou, Shaver & Tavris, 1970; DeLamater & MacCorquodale, 1979; DeLamater, 1987; Lott, 1992; Simon & Gagnon, 1998). Women are often taught that sexuality should be intertwined with a "relational orientation," instead of being taught that sexuality can be viewed as a route to physical pleasure (a "recreational orientation"), as many men are (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; DeLamater, 1987). Thus, it is not surprising that women's fantasies maintain these conventions by incorporating sexual expression into committed, emotionally meaningful relationships. Men's fantasies display the learned ability to differentiate between sexual and emotional activities.

An area of quantitative difference in the fantasies in this sample involves specified or implied romantic and emotional content. Women provided more romantic fantasies with clear "emotional" content—34.5% compared to 11% of the men. This squares with what women learn about sexuality via cultural sexual scripting. Some of the women's fantasies, such as, "He would hold me close and cater to my every need, He would treat me like a princess," (cited above) were essentially romantic, emotional *nonsexual* narratives. Thirty-one percent of the women's fantasies included romantic imagery, while only 7.5% of the men's did.

One possible measure of this sample's differences in emotional and affective content could be the amount of physical description of the fantasy partner(s). We observed that elaboration of the physical attributes of the fantasy partner seemed to be present in fantasies with less emotional and romantic imagery. About 48% of the men mentioned something about the appearance of the partner(s), and 23% of the men very specifically described physical attributes of the partner(s).

This may be due to fantasy partner choice. Since fewer men fantasized a specific, "actual" partner (i.e., a significant other, spouse, lover), they may have felt more compelled to specify the distinct "pieces and parts" of the fantasy partner(s). Cultural sexual scripts also teach some men how to attach sexual attraction to specific body parts or attributes—"I'm a leg/breast/butt man" is a common expression. However, we do not often hear heterosexual women saying, "I'm a butt/penis/chest woman."

To wit, men's fantasies included very clear depictions of physical characteristics, particularly when multiple partners were mentioned:

> "They must be thin with nice bubble asses and medium, upturned breasts (with nipples like pencil erasers)."

> "Elle McPherson type, gorgeous looking, hot woman, straight long hair, with lots of great hot looking clothes on."

> "These women are of course slim, trim and tan and obviously incredibly sexy."
>
> "The entire Swedish bikini team—big breasts, blond, unbelievably curvy asses."
>
> "One of the women would be blonde, the other dark haired, about 5'7" to 5'10," knock-out bodies."

Women did mention partner's physiques, but the language was more general:

> "I'm out on a date with a nicely built man . . ."
>
> ". . . tall, built, and unbelievably gorgeous . . ."
>
> ". . . really good looking."
>
> "Someone so gorgeous I have to have him."

Men described exactly what their fantasy partners looked like, and even mentioned celebrities who constituted visual "blueprints" of their affinities, in case the reader was unclear about exactly how gorgeous or firm the fantasy partner ought to be. When women mentioned physical characteristics, generally they stated simply that the man was attractive and fit. Another way to explore these emotional differences is to look at the differences between sensual and sexual content.

Sensual Imagery

Sensual imagery refers to narrative elements that set a scene, evoke a mood, develop a story line, provide nonsexual detail, and, especially, provide descriptions of geographical and temporal settings and the use of props (like candles, clothing, food, etc.). Descriptions of fantasy location were more common among women (35% vs. 24% of men). Women also tended to situate their fantasies temporally (e.g., morning, afternoon) and then describe the moment. Fully 71.5% of women specified a time or moment for the fantasy, while only 45% of men did so. However, only 36.5% of women further described the temporal moment, along with 16.5% of men.

It should be noted that more often than expected, men did situate their fantasies, but rarely with the extensive description found in women's fantasies. About 64% of men specified some location, while about 74% of women did so. But this superficial numerical similarity does not fully show the gender differences in fantasy scene-setting. While many men mentioned that their fantasies occurred near water or on a beach, often this was all that they said. Most women not only

mentioned the locale, but also things like the air and water temperature, the ocean surrounding the fantasized island, the number of other people in the area (if any), and various sensual props (dinner, a picnic, wine, etc.).

Women offered far more detailed descriptions of geographic location. For example, *men* offered these descriptions:

> "If I had to pick a location, I guess I would choose a place a little out of the ordinary."
>
> "My sexual fantasy involves being on an island with only sexually attractive and available females . . ."
>
> "I like to think of dogs barking and being in an industrial setting, during lovemaking that is. Fear and discomfort are integral parts of my fantasy."
>
> "As far as the setting goes it makes no difference, only important factor is that we are both with her at the same time."

Women's fantasies were opposite in terms of length and clarity:

> ". . . A tropical island. I've always dreamed about making love in a crystal blue sea, with a waterfall in the background, then moving on shore to a white, sandy beach."
>
> "It's eveningtime [*sic*], the sun is setting, I'm on a tropical island, a light breeze is blowing into my balcony doors and the curtains (white) are fluttering lightly in the wind. The room is spacious and there is white everywhere, even the bed. There are flowers of all kinds and the light fragrance fills the room."
>
> "The room would be filled with candles and soft music would fill the air, he would feed me strawberries, which we'd share, and in the morning we'd wake, bathe one another, and . . ."
>
> "We are out in the country. There is no one for miles around. There is an open yard in the back of the house surrounded by woods. All we can hear is the chirping of birds and the rustling of leaves. It is raining. Not a monsoon, not a drizzle, but a warm summer afternoon shower. There is a big, beautiful, white gazebo in the middle of the yard."

Regardless of whether women were fantasizing about the beach or some other locale, they described more specific elements of the setting than did men in this sample. Women tended to emphasize romantic and aesthetic elements. Some of the fantasies included very detailed settings, replete with colors, textures, and

fabrics, with no mention of anything overtly sexual. It seems that women's fantasies displayed more elaborate "sensual imaginations" than did men's.

Sexual Imagery

The specifically sexual dimensions of the fantasies revealed that women may have developed sensual imaginations, but men displayed more developed "sexual imaginations." More men than women mentioned intercourse, giving/getting fellatio, masturbatory activities, lesbian activities, and "woman as aggressor"—the woman making the first move and/or orchestrating the encounter:

Variable	*Men mentioned*	*Women mentioned*
Intercourse	78%	65%
Fellatio	12%	3%
Masturbation	7.7%	3%
Lesbian activities	13%	4%
Woman as aggressor	21%	3.6%

Women described "man as aggressor" more often than "woman as aggressor"; 12% of women described male partners this way, while 3.7% described themselves as taking the lead (see above chart).

Men's descriptions of fantasized sexual activities tended to be explicit and clear, although not necessarily verbose. For example:

> "The fantasy reaches a second high point during the longest and most powerful orgasm/ejaculation ever."
>
> "Totally uninhibited sexual activity."
>
> "Her voice will be sincere, yet playful. She will suggest that I take a good look at her breasts. In her attitude I would find no inhibitions whatsoever."

Women described sexual scenes such as:

> "He tells me I mean more to him than anything else in the world and that he's never been happier in his entire life . . . I then look into his gorgeous eyes and say—'I do want this more than anything in the world—I love you.'"
>
> ". . . Our secret, not even knowing each other's name. Like a mystery, and I'll never see him again."
>
> "He'd get so excited that he wouldn't be able to control himself and he would grab me and make passionate love to me."

> "Have my ideal man and myself together for the whole day. While we are together, we would play sports and then go home and take a shower together. Have no one else to bother us from the outside world and have it feel like eternity and never wanting to leave."

The primary difference in the moods and moments described by the respondents is that men envisioned sexual moments of wild abandon, no inhibitions, with sexually inventive, assertive women. Women rarely imagined themselves as sexual actors, aggressors or initiators, and certainly not as much as men imagined women as sexual actors.

The average man's fantasy in this sample, however, made sexual conduct clear and explicit, while providing the reader with some new slang for a vernacular collection. He tells us that he "got head" first, then she was turned onto her stomach while he entered her, and that after he came (explosively, of course), she climbed aboard him and "rode him like an angel on a bronco."

> "To have sex with at least 3 women—one blond/blue eyes, brunette/brown eyes, and redhead/green eyes. All friends, 22 years old and bodies that stepped out of Penthouse. All 5'6" or shorter. Have a totally wild, uninhibited time, knocking boots all night long then start again in the A.M. I'd do it in the shower, on the hood of my caddy, and on the kitchen table. And of course I'd satisfy all of them, repeatedly."

While a scene is set, at least formally, there is no mood created by the scene-setting as in the women's fantasies. Unlike women's fantasies, we don't know whether there were any lit candles, half-drunk glasses of bubbly, and soft, gentle breezes.

Just as men's descriptions of their sexual repertoire tended to be more elaborate, that repertoire also tended to be a bit more extensive. While neither women nor men tended to mention giving or receiving cunnilingus, men did mention receiving fellatio more than women mentioned giving it. In some cases, oral sex might have been subsumed in vague, reductive narratives such as "then we messed around for a while" or "we rub and kiss each other all over."

Qualitative analysis did show that explicit language, description, and developed sexual imaginations were present in a few women's fantasies. When women wrote fantasies that included their sexual agency, multiple partners, anonymous partners, and oral sex of both types—in short, the stereotypic elements of masculine fantasies—they did so in "active," explicit language with sexual descriptiveness.

Similarities between the Genders

We expected men to be much more likely to mention a stranger as the fantasy partner, but there was little difference between men's and women's responses

(11% of men, 9% of women). There was also little difference in fantasies specifically mentioning a "friend" as a partner (12% of men, 7.6% of women). However, more men did not specify exactly who the fantasy partner was or what the relationship was (if any) to that person. For example, some men mentioned that there were two blondes, but they were further undefined. They could have both been strangers to the fantasizer, they could have been friends—it was unclear and not implied.

As for other sexual activities, such as dominance and submission, few respondents went beyond the standard cultural script (e.g., kissing, intercourse). This could be due to lack of sexual experience, age cohort effects, and/or respondent bias. Participants may have been self-conscious about presumed researcher responses to fantasy content; inhibition may have prevented respondents from including avant-garde activities and scenarios about which they actually fantasized.

In the language of the fantasies, men and women did not differ in their use of the terms "make love," "have sex," "have intercourse." But there may actually be a more subtle connection between fantasized partner and/or relationship status and word chosen. Individuals of either gender may use "make love" when describing conduct with a significant other and "have sex" with a stranger or with multiple partners. Since more women than men specify significant others, women may thus be more likely to use "make love."

Neither sex mentioned "penis/vagina" very much or used slang for genitalia, although men described *intercourse* in more ways than did women. But researchers find that men are generally more likely to improvise with language, use slang, and speak more casually (Lakoff, 1975; Coward, 1985). It has been argued that men create language and therefore feel more entitled to expand it. Another study found that, in conversation, women use more formal and clinical terminology for genitalia and sexual activities than do men (Spender, 1985).

Limitations

The generalizability of these findings is limited in several respects. First, we used a college-based convenience sample that was intrinsically self-selecting on many levels. The students in the classes we visited were studying intimate relationships, sexuality, and gender. There were disparities between the number of women enrolled and the number of men enrolled. Additionally, the men who enroll in these classes may differ from the women who enroll. The relatively small number of men (N = 91) included in this sample may also have some bearing on the results. In addition, there was no way to guarantee that all enrolled students would be in attendance on the day of fantasy collection. Every student who was present had the option of not participating; there is no way to know how many students elected not to write a fantasy but also did not return an answer to this effect.

Another kind of respondent bias may also be present. While comfortable with participating generally, some respondents may have felt uncomfortable

writing fantasies that they considered avant-garde, unusual, or "kinky," fearing negative researcher responses. Some respondents may have tried to anticipate what kinds of fantasies we wanted and may have thus tried to provide especially typical responses. Clearly, respondent and sample biases must be taken into account when interpreting the results.

These results are not fully generalizable to all men and women because of other independent variables that bear on the sample. Most of the respondents were between 18 and 22, a typical college student age range. An older or younger sample would be likely to provide different fantasies, connected perhaps to different life experiences and relationships. The research occurred in a college setting; respondents of a similar age range who are not in college might answer differently.

The sample may also be overly skewed away from white, middle-class respondents. The campuses at which data were collected are highly diverse campuses; one actually has a majority of people of color on campus and a minority white student body (49%). However, there were no overt differences among the fantasies that lead us to suspect that "race" needed to be provided by respondents (along with "sex") as an independent variable. Nonetheless, if we *had* asked for other independent variables, nongendered differences may have become more obvious. This is especially possible given that different racial and ethnic groups vary in religiosity and subcultural sexual scripts. The different experiences of minorities and nonminorities are visible in virtually every aspect of social and mental life, and sexuality intersects with race and ethnicity along with gender, class, and sexual orientation.

Beyond the limitations on generalizability imposed by the sample, there are other considerations posed by our methodology. An open-ended question enabled respondents to write almost nothing ("menage-a-trois," for example) or to compose long essays. Future research that asks respondents to specify certain elements (such as, who? where? when?, etc.) of fantasies might yield responses with more comparability, although forced-choice response options can lead to other problems. Additionally, the coding scheme we devised was developed based on what we expected to find in the fantasies. Finally, regarding descriptive excerpts, the excerpted or actual fantasies included here were chosen to highlight typical gendered differences. Gender transgressive fantasies, and the few that seemed indistinguishable as to the author's sex were not included in this discussion.

The Sociology of Sexual Fantasies

Both women and men fantasize themselves as sexually irresistible objects of desire, and both fantasize themselves as the recipients of sexual activities. Women seem to use a more passive linguistic style than do men when describing penile-vaginal intercourse. Men seem to use more active language to describe sexual activities,

even when fantasizing themselves as the recipients of these activities, even when tied up (from one fantasy with bondage: "I tell her to suck me and she does").

How can this be explained? How can men use the language of *activity* to describe something during which they seem to be powerless? In heterosexual encounters, men and women often interpret the same behaviors from different sides of the power equation. For example, men experience both fellatio and cunnilingus as expressions of their power—along the lines of, "I can get her to suck me," and "When I go down on her I can make her come"—regardless of whether the man is "actually" active or passive.

Symmetrically, women experience both fellatio and cunnilingus as expressions of their lack of power—"He forces my mouth onto his penis," and, "He goes down on me and I'm helpless" (from the fantasies in this sample)—regardless of whether the woman is "actually" passive or active. Perhaps measures of activity and passivity may more accurately be cast as measures of interpersonal sexual power, in terms of who has more power in heterosexual interactions. These "false symmetries" lead us to consider the ways in which a sociological discussion reveals important dimensions of sexual fantasy that have been overlooked by previous psychological researchers.

Although our findings corroborate earlier research findings, our interpretation is different. Psychobiological research on fantasies tends to locate fantasy in sex-linked, innate mental structures. Ellis and Symons, for example, claimed that evolutionary selection was responsible for the gender differences they observed. Thus, men's penchant for new, different, and unknown female partners was explained (the need to spread "seed") and women's penchant for emotional, committed male partners was explained (the need to find one male who would be responsible for the offspring of their union).

Instead, we suggest that gender differences in fantasies are rooted in deep *social* structures. Differential sexual scripting, with the goal of reinforcing socially constructed gender role identities, is the primary axis of disparity. With socialization into a binary gender system that also assumes heterosexuality, gender is enormously powerful in the construction of the sexual self. So we would expect to see gender differences trumping sexual orientation differences, although this idea has not been fully explored.

Since our social structures also have inequities built in, we would expect to see these inequities reproduced in even the most intimate realms of individuals in sexual fantasies, the intrapsychic level of sexual scripting. These structural gender inequalities have consequences. By casting themselves as fantasy objects of desire, with less visible sexual agency, (heterosexual) women may ultimately be less able to exert sexual desires in social interactions. Meanwhile men, who cast themselves as sexual actors, filled with sexual agency, may ultimately enact a wider range of sexual behaviors without quandaries.

One possible consequence of how inequalities play themselves out in fantasies has an empirical element: In our sample, none of the men or women

mentioned having safer sex. Respondents mentioned condoms (and contraception, for that matter) *only* to point out that their fantasies explicitly *did not* include latex, safety, or worries about disease/pregnancy. This superficial symmetry, however, only serves to mask the important difference. We could be concerned with these respondents' general inability to incorporate safer sex practices into their fantasies, but clearly women and men are differently affected by this inability.

Recall that when women fantasized about men, the men they fantasized about were loved, trusted, and intimate; most women fantasized about past or present significant others. When men fantasized about women, their relationships to the women were unclear, perhaps involving strangers, friends, or multiple partners. Here the potentially dangerous consequences of unsafe sexual practices are far more marked—especially for the female partners. Women's fantasized lack of sexual agency can thus translate into an inability to implement safer sex practices *and* insist on them. Men's abundant sociostructural sexual power can thus translate into an ability to avoid safer sex and to persuade partners to avoid it as well. In both cases, the women fantasizers and the anonymous women of men's fantasies are at risk.

We might also see arenas of difficulty between the sexes in the form of sexual harassment and date rape. With such visible incongruities between the ways in which heterosexual men and women *imagine* sexual encounters, it is possible that these disparities could be transformed into violent and aggressive sexual conflicts. Duncombe and Marsden (1996) describe " . . . the level of the basic discourses of sexual exchange [that] undermine women's ability and right to initiate or refuse sexual intercourse" (p. 224). We suggest that these basic exchanges and discourses are evident in the genders' fantasies. When inequitable power exchanges permeate the intrapsychic dimensions of sexual scripting, heterosex can be compromised in multiple ways.

The gray areas between fantasies and realities seem likely to be translated into problems for heterosexual women and men. If women translated their sexual fantasies into behaviors, then they would demand sensual, intimate emotional connections with committed sexual partners. If men translated their fantasies into behaviors, then they would want highly sexual encounters with active and skilled women, without always requiring an emotional, relational context. Thus when women and men have sex with one another, each may experience a level of compromise from the ideal(ized) images expressed in fantasies. Duncombe and Marsden (1996) refer to these compromises collectively as "sex work," expanding Arlie Hochschild's concept of emotion work (1983). In heterosexual "sex work," partners interpret gendered sexual scripts in terms of necessary compromises, particularly regarding sexual needs and satisfaction. Duncombe and Marsden found, for example, that couples developed informal strategies to indicate sexual availability and prevent women from having "openly to show desire" (1996, p. 227).

This suggests that heterosexual men may believe that their sexuality would be "feminized" by demands for emotional displays of tender affection and cooperation in mood and scene setting. On the other hand, heterosexual women may feel that their sexuality would be "masculinized" by the anonymous and highly sexual interests of some men. During class discussion after data collection, one woman referred to men's more recreational fantasizing, saying, "It doesn't matter if it's me or someone else doing it to him right then. What seems more important is that it's being done right then by *someone*."

But Jayne Stake's research (1997) on how people integrate traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics suggests that successful "real-life" integrations are associated with well-being and enhanced self-esteem. When called on to be both expressive and instrumental, study subjects felt better in the work situations they described. Could sexuality be a similar "real-life" situation where the merging of traditionally gender-linked traits would benefit participants? There are several areas of heterosexual men's and women's sexual fantasies that would benefit from a merging of interests. Women would profit by heeding the desires of their male partners, who long for ardent, aware, enthusiastic sexual mates. Men would profit from increasing their ability to be emotionally committed, passionate, and sensual. Taken together, both men and women who seek each other as partners would reap the benefits of women's increased sexual agency and men's increased intimacy.

Gender differences within the most internalized aspect of sexuality—at the level of sexual fantasizing—suggest that the sociocultural structure of gender is pervasive. In heterosexual conduct, we see how fantasy and reality converge and diverge, with men looking for active, sexually experimental partners and women looking for emotional contexts and lush sexualized settings. In the "real-life" of sexuality, we see how partnered sex can involve compromises that range from the benign (e.g., choosing one position over another) to the horrible (e.g., nonconsensual force). The rich internal world of sexual fantasies needs fuller exploration so that we can better understand gender and sex.

4
Pornography and Male Sexuality

> Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view which they confuse with the absolute truth.
>
> —Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1970)

Men look at pornography, but we do not see it. We read pornography, but it is not literature. We watch pornographic films, but we are indifferent to narrative content or cinematic technique. Men consume pornography, using pornographic images for sexual arousal, usually without considering the relationship between what's in the pictures or stories and the sexual pleasure we seek. What matters with pornography is its utility, its capacity to arouse. Its value appears to be contained in its function.

Pornography is not just men looking. It is men producing images for men to consume. And consume it we do. In 1984, for example, 200 million issues of 800 different hard- and soft-core magazines were sold in the United States alone, generating over $750 million.

And most of the images produced by men to be consumed by men are images of women. In 1970, the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography found that 90 percent of all pornographic material is geared to male heterosexuals and 10 percent is geared to male homosexuals, and that consumers of pornography are "predominately white, middle-class, middle-aged married males." Though today more women are both producing and consuming pornography, and men always appear in gay male pornography, the percentages probably remain comparable; I'd estimate that now male heterosexual pornography might compose 80 percent of the market, with that for gay men constituting 15 percent, and for women, the remaining 5 percent.

This essay was initially conceived and written as the introduction and conclusion to the edited volume, *Men Confront Pornography*. At the time, the publisher asked that footnotes and references be omitted so that the book would look cleaner and more accessible to a general reader. Therefore, reference matter does not appear here. Readers who desire specific references should contact the author.

As men have been producing pornography for other men to watch, read, and look at, women have begun, with the rise of the women's movement in the 1960s, to talk about pornography, about how they feel about seeing other women's bodies portrayed in pornography, about how pornography makes them feel about themselves, about their sexuality, about other women, about men. The debate about pornography has split the women's movement in painful disagreement, dividing women on issues as fundamental as the nature of women's oppression, the organization and expression of sexuality, and the forms of political resistance to women's oppression.

To some women, pornography is, in the words of Susan Brownmiller, "the undiluted essence of anti-female propaganda." To these women, pornography graphically illustrates the subordination of women in our culture. And what is particularly objectionable about pornography is that it renders this brutal subordination so that men can experience sexual arousal and pleasure from it. Pornography, as John Stoltenberg puts it, "makes sexism sexy." And they feel it is a major cause of men's violence against women—especially rape. As Robin Morgan wrote, "Pornography is the theory, rape is the practice."

Other women are distrustful of feminist-inspired efforts to combat pornography. Some have claimed that pornography has helped them to break away from traditional passive definitions of women's sexuality and to claim a more active, vital sexuality. Some women are even attempting to create their own pornography about lustful women who act on sexual feelings and initiate sexual encounters.

What have men had to say about the pornography debate? Frankly, very little. In large part, men's response to this debate has been a deafening silence. Perhaps it is the sheepish silence that conceals a guilt of the pleasures taken from pornography. Perhaps it is the frightened silence of the culpable child caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Perhaps it is the angry silence that seeks to protect privileges now threatened by women's interference. Perhaps it is the bored silence of a nonissue, of men who know that antipornography feminists are not going to put *Playboy* out of business. Of course, for many men, there is silence about the question of pornography because there is no question: Pornography is a vital part of many men's sexuality, and the feminist debate may threaten that privilege. Silence is a refusal to acknowledge the debate.

Perhaps all these; perhaps more. I think that men have been the silent spectators in the debate about pornography because, quite simply, we don't know what to say. Even among those men who, in general, support women's efforts to carve out more meaningful and equal lives, there has been a stunning silence. Here, it is a silence born of confusion about the role of pornography in our own lives, and a more general confusion about how we experience our sexualities, a confusion that remains fixed in place because of our inability to talk frankly and openly with other men about our sexualities, and that is compounded by a paralyzing fear that whatever we say about something as volatile as pornography will reveal us to be less than "real men." Men are frightened to raise the subject, inarticulate when we try.

But men must try. Men need to raise the issue, to examine the role of pornography in our lives. A lot is at stake: Although most pornographic images are of women, pornography is, at its heart, about men. It is about men's relationships with sexuality, with women, and with each other. It is about women as men want them to be, and about our own sexual selves as we would like them to be. Whether or not pornographic images determine our sexual behaviors, there is little doubt that these images depict men's fantasies about sexuality—both women's sexuality and our own.

Sexuality, Masculinity, Pornography

Sexuality as a Social Construction

Sexuality is the source of enormous confusion. Sex evokes conflicting and often contradictory emotions: profound guilt at moments of exuberance and pleasure, simultaneous feelings of vulnerability in sexual surrender to another, and the power and control that often accompanies another's pleasure. The moments of most intense intimacy and connection are also moments of loss and abandonment. In sex, we are often at once in full possession of all our senses and in danger of utter annihilation. As Japanese novelist Shusako Endo recently wrote in *Scandal,* "our erotic behavior expresses our profoundest secrets, the ones we ourselves aren't aware of."

Confusion itself is frightening, accompanied by anxiety, threat, instability, uncertainty. Often, when confused, we retreat to a more comfortable, secure place, like the past, when we could be certain about a situation. Recourse to tradition—"it's always been like that and always will be"—is an attempt to hold in check a confusion that threatens inherited certainties. And when we are confused about our sexuality, we often retreat to biology: "It's in my genes," we want to say, believing our sexual attitudes and behaviors are the emanation of biological imperatives, the "natural" expression of inner needs and drives. It's more comfortable to think that what we do sexually has to do with biological imperatives, since such a posture allows us to avoid responsibility for our behavior.

Biological arguments maintain a privileged status in popular wisdom about sexuality. But what they reveal about physiological functions, they obscure about the relations among people. Biological arguments assume that what exists is supposed to exist as a result of evolution. They obscure the ways in which social relations involve assumptions about, and are based upon, the power of some people over others. Biological arguments claim that such power imbalances are inevitable and "natural" and not subject to challenge or change. That which is *normative*—constructed and enforced by society through socialization of the young and through social sanctions against deviants—begins to appear as normal, that which is designed by nature. This is a sleight of hand, the normative is not necessarily

normal but is the result of a long and complex set of social conflicts among groups. "It is precisely through the process of making a power situation appear as a fact in the nature of the world that traditional authority works," writes anthropologist Maurice Bloch. And in this way, we can see how the biological perspective is irretrievably conservative and resistant to change from social movements whose purpose is to transform sexuality, especially the women's movement and the gay and lesbian movement.

In contrast to these biological arguments, many social scientists understand our sexuality to be a social construction, a fluid assemblage of meanings and behaviors that we construct from the images, values, and prescriptions in the world around us. The social-constructionist perspective examines variability and change in sexual behaviors and attitudes. Specifically, sexuality varies (1) from culture to culture; (2) within any one culture over time (historically); (3) depending upon the context in which it is presented; and (4) over the course of an individual's life.

Anthropological evidence suggests enormous variability in sexual behaviors and attitudes. In fact, it is through this dramatic variation in sexual behaviors that we have learned how cultures define the erotic and shape the ways in which the erotic is enacted. For example, Alfred Kinsey found, in his famous studies of sexual behavior in the 1940s and 1950s, that 85 percent of American men had never had sex in any way other than the "missionary position." By contrast, anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn found that position to be preferred in only 10 percent of the Native American cultures he surveyed. In some cultures, people are only sexual at night, in others only during the day. In some cultures, sex can only take place inside the couple's dwelling, while in other cultures it must take place outdoors, away from the family's food supply. Although we may believe that kissing is expressive and required foreplay, the Siriono of the Brazilian Amazon jungle believe that kissing is a disgusting practice that contaminates the mouth. If our sexuality were biologically programmed, it would be a scientific invariant, like gravity: If gravity fails to work once, the entire theory must be revised.

The ways in which people are sexual and the meanings we attach to our behaviors change dramatically over time. Think, for example, about the progressive dissociation between sex and reproduction in the United States. Since the nineteenth century, sexuality has been progressively cut loose from its yoking to reproduction and the family, so that, today, the pursuit of sexual pleasure, independent of marriage, is both possible and, for many people, desirable. The progressive disentangling of sex and reproduction has been propelled by social changes such as urbanization, which provides the first historical possibility of sexual encounters with relative strangers; by medical advances such as reliable birth control; and by technological changes like the automobile, which provides an opportunity to get away from the family as well as a place to engage in sex itself. A general trend of secularization of social values has loosened the hold of religion, long the chief buttress of the sex-reproduction complex. Although academic

research continues to discuss sexuality in relation to marriage, tabulating surveys whose categories are often coded as "premarital," "marital," and "extramarital" (sometimes with a special category for homosexual sex as "nonmarital"), Americans continue to have sex in ways that may, or may not, have anything to do with the institution of marriage.

Sexuality also varies through any individual's lifetime. What turns us on when we are adolescents may not turn us on when we are in our mid-50s. As men age, for example, they may become open to more sensual behaviors, such as cuddling and extended foreplay, while women often report that their explicitly sexual sensations increase in their late 30s and early 40s. It may be convenient to explain such developments as simple biological maturation of different anatomical creatures, but men and women in other cultures do not "mature" sexually in this way, nor have they always "matured," in this way in the United States.

The reliance on biological maturation processes, to discuss sex as a force of nature, ignores the ways in which men's and women's sexuality are related to one another. That "his" sexuality shifts toward the sensual just when "her" sexuality takes a sharp turn toward the steamingly sexual indicates more than simple divergence of biological patterns. In part, this may have to do with the institution of marriage. Marriage domesticates sex, which means that sexuality is increasingly brought into the domain reserved for women: the home. When men feel that sex is no longer dangerous and risky, and therefore exciting, their sexual repertoire expands to include a wider range of sensual pleasures. By contrast, when women feel that sex is no longer dangerous and risky, and therefore threatening, they are freed to explore more explicitly sexual pleasures. (That women feel threatened by the same danger and risk that men find exciting further illustrates the power differences between women and men. The fact that fear and sexual excitement often produce the same physiological responses may confuse men, who may mistake that fear for passion.)

Finally, our experience of the erotic depends on the social context in which it takes place. We may find it convenient to think that some behaviors are simply sexy and cannot do anything but bring about sexual arousal, while other behaviors are simply never arousing, no matter what the context. But does this correspond with our experience? Take, for example, pictures of the genitals. How many anatomy students find their textbooks arousing? Scientific books and soft-core pornography may show the reader the same body part, but they usually don't produce the same outcome. What about a representation of the genitals involved in a sexual act, or even preparing for a sexual act? Compare a pornographic film loop with a clinical explanation of how to put on a condom to practice safer sex. So much for representations, which obviously require a sexual context for the images to be sexually arousing.

But what about the real thing? One might argue that the mere sight of the other's nakedness is uniformly arousing. Yet sexual arousal is actually quite rare at places where nudity is approved, such as nudist colonies and art classes. And

the touching of another's genitals might seem to be "naturally" arousing, but neither physician nor patient ordinarily experiences much sexual arousal during gynecological or prostate examinations. Few, if any, women are aroused by breast self-examination, few men by self-examination for testicular cancer.

If sexuality is socially constructed, it both changes and it can be changed. The repertoire of sexual behaviors available to women and men can be expanded, and the associations of the erotic with various forms of domination can be reevaluated and, perhaps, recontextualized. Of course, such processes take time, but the social-constructionist position opens us to the possibilities of transformation, including the responsibility to account for our own sexuality. If what we do and what we think do not simply bubble up into consciousness or behavior because of our genetic programming, we can be held accountable for them. For men, this is especially important when it comes to pornography, which is one of the major sources of sexual information that young males have about sexuality, and thus a central mechanism by which our sexuality has been constructed. Men can no longer hide behind pornography as "harmless fun."

What Makes Sex Sexy?

If sexuality is not constructed out of thin air, but carefully proscribed by rules and values that govern our behavior, then there is a relationship between what happens in the real world and what we do in bed. Some social scientists have adopted sociologists John Gagnon and William Simon's term "sexual scripts" to refer to "the plans that people have in their heads for what they are doing and what they are going to do," as well as devices for interpreting what people have done in the past. Through our sexual socialization, we learn our scripts as an actor might learn a part in a play, we learn such things as motivation (why some things should make us feel sexy and why others should not), scenery construction, cues, props, costumes, and what we should do if we forget our lines. (Like actors in the play, we are both handed a script that was created by forces external to us, and we have some power to transform the script slightly to accommodate our own interpretation. This is why what is considered normal sexuality is so strikingly similar in any particular culture and why there are individual idiosyncratic variations on the normative theme.) Sexual scripts provide us with the answers to the fundamental questions of any narrative: Who is an appropriate sexual partner? Whom do we desire? What do we want to do with that person? When do we like to have sex? Where? How should we have sex? Who does what to whom? And finally, and most critically: Why should we have sex?

Although these questions appear rather simple, arriving at the answers in our culture is an extremely complex process. Sexual desire is filtered through so many layers that "pure" lust—unconnected to a person's history—is rarely, if ever, the reason for a sexual encounter. The major organizing principle of sexual desire, the axis around which it revolves, is gender. It is through our experience of our

masculinity or our femininity that we come to know ourselves as sexual beings. When we are sexual, we regard our behaviors and the meanings we attach to those behaviors as the confirmation of our gender identity, as badges that we are "real" men or women.

One way to illustrate this is to look at what happens when the confirmation of one's gender identity through sexual behavior breaks down, when people experience sexual problems. (I'll discuss only masculinity here, though sexual problems such as anorgasmia are also experienced by women in gendered terms.) Sexologists and therapists agree that if a man experiences one of the three most common sexual problems—erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation, or low sexual interest—he almost invariably interprets this problem in gender terms, not in sexual terms. "I don't feel like enough of a man," he might say, or, "If I can't (get it up, keep it up, want to keep it up), I'm failing as a man." He'll almost never describe a desire to experience more sexual pleasure, to feel stronger desire, or to last longer simply because it feels good. Sexual performance is a confirmation of gender scripts.

It is equally unlikely that, when sex is successful, a man will interpret that in terms of satisfaction of purely sexual desire. Instead, it will confirm his status as a man, generate pride in his successful ability as a lover. The relationship is mutually reinforcing: We construct a sexuality through gender, and we confirm gender through sexual behavior. The rules of masculinity, like sexuality, vary from culture to culture and within any culture over time. The meaning of masculinity also varies in our culture by class, race, ethnicity, and age. Though it is appropriate to speak of multiple masculinities, we can also identify some elements that, if they are not held by all men in our culture, at least define the dominant form of masculinity, the model to which middle-class white men aspire and against which others are measured. Social psychologists Robert Brannon and Deborah David summarized the rules of masculinity into four basic axioms:

1. "No Sissy Stuff": Masculinity can allow no behaviors or attitudes that even remotely hint of anything feminine. Masculinity is demonstrated by distance from the feminine.
2. "Be a Big Wheel": Masculinity is measured by success and status in the real world, by one's capacity as a producer. We measure masculinity by the "size of our paycheck" or the recognition we receive from others.
3. "Be a Sturdy Oak": Men must be confident, secure, reliable, inexpressive, and utterly cool, especially during a crisis.
4. "Give 'Em Hell": Exude a manly air of violence, aggression, daring. Masculinity is demonstrated by taking risks, by "going for it."

These four rules of masculinity are given expression in men's sexual behavior. Men learn their sexual scripts beginning in childhood, from the scraps of information they find surrounding them in our society including misinformation

from peers and even disinformation from adults who are frightened by youthful sexuality. One of these sources of information is, of course, pornography, which, as Alfred Kinsey found, is one of the most often cited sources of a boy's first information about sexuality. In fact, one of the reasons masculinity and sexuality are often so entangled is that they become salient issues simultaneously. During adolescence, young boys struggle to master the rules of masculinity at the same time that they become aware of their emergent sexualities. What, then, do adolescent males learn about sexuality and how is this connected with their emerging definitions of themselves as men?

As adolescents, we learn that sex is secret, morally wrong, and wonderfully pleasurable. The association of sexual *pleasure*, achieved alone or in the company of another, with feelings of *guilt* and shame occurs early and often in a man's development and is reinforced by family, friends, school, religion, and media images of sexuality. Perhaps this guilt reinforces the demand that real men be constantly in control and produces the demonstration of masculinity in the separation of emotion and pleasure, in emotional detachment. (This is profoundly different for women, who also experience sexual guilt but often attempt to resolve it by inextricable connection of sexual pleasure and emotional commitment.)

In locker rooms and playgrounds, men learn to detach their emotions from sexual expression. Detachment requires sexual self-objectification and the development of a secret sexual self that performs sexual acts and indulges in "guilty pleasures." That men use the language of work as a metaphor for sexual behavior—"getting the job done," "performance," "achieving" orgasm—illustrates more than a passing interest in turning everything, including sexual pleasure, into a job where performance can be evaluated; it reinforces detachment so that the body becomes a sexual machine, a performer instead of an authentic actor. The penis is transformed from an organ of sexual pleasure into a "tool," an instrument by which the job is carried out, a thing, separate from the self. Men have developed a rather inventive assortment of nicknames for their penises, including the appropriation of real first names, like "John Thomas" and "Peter." (Can we imagine a woman calling her vagina "Shirley" or her clitoris "Sally Ann"?) Many men have elaborate conversations with their penises, cajoling, pleading, or demanding that they become and remain erect without orgasmic release. The penis can become the man's enemy, ready to engage in shameful conspiracy—getting an erection "inappropriately" or failing to get one when it is appropriate. Is it any wonder that "performance anxiety" is so pervasive an experience for American men?

As a result, sex for men often requires emotional detachment, which allows sexual pleasure to be pursued as an end in itself. But sex is also to be hidden, a covert operation, private, and we have few skills by which we can share the experience with others. Masturbation teaches men that sex is phallocentric, that the penis is the center of the sexual universe. And the "tools" of masturbation, especially sexual fantasy aided by pornography, teach men to objectify the self, to

separate the self from the body, to focus on parts of bodies and not whole beings, often, even, to speak of one's self in the third person. Male "sexual socialization" emphasizes how real men are supposed to have sex. Passivity is prohibited, and males must constantly seek to escalate the level of sexual activity. With young women, the adolescent male feels pressure to continue the sexual encounter; he is the aggressor, since, as one man once remarked in a group discussion of male sexuality, "It only counts if I put it in." And the young woman must play the feminine role of "gatekeeper," determining the level of sexual intimacy appropriate to the situation. As a result, neither can fully experience the pleasures of the moment. No sooner does he arrive at a particular level of sexual intimacy—touching her breast, for example—than he must begin to strategize how to advance to the next level. There is simply no time to pause and think about how soft and warm and lovely her breast might feel, how different from his own, how pleasurable to touch her. To stop would expose him as less than manly. And she cannot allow herself to take much pleasure in his hand caressing her breast, because she must now determine if it is all right with her for him to continue (she knows he will try) and to calculate how to thwart his efforts if she doesn't want the encounter to go further. It is as if each is living in the future tense, thinking only of how to escalate or how to prevent pleasure. Neither can fully experience the pleasures of the journey to sexual intercourse. And this dance is a pantomime; we perform it as a dumb show, believing ourselves to be without scripts and incapable of asking for help or even talking about what feels good and why. Men find it difficult to ask for directions when they're lost in their cars. How, then, could they ask for directions around the foreign territory of another's body?

How do men maintain the sexual distancing and objectification that they perceive is required for healthy functioning? In an early nightclub routine, comedian Woody Allen offered a brilliant rendition of a typical male strategy. After describing himself as a "stud," Allen remarked:

> While making love, in an effort [pause] to prolong [pause] the moment of ecstasy [pause] I think of baseball players. All right, now you know. So the two of us are making love violently, and she's digging it, so I figure I better start thinking of baseball players pretty quick. So I figure it's one out, and the Giants are up. Mays lines a single to right. He takes second on a wild pitch. Now she's digging her nails into my neck. I decide to pinch hit for McCovey [pause for laughter]. Alou pops out. Haller singles, Mays takes third. Now I've got a first and third situation. Two outs and the Giants are behind by one run. I don't know whether to squeeze or to steal [pause for laughter]. She's been in the shower for ten minutes already [pause for laughter]. I can't tell you any more, this is too personal [pause]. The Giants won.

Readers may be struck by several themes: the imputation of violence, how her pleasure leads to his decision to think of baseball players in the first place, the

requirement of victory in the ball game, and the sexual innuendo contained within the baseball language. The text also provides a startlingly honest revelation of male sexual distancing. Here is a device that is so successful at delaying ejaculation that the narrator is rendered utterly unaware of his partner. "She's been in the shower for ten minutes already," Allen remarks, as if he's just noticed. Other men have told me that they have silently recited multiplication tables, fantasized about other sports, and even thought about subjects as diverse as laundry, cleaning the bathroom, or watching television as strategies for feeling less, so they can delay orgasm and hence be perceived as more successful lovers. Sexual adequacy seems to be measured by the time elapsed between penetration and male orgasm, and the sexual experience itself is transformed into an endurance test in which one is competing against the clock. Pleasure, if present at all, is almost accidental. Surely such behaviors are not biologically programmed! And no wonder that male sexuality, whether with women, with men, or with ourselves, often bears more than a passing resemblance to Thomas Hobbes's description of man's life in the state of nature: "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

Although this discussion has concentrated on heterosexual males, a similar model could be constructed for gay men. From the research on gay male sexuality now available, we can understand that what's true for straight men is equally true for gay men. Straight men and gay men have far more in common about their sexuality than we might at first suppose. Boys, whether they become straight or gay, are socialized similarly; there is no "anticipatory socialization" for homosexuality. In addition, the modern gay male culture, since the Stonewall riots of 1969, has thrown out the old equation of gay man as "failed man," which was casually equated in a homophobic culture as "false woman," since gay men and women are penetrated in sex.

From this new perspective, gay men are "real men" and gender may be a more fundamental source of behavior and attitudes than sexual orientation. (This despite the fact that most gay men, when asked about the origins of their homosexuality, respond in gender terms, not in terms of sexual attraction: "I knew I was different from other boys," a statement of gender nonconformity, is a far more common response than "I was attracted to other boys.") For much of the 1970s and 1980s gay men often aspired to "hypermasculinity" and demonstrated that gays were as capable of objectification, phallocentrism, distancing, and the separation of emotion from physical sensation as straight men. "Tricking" for gay men was an exaggerated version of "scoring" for straight men. That gay men have, at least until recently, had much more sex and with more partners than straight men has been the source of envy as well as anger among straight men. As sociologist Martin Levine has commented wryly, "Straight men might have as much sex as gay men, if women would only let them."

Pornography, a central source of material that instructs young men about the relationship between their sexuality and their masculinity, shows men what it means to be a real man having sex. Pornography is an important part of the male

sexual script, which; in turn, is a vital confirmation of masculinity. It is therefore essential to respond to the recent politicization of pornography if we are to understand our sexuality and what it means to be a man in our culture.

The Politicization of Pornography

In 1888, an anonymous writer for the *London Sentinel* passed by a London bookshop and observed a 14-year-old boy reading a passage from the newly translated novel *La Terre* (*The Earth*), by Emile Zola, which was displayed in the shop's window. Outraged, the writer barged into the shop and demanded that the book be removed from the shelf because "the matter was of such a leprous character that it would be impossible for any young men who had not learned the Divine secret of self-control to have read it without committing some form of outward sin within twenty-four hours after."

This little tiff a century ago raises the two central themes that have framed the current political debates about pornography themes that are brought to the center of Western cultural discourse by the availability of cheap written materials and, more recently, by cheap mechanisms of photographic reproduction. The first of these concerns the definition of pornography, specifically the difference between the obscene and the pornographic. What is "leprous" and what is merely scabrous? And by what and whose standards are such words and images to be judged? The second issue concerns the relationship between images and behavior: Does pornography cause changes in its consumers' behavior, leading them to commit "some form of outward sin" after using it? In particular, does pornography change men's attitudes toward women, celebrating and championing misogyny? In so doing, can it be said to cause violence against women? Does it, at the very least, desensitize consumers to the brutality of sexist culture, inuring us to a world in which violence against women is routine?

These two themes express different politics, different ways in which the debate over pornography has been framed. The first is, of course, the right-wing assault against obscenity, a critique of explicitly sexual images and undermining traditional authority, especially within the family. Dirty pictures are said to lead young minds—especially the minds of adolescent males—into a fantasy realm where they are not subject to the traditional demands of parental obedience, homework, and church attendance:

> The boy's mind becomes a sink of corruption and he is a loathing unto himself. In his better moments he wrestles and cries out against this foe, but all in vain, he dare not speak out to his most intimate friend for shame: he dare not go to parent—he almost fears to call upon God. Despair takes possession of his soul as he finds himself losing strength of will—becoming nervous and infirm; he suffers unutterable agony during the hours of the night, and awakes only to carry a burdened heart through the day.

So wrote Anthony Comstock, in the Report of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice in 1887. Pornography in this view portrays a world of sexual plentitude and therefore encourages the pursuit of sexual pleasure outside the confines of traditional marriage; obscene materials have the ability, Comstock wrote, to "poison and corrupt the streams of life, leaving a moral wreck, a physical deformity, an enervated system, and carrying the seeds of destruction far into the social fabric." It is thus to be combated in the same way as one would combat the individual's right to sex education, birth control, abortion, divorce, the ERA, homosexuality, premarital sex, and women's right to enter the labor force as men's equals.

A century after Comstock, Patrick Fagan, director of the Child and Family Protection Institute, a Washington-based, right-wing policy analysis center, repeated this position:

> Pornography can lead to sexual deviancy for disturbed and normal people alike. They become desensitized by pornography. Sexual fulfillment in marriage can decrease. Marriages can be weakened. Users of pornography frequently lose faith in the viability of marriage. They do not believe that it has any effect on them. Furthermore, pornography is addictive. "Hard-core" and "soft-core" pornography, as well as sex-education materials, have similar effects. Soft-core pornography leads to an increase in rape fantasies even in normal males.

(Note that Fagan equates hard-core pornography and sex education information.)

A conservative contemporary antiporn activist in Kansas City confesses that he has seen how pornography "has destroyed people's lives." Although it is "not the cause of all the world's evils, [pornography] does have a catalytic effect on somebody who already has other problems." And who doesn't already have other problems?

Political campaigns against pornography have historically been framed by public concern over obscenity, the proliferation of increasingly explicit sexual images. "Art is not above morality," proclaimed Comstock as he campaigned furiously against smut. In both Europe and the United States, antiobscenity campaigns led to the censorship of dozens of books now hailed as great literature. Works by Gustave Flaubert, Oscar Wilde, Emile Zola, James Joyce, and D. H. Lawrence constitute only some of the more celebrated cases earlier in this century; recent antismut crusades have removed books such as *The Joy of Sex, Our Bodies, Ourselves,* John Irving's *The World According to Garp,* Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five,* and John Updike's *Rabbit Run* from the library shelves in many communities.

The liberal response to the right-wing assault against sexuality and individual freedom has always been to assert the primacy of an individual's right to freedom of expression over any community's right to squash that freedom in the name of collective decency. Community standards shift too easily and unpre-

dictably to compromise the fundamental right of individuals to control what they see and what they say, according to the liberal position. Few liberals are what one might call "pro pornography," and many are deeply offended by the content of some materials, but they see the freedom of the individual as a cause to be defended despite their own discomfort.

Conservatives have historically remained unconvinced. After the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography in 1970 found little evidence of social collapse from the use of pornography and issues of freedom of expression to be worth upholding, President Nixon rejected his commission's report, arguing that "pornography is to freedom of expression what anarchy is to liberty; as free men willingly restrain a measure of their freedom to prevent anarchy, so must we draw the line against pornography to protect freedom of expression." Few liberals were convinced by an argument that promoted censorship in the name of preventing censorship. And so the debate continued.

In the 1980s, the right-wing crusade against pornography has been carried forward by a zealous former attorney general representing an administration gravely troubled by the erosion of traditional values symbolized by unrestrained sexual expression. The second President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, which came to be called the Meese Commission, held a series of hearings across the nation, in which women who were victims of sexual assault, spouse abuse, and marital rape also testified about being victims of pornography. The commission also heard testimony about pornography's links with organized crime and its casual role in the rise of divorce, abortion, and teenage sexuality and the decline in marital fidelity and church attendance.

The feminist challenge to pornography, mounted in the late 1970s and continuing today, has radically shifted the terms of this debate. Earlier discussions pitted the community's right to censor speech it didn't like against an individual's freedom to consume that which the community didn't like. The current feminist debate makes few, if any, claims for community morality. They are less concerned with the corruption of young boys' morals, or the erosion of the traditional nuclear family, some, in fact, support the dismantling of the family as an institution that fundamentally oppresses women. And they are less concerned than conservatives with the community's right to censor speech; as far as they are concerned, the community of male domination has made the silencing of women's speech a foundation in the building of its culture. What feminists *are* interested in is the harm done to women.

It is ironic that as the right wing is challenging pornography because it undermines the patriarchal family, casting sexuality as a threat to male domination, women are challenging pornography because they believe it reinforces male domination. In their view, pornography depicts women in submissive positions, enjoying rape and torture, and thus graphically illustrates male domination; in fact, it makes sexual torture of women a turn-on. Antipornography feminists challenge pornography because it maintains the subordination of women in society.

Feminist writers such as Susan Brownmiller, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Griffin, Catharine MacKinnon, and Robin Morgan have also confronted the traditional liberal idea that pornography is protected by the First Amendment right of freedom of speech. Their argument is that pornography is not freedom of expression but is itself a form of censorship: Pornography silences women, suppresses the voices of women's sexuality, constrains women's options, and maintains their subordination in a male-dominated world. We live, they argue, in a culture in which simulated (or real) rape, mutilation, torture, or even murder of a woman are routinely presented to men by men, with the intention (and effect) of making men experience desire, of turning men on, of eliciting erection. It is impossible to frame the debate in terms of freedom of speech versus community standards; now the conflict is between men's free speech and women's free speech.

If a man's freedom of speech requires the silencing of women, there is only partial freedom and surely no justice. Pornography "is not a celebration of sexual freedom," writes Susan Brownmiller, "it is a cynical exploitation of female sexual activity through the device of making all such activity, and consequently all females, 'dirty.'" "Pornography is "designed," she continues, "to dehumanize women, to reduce the female to an object of sexual access, not to free sensuality from moralistic or parental inhibition." Pornography does not represent a liberating breath of free sexuality in the normally stale and fetid air of conservative censoriousness; it is only the sexualization of that traditional patriarchal world. Pornography is not rebellion, it is conformity to a sexist business-as-usual.

Along the same lines, Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon completely reframed the political debate by arguing that if pornography stifles free speech, then it ought to be subject to legal challenge because it prevents women from obtaining the equal rights guaranteed by the Constitution. If pornographic images suppress women's right to free speech, then these obstacles can be legally removed. Their coauthored municipal ordinance was passed by city councils in Minneapolis and Indianapolis (although the former was vetoed twice by the mayor and the latter struck down by a federal judge as unconstitutional), and introduced in several other city and county legislatures around the nation (by a two-to-one margin, such an ordinance was passed by referendum in Bellingham, Washington, in November of 1988). It is a remarkable document that completely shifts the terms of the debate, and it raises, for men, some profound questions about men's sexuality.

The intent of Dworkin and MacKinnon's civil rights ordinance, often called the Minneapolis Ordinance, can best be understood by analogy. Imagine the following scenario: What if photographs of the sexual mutilation of black women and men and the lynching of black men by whites in the South during the 1920s were sold on virtually every newsstand in the nation, intended to arouse white consumers to erotic fantasies under the pretense that this is "what blacks really want"? When blacks say they do not like Jim Crow laws, they "really mean" that they do, and so the racist subordination of black people can continue unabated—fueled, in fact, by these images. (I believe it's possible that the sexualization of the violence

against blacks—the rape of black women by whites, the genital mutilation of black men before lynching them—does, in fact, reveal an eroticization of oppression that makes the analogy even more powerful.) How long, antipornography feminists ask, would blacks in this country put up with such humiliation? How long would they stand for the sexualization of torture and murder? How long would the government allow magazines that publish such images to remain "protected" as free speech?

The feminist campaign against pornography rests on three levels of harm said to be caused by pornography. First, they argue that pornography *is* violence against women. The offscreen activities that lead to the production of a pornographic movie often involve the coercion of the woman into scenes of humiliation, rape, and degradation. For example, Linda Marchiano, who under the name Linda Lovelace starred in *Deep Throat*, the most successful pornographic movie in history, claims that she was forced, often at gunpoint, to perform the sexual acts that were filmed for male consumption. *Deep Throat* is not fiction, it is a documentary of a sexual assault. "Every time someone watches that film," Marchiano writes in her autobiography, *Ordeal*, "they are watching me being raped."

This blurring of the distinction between "art" and reality, and the actual coercion recorded in pornographic material, is far more common than we might believe, many women claim. But even so, women who are not pornographic models are also injured by pornography, humiliated and degraded. Just as every joke that makes fun of a black or a Jew hurts all blacks and Jews, so too does pornography hurt all women. In an interview recently, Susan Brownmiller commented:

> I find any crotch shot in *Playboy* or *Penthouse* absolutely humiliating. People say, "Well, what are you humiliated by? You've spread your legs and looked at yourself in the mirror, that's what you look like." Well, yeah, I know that's what I look like, but why should it be in a magazine on the newsstand? To me, the issue of privacy is really significant. Where are the images displayed and for what ultimate purpose? If they're displayed for men in business suits to jerk off on, then there's something wrong with the image.

Susan Griffin's moving analysis, *Pornography and Silence*, underscores the psychological costs of sexual objectification in pornography. Griffin speaks of the necessity for women to create a false self, to become "the pornographic ideal of the female." The constant barrage of images of violence against women does great violence "to a woman's soul. In the wake of pornographic images, a woman ceases to know herself. Her experience is destroyed." The new self-image she constructs is of the adorable plaything of pornography, silenced by pornography and denied a real voice, she speaks with the false voice of the pornographic sex symbol. Pornography maintains sexual inequality by injuring some women directly, and silencing all women. As one woman commented: "I want a legal remedy that will give relief to women who are harmed by the practice of pornography. I want a legal

remedy that's going to stop looking at the pictures, stop calling them fantasy, stop calling them representations and images and depictions and start viewing them as *documents, presentations,* and the *reality* of women and men in this culture."

A second level of argument is that pornography causes violence against women. Pornography provides a how-to manual for woman-hating, they argue, and it makes sexism sexy in the process. As Dworkin writes, pornography "functions to perpetuate male supremacy and crimes of violence against women because it conditions, trains, educates, and inspires men to despise women, to use women, to hurt women. Pornography exists because men despise women, and men despise women in part because pornography exists." Pornography thus causes rape and battery by convincing men that when their dates/wives/lovers say no they really mean yes, and that if they force women to have sex against their will they will eventually love it. "The point about pornography is that it changes men," Dworkin noted in an interview. "It increases their aggression toward women. It changes their responses." Here, antiporn feminists refer to the same evidence as the right-wing would-be censors: Convicted rapists often confess to having used pornography, and many men accused of other forms of sexual crimes or deviance also have, in their homes, large quantities of pornographic materials. To antiporn feminists, these men are not the sexual deviants the right-wingers see, but rather overconformists to the rules of misogynist masculinity. What might sound like an abdication of responsibility if spoken by a man ("Pornography made me do it!") appears to the antiporn feminist as an insight into social science causation.

Finally, these women argue that even if it were not violence itself, and even if it did not cause violence against women, pornography would inure consumers to the culture of violence that surrounds us. Repeated exposure to pornographic images "desensitizes people to the abuse of women," Catharine MacKinnon noted in an interview. Viewers become "numb to abuse when it is done through sex." Underscoring this position, Chief Justice Nathaniel T. Nemetz, of the British Columbia Court of Appeals in Canada, argued that pornography precludes gender equality: "If true equality between male and female persons is to be achieved," he wrote in his opinion on *R.* v. *Red Hot Video,* "it would be quite wrong to ignore the threat to equality resulting from the exposure to male audiences of such violent and degrading material, given that it has a tendency to make men more tolerant of violence to women and creates a social climate encouraging men to act in a callous and discriminatory way toward women." Even against some evidence from social scientific experiments that seem to contradict this view, antiporn feminists hold fast to their convictions. "Does one need scientific methodology in order to conclude that the anti-female propaganda that permeates our nation's cultural output promotes a climate in which acts of sexual hostility directed against women are not only tolerated but ideologically encouraged?" asks Susan Brownmiller.

As some women have reframed the political debate about pornography, they've been confronted not only by liberals who advocate a sexual laissez-faire, but by other women who oppose what they see as an impulse to censor and who claim

that pornography can be a key element in a woman's reclaiming of a vital sexuality. Others are fearful of the censorship implications of the antiporn position. Writers such as Lisa Duggan, Barbara Ehrenreich, Kate Ellis, Ann Snitow, Carole Vance, and Ellen Willis have been involved in the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce (FACT), which was created to expand the political debate and especially to engage with antiporn feminists who had organized Women Against Pornography (WAP). (I'll use these acronyms for convenience, even though not all antiporn feminists are associated with WAP and not all anti- "anti-porn" feminists are associated with FACT.)

In part, the pornography debate among feminists recapitulates old divisions between radical feminists on the one hand and socialist feminists on the other. To radical feminists, the context in which all political struggle takes place is male domination, the violent subordination of women by men. It permeates all interpersonal relationships, and it is institutionalized in governmental and community organizations. The goal of radical feminists has been to protect women who have been the victims of male violence and to create institutional mechanisms to prevent future abuse. To socialist feminists, by contrast, feminism involves the claiming of a rebellious sexuality, extracted from the contradictory images that consumer society provides.

Feminists disagree about the context in which pornography is produced and consumed. To WAP, that context is sexist violence. Pornography eroticizes this violence and therefore reassures men that sexist violence is all right. In the ideal world that these women construct, there would be no pornography, because all sexual relationships would be based on mutual respect for the other's integrity, in contrast to the pornographic world fueled by inequality and domination. "We will know that we are free when pornography no longer exists," Andrea Dworkin writes in her powerful book *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*.

To FACT, on the other hand, pornography's context includes not only sexist violence but also sexual repression and sexual scarcity. Not only does sexism lead to violence against women, but it leads to bad sex and too little of it. In Western culture, we can't have as much sex as we want—civilization, as Freud understood it, would be impossible if we did. To FACT, feminism is an empowering drive to affirm women's sexuality, to claim appetite, and leads not to the elimination of images but to their proliferation, as women become more articulate about their sexuality. Feminism is thus about the capacity to transform experiences of powerlessness and oppression into sources of liberation. And, they claim, the inherent contradiction of sex—the fusion of omnipotence and powerlessness through surrender—is a chief vehicle of the transformation of powerlessness into pleasure. Their vision of utopia is one in which women can claim their sexuality based on a belief that desire is not exclusively a male prerogative. In a society of sexual plenty there might be no need for pornography, because the pornographic need is fed by scarcity and repression. Antiporn feminists, by contrast, claim that the form is male. "There can be no equality in porn, no female equivalent, no turning of the tables

in the name of bawdy fun," writes Susan Brownmiller. "Pornography, like rape, is a male invention, designed to dehumanize women, to reduce the female form to an object of sexual access, not to free sensuality from moralistic or parental inhibition." (Brownmiller is obviously thinking only of heterosexual male pornography, since some gay male pornography uses gender equality as a springboard to erotic fantasy.)

FACT questions the claim that pornography is violence against women, causes violence, or inures consumers to a culture of violence. To members of FACT, the antiporn feminist position seems to rest on a crude behaviorism: If I see it in pornography, I will fantasize about it. If I fantasize about it, I will want to do it. If I want to do it, I will do it, even if it means doing it against someone's will. WAP claims that fantasy reflects those experiences and desires that men currently entertain; sexual fantasy resembles the world as men want it to be. FACT uses a more psychoanalytic explanation, that fantasy is a transformation of past experiences, in which loss can be recaptured. To them, fantasy is about structuring fears in order to gain control over them, transforming the darker regions of sexuality into potentials for pleasure.

And FACT also disputes the contention that pornography inures us to the culture of violence that defines women's daily lives. Repeated exposure to fantasy images of violence does not always have this effect in nonsexual situations. How many times have you seen a murder enacted on television? One thousand? How about a car crash in which someone is obviously injured? Ten thousand? Imagine strolling down the street and witnessing a real murder or a real car wreck. Do you think you'd feel numb, unable to respond because you've been anesthetized to the real pain that those real people are feeling? FACT's position is that people can tell the difference between genuine screams and set-ups, between blood and ketchup. The troubling phenomenon of insensitivity to violence is more closely and obviously connected to fear than to media images.

Most women agree, however, that pornography expresses male hostility to women's political gains over the last two decades. As women advance in real life, they are pushed back in men's fantasies. Here is antipornography activist and sociologist Diana Russell:

> The great proliferation of pornography since 1970—particularly violent pornography and child pornography—is part of the male backlash against the women's liberation movement. Enough women have been rejecting the traditional role of being under men's thumbs to cause a crisis in the collective male ego. Pornography is a fantasy solution that inspires non-fantasy acts of punishment for uppity females.

And here is FACT member, writer Ellen Willis:

> The aggressive proliferation of pornography is . . . a particularly obnoxious form of sexual backlash. The ubiquitous public display of dehumanized

> images of the female body is a sexist, misogynist society's answer to women's demand to be respected as people rather than exploited as objects. All such images express hatred and contempt, and it is no accident that they have become more and more overtly sadomasochistic . . . Their function is to harass and intimidate, and their ultimate implications are fascistic.

(Note that the key difference here is that Russell claims an explicit relationship between these images and men's behavior, while Willis explores the impact of these images on women and makes no claims that the images translate into behavior.)

But there is more common ground among women with differing political views on pornography. Perhaps most critically, we must understand how *pornography is gendered speech*, how form is related to content, and how both form and content are and have been so ineluctably male. So here is one place where men come in. Our culture is so suffused with sexism that it is often invisible to us. And the eroticization of others' pain and terror is important for all men to examine: Why do depictions of rape turn so many of us on? Women are challenging men to stop eroticizing violence against women and help protect women who consider themselves victims of pornography from further abuse. Moreover, the seeds of liberation are often found among the contradictory images that our culture produces: Sexual liberation is a vital element in the feminist challenge to sexism, precisely because women's sexual desire has so long been suppressed under the blanket of "natural" passivity. Women are now challenging men to develop healthy and exuberantly erotic relationships with women as equals. How will men respond?

As I see it, men's confrontation with the issue of pornography revolves around four central themes: (1) the definition of pornography; (2) the relationship between pornography and sexuality; (3) the relationship between pornography and violence against women; and (4) the ways in which pornography shapes our relationship with other men.

The Futile Search for Definitions

The debate about pornography often begins with a quibbling over the definition of pornography—and too often it ends there as well, with each side comfortable with its particular definition. Perhaps the belief that we need a definition that will hold across all cases is one of the major barriers that prevents various groups from speaking with each other. While some search genuinely for definitions, others use a variety of strategies to protect what they find erotic or thrilling and to still find the grounds to sanctimoniously condemn what others find titillating. We are quite resourceful in the ways we invent moral arguments to condemn in others what we like for ourselves. The debate thus ends either in a relativistic stew, in which discussion stops abruptly when someone says, "Well, it depends on what you mean

by pornography," or in that moralistic conundrum once sarcastically derided by Gloria Steinem: If I like it it's erotica, if you like it it's pornography.

I find these arguments about the definition of pornography both tedious and boring, an endless cycle of assertions that allow men to abdicate responsibility for confronting the politics of desire. The search for abstract definitions itself often freezes sexual imagery outside of its social context. But it is that context that determines sexual arousal, which permits the imaginative leap between a movie screen or centerfold and fantasies of sexual gratification. To speak of pornography in the abstract is to see it as more powerful than it really is. Pornography is most often nothing more than a collection of images, words, and pictures that are constructed to arouse men and, once aroused, to sustain that arousal through a masturbatory fantasy. Pornography is what pornography does: if men cannot masturbate to it, it is not pornography. Since the erotic and the pornographic are both so dependent upon context, finding one definition that will apply in all cases is both impossible and politically distracting. In particular, the search for definitions distracts us from the more pressing questions: Regardless of how pornography is defined, why do those images arouse us? What do those images actually portray? Would those images, if they were real, continue to arouse us? Why do men find those images sexy? What do the answers to these questions tell us about our sexuality?

Sexism and Sexual Repression: Food for Fantasy

Men's sexual fantasies are, in part, fueled by the two themes that frame the feminist debate about pornography: sexism and sexual repression. Why should we be surprised that these are often conflated in sexual fantasy? Sexist assumptions about women's sexuality permeate our culture, and men often hold utterly contradictory notions about women's sexuality (along with cultural icons that signify these bizarre notions). Women are seen simultaneously as passive and asexual (the "frigid prude") and insatiable and demanding (the *vagina dentata* that will devour men). These images confuse men and can often paralyze women, making their struggle to claim a vital sexuality a difficult and politically charged process.

Sexual repression also fuels men's lust. (This is, of course, true for women as well, although it is often expressed differently. Though much of this discussion of fantasy shaped by sexism and sexual repression holds also for women, I will continue to focus here only on men's fantasies.) Few men would say that they are having as much sex as they want. The norms of masculinity, after all, require that men should want sex all the time, and produce instant and eternally rigid erections on demand. These norms, though, contradict the social demand for sexual repression and the profoundly erotophobic thread that runs through our culture. As a culture, we abhor sex and are terrified by it because we believe that the iconoclastic anarchy of the orgasm threatens all forms of authority—political, social,

economic, and familial. And so we associate sexual yearnings with guilt or shame. And we simultaneously understand masculinity as the constant and irrepressible capacity for desire. (In part, this helps explain Freud's opposition of civilization and sexuality, and why, in a sexist culture, women's sexuality is constructed as passive so that they can control men's sexual drive.)

Sexual repression produces a world in which the nonsexual is constantly eroticized—in fantasy we recreate mentally what we have lost in real life. And sexist assumptions about women's sexuality provide the social context in which these fantasies take shape. Who but the sexually starved could listen to a twenty-second prerecorded message from a faceless woman over a telephone and be aroused? And in what context but sexism could her message be understood? In these prerecorded fantasies, the woman's voice has a lot to accomplish in twenty seconds: She must set a scene (nurse/patient, camping trip, etc.), express her intense need for sex with the listener, vocally simulate her arousal and orgasm while pleading for his orgasm, and finally close the encounter with gratitude for such frenzied pleasure and bid a fond farewell to her caller, inviting him to call again or call a different number "for a live girl." All this in twenty seconds! On the telephone! On tape! And still it turns men on. Easily.

Men's consistent complaint of sexual deprivation has no basis in biology, although it is comfortingly convenient to blame our hormones when we want sex. To always seek sex, to seek to sexualize relationships with women, to never refuse an offer of sex—these are crucial elements in the normative definition of masculinity. Sexual pleasure is rarely the goal in a sexual encounter; something far more important than mere pleasure is on the line: our sense of ourselves as men. Men's sense of sexual scarcity and an almost compulsive need for sex to confirm manhood feed one another, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of sexual deprivation and despair. And it makes men furious at women for doing what women are taught to do in our society: saying no. In our society, men being what men are "supposed to be" leads inevitably to conflict with women, who are being what they are "supposed to be."

Certainly, women say no for reasons other than gender conditioning, they may not be interested, or they may be angry at their partner for some reason. And certainly, men are also angry at women who are sexually voracious and fully claim sexual appetite. But, in general, this dynamic of men wanting and women refusing is established early in our adolescent sexual socialization and has important consequences for both male and female sexualities.

Men's consumption of pornography is, in part, fed by this strange combination of lust and rage. Pornography can sexualize that rage, and it can make sex look like revenge. That men may gain from pornography an acceptable vehicle to vent that rage is why many antiporn feminists claim that pornography leads to rape and sexual assault. Yet social scientists are not so sure. Sociologists Murray Straus and Larry Baron found that the number of rapes was positively correlated with the consumption of soft-core pornography; the higher the number of copies

of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* sold in a particular state, the higher the number of rapes. Instead of jumping to the obvious—and, it turns out, false—conclusion, these researchers also found that these two statistics were also positively related to the number of "men's" magazines, such as *Field and Stream* and *Popular Mechanics*, that were sold in those states. Shall we prohibit newsstands from carrying them? It turns out that the higher rates of magazine sales and rapes are both due to the higher percentage of younger men in those states. Researcher Edward Donnerstein and his associates make the social-scientific case clearest: Even "if every violent rapist we could find had a history of exposure to violent pornography, we would never be justified in assuming that these materials 'caused' their violent behavior." Pornography, then, is part of a larger question, having to do with the definition of masculinity in our society.

In their laboratory experiments on the effects of pornography on men's behavior and attitudes, various research teams have reached similar conclusions. Several found that repeated exposure to violent pornography did lead to the psychological numbing of sensitivity toward violence against women, and, at least initially, increased men's beliefs in myths about rape. Donnerstein, for example, found that "exposure to degrading pornography did result in more calloused beliefs about rape," and "may have negative effects on attitudes about women."

To understand these results, though, researchers have attempted to disentangle the violence and the sex contained in violent pornography. Here, the results are important. While nonviolent sexual images had no noticeable impact on either attitudes or behavior, images of violence against women alone, as well as violent pornography, had similar deleterious effects on men's attitudes. Clearly, it is the violence, and not the sex, that is responsible. In lieu of the Meese Commission's "unwarranted extrapolation from the available research data," Donnerstein and his colleagues have argued, "depictions of violence against women, whether or not in a sexually explicit context, should be the focus of concern." Sexualized violence is only one form of violence that may cause harm; if policy makers choose to single it out, it is, I believe, because of their discomfort with the sexuality contained in the images, not the violence.

The policy implications drawn from research on the impact of pornography square with parallel research on rape, as Nicholas Groth has stated in his conclusion to *Men Who Rape:* "It is not sexual arousal but the arousal of anger that leads to rape." He concludes that "pornography does not cause rape, banning it will not stop rape." But such assertions beg the question: Why are men so angry at women? Everywhere, men are in power, controlling virtually all the economic, political, and social institutions of society. And yet individual men do not feel powerful—far from it. Most men feel powerless and are often angry at women, who they perceive as having sexual power over them: the power to arouse them and to give or withhold sex. This fuels both sexual fantasies and the desire for revenge.

In this world of constructed perpetual male lust and feelings of powerlessness in the face of women's constructed denial of desire, pornography becomes

almost a side issue to the problem of men's anger at women. In one particularly compelling interview in Timothy Beneke's fascinating book *Men on Rape*, a young stockboy in a large corporation describes his rage at women who work with him:

> Let's say I see a woman and she looks really pretty and really clean and sexy, and she's giving off very feminine, sexy vibes. I think "Wow, I would love to make love to her," but I know she's not interested. It's a tease. A lot of times a woman knows that she's looking really good and she'll use that and flaunt it, and it makes me feel like she's laughing at me and I feel degraded . . . If I were actually desperate enough to rape somebody, it would be from wanting the person, but also it would be a very spiteful thing, just being able to say "I have power over you and I can do anything I want with you," because really I feel *they* have power over *me* just by their presence. Just the fact that they can come up to me and just melt me and make me feel like a dummy makes me want revenge. They have power over me so I want power over them.

If men can see women's beauty and sexuality as so injurious that they can fantasize about rape as a retaliation for harm already committed by women, is it also possible that pornographic fantasies draw from this same reservoir of men's anger? If so, it would seem that men's rage at women, and not its pornographic outlet, ought to be our chief concern.

The Pornographic Spectacle

Thinking about men's experiences of power and powerlessness has led me to wonder if one could find an arena for men that is equivalent to the representation of women in pornography. The issues of male sexuality and control seem too similar in gay male pornography, even though the gender equality of the participants fundamentally alters the politics of gay porn. To empathize with women's responses to their representation in pornography means to identify with what women say they feel. Is there an arena in which what happens to women in pornography happens to men?

My first thought was of bodybuilding. Here is a place where the body is transformed into an object of its own consumption, as the woman's idealized body is stripped of its history, its identity, its personality in pornography. The artificial purity of form can only hint at its capacity to act. The body as object is perfected, without concern for its interior life. Bodybuilding is as decontextualized as pornography, the process of self-reification, the transformation of the body into its own objectified false essence. Bodybuilding allows men to experience what English art critic John Berger writes in *Ways of Seeing* about the relation between women and men and seeing and being seen: "Men act and women appear. Men look at women.

Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women, but also the relation of women to themselves." Bodybuilding transforms men into "women," making men and their exaggerated—even distorted—expression of gender the object of the gaze. But bodybuilding is too tame, too generous—here, the male body is presented only in its allusion to strength, hardness, muscles. These may refer to masculine virtues such as strength, bravery, and power, but bodybuilders are the analogs to the soft-core idealized female pornographic image, or, in Berger's understanding, to the painting of the nude. Harder-core pornography is about the idealized female image turned against itself, becoming, in a sense, the rationale for its own violation.

Pornography is more like boxing and professional wrestling than it is like bodybuilding. The analogy with wrestling suggests the ways in which pornography is artifice, spectacle. The wrestler's body is exaggerated masculinity just as the pornographic body is highly exaggerated, with a persistent focus on size, motion, how long it lasts. Like much pornography, the wrestling match is a staged spectacle, not real fighting; it is highly ritualized and follows elaborate conventions and codes of behavior that are rarely transgressed. The bodies of wrestlers are often costumed in stylized caricatures of various versions of masculinity, which often use cultural signifiers of "evil" drawn from class-based or political struggles (the hillbilly, the motorcycle delinquent, the Indian warrior, the Russian strongman, the Arab sheik, the bodybuilder). Like much pornography, the primary relationship within the spectacle is the wrestlers' relationship with the audience; they perform to be observed. And like a good deal of pornography, the intensity of the violence between the wrestlers is an elaborate construction. No one actually believes they're hurting one another; one watches wrestling for the sheer thrill of the spectacle, of the illusion.

The analogy between wrestling and pornography, though, breaks down in the face of hard-core pornography and violent pornography. The importance of the event-as-spectacle diminishes, and the "truth" of the interaction becomes a central feature. Boxing is no less a spectacle than wrestling, but the boxers' relationship to one another assumes a far more significant dimension. The boxers themselves are intensely attuned to one another; the viewer is more the privileged voyeur, being allowed to watch the most intense interaction imaginable between two men.

Like wrestling and bodybuilding, there is a fetishization of the boxer's body, though in boxing the "tale of the tape" often implies a relationship to masculine perfection and not simply the capacity to do violence or the exaggerated qualities of the wrestler. The bodies of boxers are perfect specimens of masculinity—hard, strong, muscular—and these bodies are then transformed into dangerous machines that will destroy you unless you destroy them first. Boxing involves the "deadly improvement of the human physique when it is turned into an implement of its own destruction," writes Garry Wills. Just as we might say that pornography is more about *being* fucked than it is about fucking, boxing, as Joyce Carol Oates

comments in her slender literary discussion of the sport, "is about being hit rather than it is about hitting, just as it is about feeling pain, if not devastating psychological paralysis, more than it is about winning." But Oates only partially glimpses the relationship between boxing and pornography:

> Boxing as a public spectacle is akin to pornography: in each case the spectator is made a voyeur, distanced, yet presumably intimately involved, in an event that is not supposed to be happening as it is happening. The pornographic "drama," though as fraudulent as professional wrestling, makes a claim for being about something absolutely serious, if not humanly profound: it is not so much about itself as about the violation of a taboo . . .The obvious difference between boxing and pornography is that boxing, unlike pornography, is not theatrical. It is not, except in instances so rare as to be irrelevant, rehearsed or simulated. Its violation of the taboo against violence is open, explicit, ritualized and . . . routine—which gives boxing its uncanny air. Unlike pornography (and professional wrestling) it is altogether real: the blood shed, the damage suffered, the pain (usually suppressed or sublimated) are unfeigned.

Harder-core pornography resembles boxing in precisely the ways that boxing differs from wrestling. Hard-core pornography is real sex, just as boxing is real fighting. Each is a "real" event (people are actually having sex and boxers are actually hurting one another), and each is carefully proscribed by rules.

Boxing resembles pornography in another way. Each activity turns on a particular moment in the unfolding drama, each has a moment of transformation. In boxing, Oates writes, the "moment of visceral horror" is "that moment when one boxer loses control, cannot maintain his defense, begins to waver, falter, fall back, rock with his opponent's punches which he can no longer absorb; the moment in which the fight is turned around and in which an entire career, an entire life, may end." In this moment, the "defeat of one man is the triumph of the other." So too in pornography, where the pivotal moment is when the woman's resistance collapses against the irresistible passion of the man's aggressive advances, when she can no longer physically push against his embrace and melts into his passion, and thus discovers her own passion. This is the moment when she is still saying no but now obviously means yes, the moment when Rhett Butler gathers a kicking and struggling Scarlett O'Hara into his arms and carries her upstairs where, off screen, he will have his way with her, despite her initial resistance (and to the swoons of audiences everywhere). This is the pornographic moment, the moment in which barriers are trespassed, when taboos are demolished, when individual integrity is transgressed. This is the moment of his victory and her defeat.

(Some pornography does not illustrate a simple win-lose model of male-female interactions. By showing lustful women who want to have as much hot sex as men do, some pornography can provide a fantasy situation in which both man

and woman "win," that is, each gets the terrific sex that each wants. Unfortunately, this model informs less than one might optimally hope; what appears to be the majority of pornographic images impose traditional punishments on women for claiming their desire. These are the consequences for sexual women in the pornographic fantasy—defeat, resignation, pain, and humiliation.)

Like boxing, the pornographic moment also requires verification by independent observing eyes. Each depends upon a specific representation to demonstrate its authenticity. For the boxing match, it is the first drawing of blood. A collective gasp from the crowd often accompanies that moment when the boxer's pain is registered as authentic by a visible mark. In pornography, the "wet shot" or the "cum shot" provides a narrative climax to the proceedings, simultaneously concluding that sexual episode for the man and providing the validation that the sex was authentic. That is why, in pornography, male ejaculation almost invariably occurs outside the woman, and often on her, as if to show that this was not a staged, simulated sexual encounter designed solely for the pleasure of the viewer, but real sex, in which the man had a real orgasm. (Of course, since external ejaculation is not presented as a form of birth control but rather as a stamp of authentication, the cum shot also reveals that even these "real" sex scenes are fully staged, and as constructed by artifice as the wrestling match.) The viewer can now choose to believe that the sex was also mutually pleasurable, since its authenticity was demonstrated. This may also reduce any attendant guilt he might feel about using pornography to masturbate. "You see, the people in the film liked it, so how bad can it be?"

The costs of authentic sex in pornography and fighting in boxing are often concealed in the role of spectator. In an intriguing essay in which he explains his decision to avoid viewing boxing matches, Garry Wills is reminded of St. Augustine, who, in *The Confessions*, describes his friend Alypius, who revels in watching gladiators. "At the sight of the blood," Augustine writes, "he took a sip of animality. Not turning away, but fixing his eyes on it, he drank deeper of the frenzies without realizing it, and taking complicit joy in the contest was inebriated by his delight in blood." The real harm, Augustine believed, was to the viewer, not to the participant; Alypius was "wounded deeper in the soul than the gladiator in his body."

It is true that a major difference between boxing and pornography is the gender of the participants. In violent heterosexual male pornography, it is the woman's body, in ideal form, that is violated, while boxing implies, by definition, the almost perfectly matched equality of the combatants, and certainly demands their gender equality. This is a difference on the surface only. The anger at women that propels men's pornographic fantasies stems, in part, from men's belief that women have all the power in male-female relations, especially since women have the power to reject them. As Susan Griffin noted in her book *Pornography and Silence*, pornographic fantasy is a revenge fantasy against women's perceived power, a fantasy that often turns women's power to say no into their inability to

get enough. In boxing, two apparent equals enter the ring to find the physical dimension that will separate them, that will mark them as unequal. One emerges the champion, the other as chump. In pornography's reversal of real life, two gender unequals enter a scene in which the one in power (the woman) is put back in her place. They enter the ring in reversed positions, but emerge as masculine man and feminine woman.

Though I am only talking about a small band on the pornographic spectrum here—violent heterosexual male pornography—the analogy between boxing and this kind of pornography is instructive in that it exposes a partial truth of men's rage at women. It means that we must understand pornography as a real event, unstaged and unfeigned, involving real people engaged in a real activity for the pleasure of the spectator, at the same time as we understand pornography to be a staged spectacle, a fantasy world, an illusion. Women can be seen as the victims of pornography in the same way that boxers are victimized. But how can they be cast as victims if they chose to participate? "No one held a gun to their heads and said 'Do it,'" remains a facile ploy to avoid confronting the issue. Freedom of choice is illusion. How many working-class men would choose boxing in a world of truly free choices, in which they might just as easily become brain surgeons? And how many working-class women would choose to be pornographic film stars, or prostitutes, if they could just as easily become Supreme Court justices? (That's why it is always big news when an upper-class woman is "discovered" to have a double life as a porn star.) Of course, some women do choose to work in the sex industry as a challenge to the sexual repression and sexism they see in the world around them; these women see their work as liberatory, vital, and often feminist. Though their voices are important to hear, I doubt that they are in the majority.

Pornography and Fantasy

To the spectator, pornography is less about the real lives of pornographic actresses than about the viewer's fantasies that their activities provide. Pornography provides a world of fantasy to the male viewer—a world of sexual plenty, a world in which women say no but really mean yes (or say yes in the first place), a world of complete sexual abandon, a world of absolute sexual freedom, a world in which gorgeous and sexy women are eager to have sex with us, a world in which we, and our partners, are always sexually satisfied. The pornographic utopia is a world of abundance, abandon, and autonomy—a world, in short, utterly unlike the one we inhabit. (I have often wondered if it is the world we would like to inhabit if only we could, or if that world is too threatening to attempt to call it into existence.) In our jobs, men's sense of autonomy and control has historically decreased. In the sexual marketplace, men feel vulnerable to women's power of rejection. Most men do not make enough money, have enough control in the workplace, or get enough sex. Many men feel themselves to be "feminized" in the workplace—dependent,

helpless, powerless. Most men don't feel especially good about themselves, living lives of "quiet desperation," as Thoreau so compactly put it. Pornographic fantasy is a revenge against the real world of men's lives.

But fantasy is not created from nothing; at least in a limited sense, fantasy is a "recollection" of a world we have lost. It is a psychoanalytic truism that what we lose in reality we recreate in fantasy. Now what have men lost that we seek to retrieve and recreate in pornographic fantasy? At the individual level, we recreate our infancies, the sense of infantile omnipotence, when the entire universe revolved around the satisfaction of our desires and the sense that the world we inhabited was full of sexual pleasures. The world of infancy is an eroticized world, a world of tactile pleasures ministered to by adults, especially the mother. But childhood socialization demolishes this world of erotic omnipotence and introduces the child to a world of scarcity (no-saying), repression (toilet training, punishment), and dependency on the will of that adult woman who is the mother. The world of childhood may be the reverse of the infantile world, but it more closely resembles the world we come to know as adults. And who wouldn't want a temporary imaginary vacation from such a world?

This dramatic transition from infancy to childhood also helps to explain the strange ways in which the pornographic narrative is often constructed. Our commonsense assumption is that a man identifies with the male actor in the pornographic film. But so many pornographic movies, especially those that eventually lead to rape, bondage, sadomasochism, begin with a woman alone—walking home at night, waiting in a bar or on a street corner or in her home. Perhaps in this first scene, the male viewer identifies with the woman, in a similar way that he identifies as a child with his mother. The male actor's violation of the woman, in a rape scene for example, allows the male viewer a moment to make the symbolic leap from identification with the woman in the film to identification with the man. Just as the familial oedipal triangle is resolved by the young boy making the symbolic leap from identification with mother to identification with father, the pornographic film allows a similar leap. Masculinity, as socially constructed in our culture, is therefore confirmed.

At the collective, or social level, this transition in identification is also evident. "If readers are especially fond of tales of women objectified and abused under particular circumstances, we might ask ourselves to what extent those readers feel themselves victimized under comparable conditions in their own immediate phenomenal worlds," is the way Lawrence Rosenfield posed the question. It is "as if the moral degradation the reader might feel in his daily life were being reified for him in bodily terms."

The social world that men have lost is the world of economic autonomy and political community, a world in which individual men could take pride in their work and share it among a community of neighbors and friends. It is a world in which work contained some intrinsic meaning. And it is a male-dominated world, a world in which men's power over women was challenged, if at all, with far less

effectiveness and with far fewer results. But male domination has been decreasing rapidly with industrial progress. Women's advances into the economic and political arenas, and their assertion of social rights, have eroded the power of men over women dramatically. The lives of women have dramatically changed from a century ago: Women often have careers; they vote, own property, control their own reproductive lives. Although male violence against women is still a very serious problem, women today are actually subject to far less violence than they were in pre-industrial societies, in which rape was commonplace (although often not labeled rape) and women were freely traded among men as possessions. Is it an ironic consequence of the *success* of feminism that men, in their fantasies, sometimes need to return to that earlier historical era in which their word was law and their desire was the only desire that mattered? Ironically, those conservatives who would like to return us to this world of unquestioned male domination *in real life* are often the same people who would like to suppress our access to *fantasy versions* of it in pornography.

It may be true that the advance of women's rights has been accompanied by an increase in pornographic images. (I say "accompanied" and not "caused," because I want to be clear that if this is an unanticipated consequence of feminism's success, I neither want to blame feminism for it, nor suggest that the only way to eliminate pornography is to abandon feminism. In fact, the increase in women's rights and the increase in pornographic images may both be caused by the general historical increase in the rights of individuals for free expression.) Pornography provides a world without job pressures and full of material abundance, and of eager, available women capable of acting on sexual desire as men understand it. But most men realize that these earlier worlds of unchallenged male domination—of infantile omnipotence and sexualized control over the mother—are gone forever. Pornography may be a sexualized "Fantasy Island," an oasis where men can retreat from everyday life's pressures, but it is not "Gilligan's Island," from which there is no escape once stranded there. Men can return from the fantasy paradise of pornography. And they do return.

Though it's impossible to demonstrate this empirically, I suspect that men who actually did live in those societies in which slavery existed did not have many erotic fantasies about slaves. White South Africans have only a small amount of pornography about Black South Africans. In part, the reality of domination may diminish a psychological need for fantasies about it. Conversely, the proliferation of fantasy may testify to the decline of the reality of domination. On the other hand, pornography may speak to men's *incapacity* to act as they would like. In societies in which economic, political, or social domination is so repressively enforced, men may retain the capacity to act sexually against the women of that subject population. The casual rape of colonized women is a form of sexual terrorism—one that serves sexism by keeping women down and serves the other forms of domination by acting as a vicious reminder of the dominated men's incapacity to protect "their" women.

Recent social developments may have also begun to disentangle sexual fantasy from the guilt and shame with which it has historically been linked. Today,

much of the growth in the pornography industry is in video cassettes for home use, either as rentals or for purchase. According to a survey in *Adult Video News* in 1986, one of every five video cassettes are in the category "adult action," and more than fifteen hundred new hard-core X-rated titles hit the market each year. In 1986, approximately $500 million was generated by retail sales of pornographic cassettes, double the volume in the previous three years.

As pornography is emerging from the dank darkness of the seedy porno theater in dangerous and disreputable neighborhoods, and moving into the suburban living room or bedroom, it is also changing its gender. While men continue to be the overwhelming majority of consumers, some researchers estimate that up to twenty percent of all renters are women. And married and unmarried couples are increasingly choosing a video cassette together to rent for their evening's entertainment. The proprietor of my local video store tells me that it is increasingly common for couples to choose three or four cassettes for a weekend's viewing, including a cartoon feature or a Walt Disney or Steven Spielberg film for the children, a family drama for the entire family, and a pornographic film for the time after the children have gone to bed. As couples continue to rent pornographic videos together, the clandestine nature of sexual fantasy, the furtive pleasures taken guiltily, and always with the risk of being caught, may decline as well. Is it possible that heterosexual couples can begin to use pornography as an affirmation of their sexuality instead of as a confirmation of their dirty thoughts? In short, can straight couples use porn the way that many gay men use it?

The progressive disentangling of sexual fantasy from guilt may allow men to admit what has always been true about their relationships with pornography, but which the norms of masculinity have long prevented them from admitting: Many men use pornography as sex education. In the world of sexual repression and scarcity that men inhabit, many men—perhaps most men—are unsure of themselves as lovers, uncertain of their capacity to give and receive pleasure. Pornography has likely always been a furtive source of sex education; men will offer to try something new with their partner or ask their partner to try something new. It may be true that violent pornography could suggest to some viewers that violence against women is reasonable on the sexual menu. But even here it is more likely to end up with a suggestion of a little consensual S/M, and not necessarily in rape. Most consumers are more innocent, taking a couple of sexual positions or the sequencing of the sex as what are often called "marital aids." That couples are now renting and viewing films together should, one hopes, increase the mutuality and equality in this less furtive form of sexual information.

Confronting Pornography

None of these psychoanalytic or sociological explorations is intended to let men off the hook, to defend unquestioningly men's "right" to consume pornographic

images, especially within the 3 to 5 percent of the pornography market that presents images of women tortured and raped. Pornography cannot but contribute to men's storehouse of sexual fantasies, and, as such, impoverishes our sexual imaginations even in the guise of expanding our repertoires. Men must think carefully about these images in which violence against women becomes the vehicle by which men experience sexual arousal. Even through fantasy, "any form of rejection, cruelty, and injustice inflicted upon any group of human beings by any other group of human beings dehumanizes the victims overtly, and in more subtle ways, dehumanizes the perpetrators," wrote Kenneth Clark. Master and slave are mutually depraved, though only the master maintains institutional outlets for his depravity.

But confronting the role of pornography in men's lives doesn't necessarily mean removing sexual fantasy or constraining men's desire and capacity to imagine a world unlike the one in which they live, to imagine a world of sexual plenty. Sexual scarcity and sexual repression feed the pornographic imagination just as sexism becomes the content of much fantasy. Paul Goodman seemed to have this in mind when he wrote that "when excellent human power is inhibited and condemned, it will reappear ugly and dangerous. The censorious attitude toward the magazines and pictures is part of the general censorious attitude that hampers ordinary sexuality and thereby heightens the need for satisfaction by means of the magazines and pictures [and] must lead to more virulent expressions, e.g., still less desirable pornography."

For men to "confront" pornography means neither repudiating sexual pleasure nor ignoring the content of our sexual imaginations. It will require that we listen carefully to women, that we take seriously their pain, anguish, confusion, and embarrassment about the content of our pornography. It will require that we listen when women tell us about the pain and terror of sexual victimization, as well as their exhilaration at their claiming of a sexuality. This is not easy; men are not very good listeners. We're not trained to listen to women, but trained to *not* listen, to screen out women's voices with the screaming of our own needs. It will mean, therefore, listening to our own sexual yearnings, unfulfilled and, perhaps, unfulfillable, and exploring the mechanisms that will allow us to empower ourselves, and create images that arouse us without depicting the punishment of others as the basis for that arousal. It will mean learning to speak with other men about what is sexy to us and what isn't, about how to separate the sex from the sexism. It will mean making political and personal alliances with other men—not in silent complicity with misogynist pornographers, but in open defiance of both sexual repression and sexist violence, and in loving support of a common struggle within and against a repressive culture.

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5

Sexual Violence in Three Pornographic Media
Toward a Sociological Explanation

with Martin Barron

With almost three decades of social science research on sexual violence in pornography, many of its characteristics are now well understood. We know that pornography contains images of both violence and sexual violence (Palys, 1986; Scott & Cuvelier, 1993; Smith, 1976). We have some idea of the negative effect of sexually violent pornography, especially on men's attitudes toward women (Allen, D'alessio, & Brezgel, 1995; Brannigan & Goldenberg, 1987; Fisher & Grenier, 1994; Linz, 1989; Malamuth & Check, 1985; Mayerson & Taylor, 1987).

Unfortunately, however, the vast majority of previous research on sexual violence in pornography has approached pornography as an undifferentiated mass with regard to sexual violence. This study seeks to determine if this assumption is justified. Does pornography differ across media? In what ways, and to what degree? How can these differences be explained? These are the primary questions of concern in this chapter. We begin our inquiry by reviewing past efforts to understand the content of pornography, and then present some tentative hypotheses concerning the levels of sexual violence across media. Through an empirical investigation of three contemporaneous pornographic media—magazines, videos, and internet newsgroups (the Usenet)—we discuss differences in violent content and speculate about some of the possible explanations for these differences.

The Content of Pornography

Most social and behavioral science research on pornography has studied either the effects of pornographic images on viewers, or examined the content of the pornography itself. (As our empirical analysis focuses only on the changing content of pornography, we have confined our review of the literature to that branch of the research.) Although Smith (1976) found remarkable homogeneity in his sample

of "adult-only" paperbacks, Malamuth and Spinner (1980) found increasing violence in their study of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* over a 5-year period, from approximately 1.5% of all pictorials for both magazines in 1973 to 6% in *Penthouse* and 4% in *Playboy* in 1977.

The debate surrounding these studies generated important additional research. Scott and Cuvelier (1987a, 1987b) disaggregated the two magazines and examined them over a longer time span to eliminate the possibility that the original studies had conflated them and examined an anomalous period. They found a curvilinear relationship between year and sexual violence, from virtually no violence in its earliest years, with increases until the late 1970s (the endpoint for the study by Malamuth & Spinner, 1980), when the violent content began to subside. It appears that *Playboy* responded to the proliferation of more violent magazines and the introduction of videotapes by returning to its traditional, more economically affluent and upscale consumerist readership.

Criticized for methodological synecdoche—letting *Playboy* stand for all pornographic magazines, especially at a time of proliferation, Scott and Cuvelier (1993) examined sexual violence in *Hustler* from its inception (July 1974) through July 1987. While they found a higher level of violent content (1.6% of all pictorials) in *Hustler* than in *Playboy* (.038%) overall, they found no changes in the magazine over time and argued that their work "refutes the alleged increase in sexually violent portrayals" (Scott & Cuvelier, 1993, p. 367).

Other researchers used more synchronic approaches. Winick (1985, for example, examined 430 pornographic magazines found in an adult bookstore in New York City's Times Square. After classifying these magazines into 22 categories, Winick found that 4.9% of the magazines examined were dedicated to bondage and discipline, while violent content accounted for only 1.2% of his sample. However, lack of reliability of the sample (Winick only went into one store) and coding validity (all coding was done on the premises) make his findings less useful to other researchers.

The rapid development of video technology revolutionized the pornography industry. The rental of pornographic movies rose from 75 million in 1985 to 490 million in 1992 (Schlosser, 1997). Research followed suit. Comparing sexual aggression in "Triple-X" videos and in more mainstream "adult" videos, Palys (1986) found virtually no differences—6.6% of the scenes from adult videos and 6.4% of the scenes from Triple-X videos contained sexual aggression—but enormous differences between pornographic videos and pornographic magazines (where 1% was more typical). Virtually every study of pornographic videos has found similar levels of sexual violence, substantially higher than in magazines (see, for example, Brosius, Weaver, & Staab, 1993; Duncan, 1991; Yang & Linz, 1990).

Little research has been done on pornography and the Usenet (internet newsgroups), although it has become a very controversial topic. One study (Rimm, 1995) was both methodologically and ethically suspect—supplemental data were collected from an adult bulletin board (which requires a credit card and

age verification to use) and surreptitiously from students using the Usenet (DeLoughry, 1995; Elmer-Dewitt, 1995). Other less typical forms of pornography—from pornographic cartoons (Matacin & Burger, 1987) to dial-a-porn recordings (Glascock & LaRose, 1993)—have also been examined. These studies tend to underscore the fact that all pornographic media contain violence, and that each displays violence differently.

Only one study has attempted to compare pornographic media. Dietz and Sears (1988) examined books, magazines, and films in adult bookstores in four cities. They found that 12% of the magazines, 20% of the books, and 7.7% of the films portrayed some violent theme. While this study proposed the reverse in the amount of violence in magazines and videos, Dietz and Sears only examined the covers and display boxes of the pornography being investigated, thereby making it impossible to understand the actual content of the material (see Linz & Donnerstein, 1988).

Studies of the content of pornography have thus been suggestive at best, but beset by both substantive and methodological problems that make reliability questionable and comparability impossible. Only the research on the effects of pornography on men's attitudes and behaviors have yielded any reliable, albeit often contradictory, results. We still know little about the differences in the actual content of pornography among various pornographic media. This study is an attempt to remedy this serious lacuna in our understanding of the content of pornography. We provide a careful methodological procedure to compare different pornographic media to ascertain the differing levels of violence.

The introduction of these different pornographic media at different historical moments (with magazines being introduced first, followed by videos, and then the Usenet) offers several intriguing possibilities that might affect the differing amounts of violence we might find within them. Violent content might remain constant across all three media. Levels of violence might increase in a linear way, moving from low (magazines) to intermediate (videos) to higher (Usenet). Or it might decrease in a linear way. Finally, the relationship might be curvilinear, with either a peak or trough in the middle. Given that previous research found a significant increase in the level of violence between magazines and videos, we hypothesized that a constant level, decrease, or curvilinear (trough) model was unlikely. The plausible relationships in which we were interested were that the level of violence would continue to increase from videos to the Usenet, or that it would decline from videos to the Usenet. At the same time, we wanted to retest the relationship between magazines and videos.

Methodology

Our sample of magazines and videos was drawn from a suburban New York township. The population of this suburb is predominantly white and middle-class. We collected 50 cases from each of the three pornographic media. The unique nature

of each media, however, necessitated slightly different sampling schemes for each medium. Videos and magazines were chosen through a multilevel cluster sampling design. For both media, pornography was operationalized as being any sexually explicit material to which access was limited, either by signs or physical structure, to adults. At each of five stores, 10 videos were randomly selected to comprise the video sample. (See Appendix A for a list of films.) Because the majority of stores selling pornographic magazines did not sell 10 different magazines, 5 magazines were selected from five different stores, and two stories were randomly taken from within each magazine to comprise our magazine sample. (See Appendix B for a list of magazines.)

Our Usenet sample was confined to stories taken from the newsgroup alt.sex.stories. It is important to remember that the Usenet portion of the Internet is only one portion of what is considered the Internet, and only one way to access pornography via the Internet. We decided to concentrate on this portion for several reasons. First, it provides a convenient data pool. While the World Wide Web has certainly caught the public's eye more than newsgroups, there is virtually no way to construct a list of all pornographic web sites from which to sample. Further, while some pornographic web sites contain stories, the majority primarily contain pictures, and thus do not provide the narrative elements important to this study. We used alt.sex.stories precisely for its narrative content. Finally, while many web sites with pornographic material have begun to charge for access, the Usenet remains free to all with access to the Internet.

The sampling population for this study was made up of all sexual stories of at least 250 words posted to the newsgroup during one month in 1997 (approximately 28% of the postings for this month fit this description). From this population, a random sample of 50 cases was drawn.[1]

Coding Scheme

The unit of analysis within each story (textual or visual) was the scene. We used Palys's (1986) definition as "a thematically uninterrupted sequence of activity in a given physical context" (p. 25). Each scene was examined for sexual and/or violent content. Coders were provided a list of specific violent acts (see Table 5.1) and recorded whether each scene contained each particular act and, if the scene did contain that act, the sex of both the person performing the violent act and the victim. Coders only measured the presence of the behavior. They were not instructed to measure the number of times it occurred within a scene or the intensity of that occurrence.

Table 5.1 is divided into four violence strata (indicated by the spacing between categories). These divisions were made during data analysis by placing the individual violent acts in a roughly hierarchical order and making logical divisions among them.

Table 5.1 Violence Categories

Violence category
Verbal aggression
Pushing, shoving
Being rough in an otherwise "normal" activity
Pulling hair/biting
Pinching
Open hand punch (e.g., slap, spank)
Threaten with weapon
Choking
Closed fist punch or kick
Confine, bondage
Use weapon on victim
Torture, mutilation
Attempted, actual murder

In addition to examining specific violent acts, coders were instructed to identify the sex of the participants; whether each was in a dominant, submissive, or ambiguous power position; and whether each appeared to be a consensual, coerced, or nonconsensual participant.

Two points are important to note here. First, no attempt was made to measure the level of intensity contained in any particular violent act. Thus specific instances of the same violent act may vary in intensity. While this is true for all forms of violence examined, it is especially noteworthy for those forms of violence that are more "culturally ritualized," such as verbal aggression, slapping/spanking, and confine/bondage, all of which oscillate between what might be considered light and heavy violence.

Five coders were employed to code the 150 cases. Four were undergraduate volunteers, and the fifth was one of the authors. Two of the coders were male and three were female. All were white and had some social science background, and all completed an extensive training seminar prior to participating.

Reliability

Ten percent of our sample was coded by two different coders in order to ascertain intercoder reliability. Cohen's Kappa Coefficient was computed for each of these cases and their recode. This measure of association provides the percent agreement between coders rescaled to correct for chance. The average Kappa Coefficient for the 15 recoded cases was .8302.

Results

The amount of sexual violence found in our sample is shown in Table 5.2. The first row aggregates the individual types of violence to give a summary of the percentage of scenes containing any violence, while each subsequent row summarizes the percentage of scenes containing particular forms of sexual violence.[2]

According to our findings, the Usenet is most likely to contain violence by a wide, and statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 10.34$, df = 1, $p < .0025$) margin. Videos contain the second highest proportion of violent scenes, followed closely by magazines. However, while the videos in this sample contained a higher percentage of violence than magazines, these differences were not statistically significant at the .05 level. Although the difference between media in the percentage of cases containing *any violence* is statistically significant, more than half of the differences in individual violence items were not statistically significant. The majority of statistically significant differences occur in the most violent stratum, with one statistically significant form of violence occurring in each of the other three strata.

Table 5.3 illustrates the percentage of scenes containing violence in particular strata by medium. The row variables (*low, medium, high,* and *extreme*) are derived from dichotomous variables representing the presence (or absence) of violence from that stratum. Thus, any scene containing any verbal aggression, being rough in an otherwise normal activity, or pushing/shoving would be coded as containing violence in the low stratum.

Note that for both magazines and videos, violence decreases in a monotonic fashion. As violence becomes more intense, or extreme, fewer scenes contain it. For both media, approximately 15% of scenes contained low intensity violence.

Table 5.2 Percentage of Scenes Containing Sexual Violence by Media.

Type of violence	Magazine[a]	Video[b]	Usenet[c]	χ^2
Any violence	24.8	26.9	42.1	12.83**
Verbal aggression	7.6	12.6	15.0	3.11
Rough in otherwise normal activity	2.9	4.1	10.0	8.48*
Pushing, shoving	7.6	3.8	3.6	3.06
Pinch	1.0	3.8	2.1	2.79
Pull hair/biting	4.8	8.0	3.6	3.83
Threaten with weapon	0.0	0.8	9.3	31.72**
Open hand punch (i.e., slap, spank)	4.8	9.3	8.6	2.23
Choke	0.0	0.8	0.7	0.86
Punch/kick	1.9	0.8	2.1	1.70
Confine, bondage	5.7	2.7	25.7	69.59**
Weapon	1.0	1.6	15.7	48.17**
Torture, mutilation	1.0	0.3	8.6	32.01**
Attempted/actual murder	0.0	0.0	1.4	6.72*

[a]n = 105. [b]n = 364. [c]n = 140.
*p < .05. **p < .001.

Table 5.3 Sexual Violence in Scenes by Strata.

	Magazine[a]	Video[b]	Usenet[c]	χ^2
Low	14.3%	16.5%	23.6%	4.51
Medium	9.5	15.4	17.1	3.03
High	6.7	4.4	26.4	56.72*
Extreme	1.9	1.9	17.1	48.76*

[a]n = 105. [b]n = 364. [c]n = 140.
*p < .001.

Both have fewer scenes with medium intensity violence (roughly 13%), fewer still with high intensity violence (roughly 5%), and very few scenes with extreme violence (2%). Differences between magazines and videos were not significant at $\alpha = .05$. The Usenet, however, does not follow such a linear pattern. Most of the violence in Usenet newsgroup pornography falls into the low and high categories, while the medium and extreme categories contain slightly less violence. For all strata, a higher percentage of scenes from the Usenet contain violence (the differences between the Usenet and the other two media combined are statistically significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level for all strata except medium).

When we examined the level of violence from more to less recent technology, we also found that the Usenet contains more coercive and less consensual sex in the scenes depicted. Over one-fourth (26.4%) of scenes from the Usenet contain coercive or nonconsensual sex, followed by videos and magazines (4.9% and 4.8% respectively). While we can again note the Usenet-video-magazine pattern, the difference between magazine and video is not significant ($\chi^2 = .006$, df = 1, p = .939).

When we examined the question of power in sexual relationships, we again found that the Usenet differs dramatically from the other media. While the majority of scenes in magazines and videos contained neither dominant nor submissive participants (i.e., portrayed egalitarian sexual relations, with 69.5% and 80.8% respectively), only 49.3% of Usenet scenes did. The difference between magazine and video here is significant (egalitarian sex, $\chi^2 = 6.055$, df = 1, p = .014).

When these power positions are disaggregated by gender, an interesting pattern emerges. Table 5.4 shows power positions broken down by gender. Percentages are for all scenes containing that type of power position; thus, of all magazine scenes containing a participant in a dominant power position, 9.7% of those scenes have a male in the dominant power position. (The percentage of males and females in a given power position in a given medium do not add to 100% because some scenes contain two people of opposite sexes maintaining the same power position.)

Two things are worth noting here. First, while videos and the Usenet follow the expected gender role patterns (women are more often submissive, men are more often dominant), in the magazines dominant power positions are virtually

Table 5.4 Percentage of Scenes Containing Nonegalitarian Sex by Sex of Participant and Media.

	Magazine[a]		Video[b]		Usenet[c]	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Dominant	9.7	93.5	74.2	33.3	68.6	41.4
Submissive	74.2	35.5	26.5	77.9	16.2	85.3

[a]n = 31 (dominant), n = 31 (submissive). [b]n = 70 (dominant), n = 68 (submissive).
[c]n = 66 (dominant), n = 68 (submissive).

always held by women. At the same time, men are twice as likely to be in the submissive position as women. Second, across all media both sexes are shown relatively frequently in both dominant and submissive roles (with, perhaps, the exception of dominant men in magazines). This suggests a greater level of fluidity of dominance and submission than some theories, which hold that these images always accurately mirror gender stereotypes, might have predicted.

We then turned to an examination of the victims and perpetrators of violence. Where violence occurs it is disproportionately caused by men in usenet scenes. Men make up a smaller percentage of aggressors in video scenes and an even smaller percentage in magazines. In magazines, 38.5% of sexually violent scenes had male perpetrators and 65.4% had female perpetrators. However, in videos 60.2% of the sexually violent scenes had male perpetrators and 49% of the scenes had female perpetrators. In the usenet sample, 62.7% of the scenes had male perpetrators and only 42.4% of the scenes had female perpetrators. (Again, since a scene can contain perpetrators of both sexes, the percents do not sum to 100.) It is worth noting that magazines not only have a greater gender difference in the perpetrator of violence than the other two media, but they also display women inflicting violence more often then men.

The opposite gender relationship is expressed when we examine the victims of the violence. In magazines, 50% of the sexually violent scenes had male victims, and 61.5% had female victims. Percentages may not add up to 100% because the same scene may have had more than one victim of the violence. In the videos, 32.7% of the scenes depicted male victims, compared with 79.6% of the scenes depicting female victims. And on the Usenet, 23.7% of the scenes depicted male victims and 84.7% of the scenes had female victims. As we can see, the victims of violence in pornography are far more frequently female: Over 61 percentage points separate males and females at the extreme (Usenet), and 11.5 percentage points (magazines) is as close as the sexes come to parity. Magazines, which showed the greatest gender difference in terms of perpetrators of violence, are the most egalitarian in terms of the victims of violence. Finally, we turn to the issue of consensual sex together with violence. To what extent were victims of violence consensual participants? What we found here was surprising. The vast majority of

violence in magazines and videos occurs in the context of a consensual relationship. In magazines, 88.5% of the violence was depicted as consensual, compared with 3.8% as coercive and 7.7% as nonconsensual. In the videos, 91.8% of the violence was depicted as consensual, 5.1% as coercive, and 3.1% as nonconsensual. On the usenet, however, 42.4% was depicted as consensual, while 10.2% was coercive and 47.5% was depicted as nonconsensual. Thus, less than half of the usenet scenes that contained violence were consensual, statistically different from both magazines and videos ($\chi^2 = 51.38$, df = 2, $p < .001$).

Discussion

Our results clearly demonstrate differing levels of violence among the three pornographic media. What types of theoretical arguments would explain these differences? Although we cannot conclusively point to any single theoretical trend, we outline some of the possible interpretations of the different levels, and offer some evaluation of those explanations.

Several differences among the different media must be factored into the explanation. Magazines, videos, and the Usenet represent three different historical "moments" in the history of erotic representation, from the 1950s and 1960s (the rise of mass-market magazines), to the 1970s and 1980s (the dramatic explosion of videotapes), to the current era, in which the Usenet (and the Internet in general) has emerged as one of the most versatile and accessible venues for pornography. This historical progression also illustrates the increasing "democratization" of pornographic media. As new technologies (video, telephone, computer, etc.) have been adapted to pornography, the cost of production has dropped and control of production has diffused. Successful pornographic magazines require massive production and distribution requirements, making them the province of media elites. For example, while Hugh Hefner began *Playboy* with a initial investment of only $600 in 1953 (Leerhsen, 1986), a magazine start-up today can require as much as $20 million—the amount needed by John F. Kennedy Jr. to inaugurate *George* (Handy, 1995).

Adult videos, which became the preferred pornographic medium during the mid-l980s, are far less expensive to produce than magazines. A typical adult feature can cost as little as $3,000 (Schlosser, 1997). The relatively inexpensive production price of videos, compared to magazines, has allowed for an enormous upsurge in both the number of producers creating pornographic videos and the number of features made each year.

The Usenet offers the greatest access to the largest number of users at the least expense: One need only have a computer, a telephone line, and access to the Internet to enter its pornographic world. Usenet pornography production is also unique in that there is complete individual ownership of the means of production. Magazine production requires large printing presses as well as numerous specialized

employees (typesetters, graphic artists, etc.). Video production requires cameras, lighting, sound systems, duplication equipment, and people to run them. Usenet pornography production requires nothing more than a computer, a telephone line, and an imagination. In addition, pornographic magazines are dependent upon advertising, which may require the magazine to mute the violent content to express a more mainstream association with erotica and high-end consumerism. Videos and the Usenet are less dependent upon advertising, and may actually eschew it altogether. This independence, coupled with the lower costs of production and distribution, means that many of the participants in the Usenet world are as much creators of pornography as they are consumers of it. We believe that this blurring of the lines between consumer and creator contains some threads of explanation that may be worth exploring.

Democratization has led to an increase in violent scenes from magazines to videos to the Usenet, with the largest increase in violence in the move between videos and the Usenet. Perhaps this is the illustration of nothing more than simple psychological notions of addiction working themselves out on an aggregate scale. We might expect, for example, that just as individual consumers of pornography tend to tire of a certain level of explicitness and need more, so, too, would the market, acting as an individual. Thus, the more pornography is consumed at one level, the less arousing this material becomes as the consumer becomes used to—satiated with—the material. This satiation leads the consumer to seek out newer, more explicit, and more violent forms of sexual material that will again arouse him/her (Russell, 1993; Zillmann & Bryant, 1984). Thus we might expect that as new pornographic technologies emerge, one will find them increasingly violent, because they must satisfy both the demand previously satisfied and an increased demand for even more. Such an explanation, however, can take us only so far in terms of the historical sequence of pornographic form. Our second finding concerned the differing *content* of the victim and victimizer among the three media, and this difference could not be explained by a simple addiction model. We found that the Usenet shows men in dominant positions, as victimizer and not victim, in far greater proportion than do magazines and videos, which is also suggestive that democratization of pornography has increased both the violence and the amount of misogyny—women as victims—contained in the images. Such a finding confirms some of the arguments offered by radical feminist critics of pornography: that pornography illustrates a universal misogyny and that its function in male supremacist society is to eroticize male supremacy, to " . . . keep sexism sexy" (Stoltenberg, 1989, p. 129; see also MacKinnon, 1987).

Unfortunately, radical feminist critics often tend to treat pornography as an undifferentiated whole, a monolith, rather than as a set of diverse and often competing genres. Their critique is not

> . . . presented against the background of any attempt to analyze pornography into different forms, some catering to more peculiar perversions and

> some not, some concerned with women, some wholly directed towards homosexual men. Pornography is treated as simply an individual phenomenon . . . (Simpson, 1983, p.71)

How, then, can we explain not only the increasing violence in the progression of pornographic media but also the qualitative difference in the depiction of victims and victimizers between the Usenet, on the one hand, and magazines and videos on the other? We believe that several specific elements of the Usenet tailor it for a particular type of pornographic representation. As we noted above, it is more democratic, with greater mass access and far less dependence on commercial advertisers. It is as close as one can get to men's direct expressions of their own fantasies, unconstrained by the demands of the marketplace or the high costs of producing and distributing those fantasies to others.

More than this, though, these internet newsgroups are the closest things to the all-male locker room that exist in the pornographic world: a world, in a sense, entirely without women, a world in which men control absolutely all facets of the scene and in which women do not insert themselves as corporeal beings, even in the highly stylized forms offered by magazines or videos. Any adequate explanation of the increased violence and the shifting relationships of victims and victimizers, then, must take into account the distinctly, purely, and uncorruptedly *homosocial* element in the internet newsgroup.

Surely, this homosocial element has been noted before. After all, most pornography is produced *by* men and *for* men; it is in this sense about masculinity (see, for example, chapters 4 and 6 in this volume). If, as Kimmel argued, pornography is "gendered speech," it provides a communicative system among and between men.

This homosocial element—men communicating with other men using a particularly gendered speech—has been largely absent from most empirical discussions of pornography and its impact, in part because of the surface level "reading" that pornography is about men's relationships with women. Yet with the Usenet, the relationship between producer and consumer is so blurred as to become nonexistent. And perhaps what is different between the Usenet and the other pornographic media is that the apparent collusion between producer and consumer is broken. Magazine and video producers enter into at least a tacit alliance with consumers. This is necessitated by the pornography producer's desire for profits, and the pornography consumer's desire for arousal. No such alliance exists between the producers and consumers of usenet pornography (at least not those who have continued to produce pornography free of charge). Perhaps what the Usenet offers is *homosocial competition*—a relationship among men in which the sexual victimization of women is a currency among men, used as a way to facilitate upward mobility in a masculine hierarchy.

Bird (1996) argues that homosociality is vital to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity, acting to institutionally and interpersonally segregate men

and women, and also acting to suppress nonhegemonic masculinities. Three characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are crucial to Bird's conceptualization, and may suggest some of the elements of an adequate explanation of our findings:

> (a) *emotional detachment*, a meaning constructed through relationships within families whereby young men detach themselves from mothers and develop gender identities in relation to that which they are not (Chodorow, 1978); (b) *competitiveness*, a meaning constructed and maintained through relationships with other men whereby simple individuality becomes competitive individuality (Gilligan, 1982); and (c) *sexual objectification of women*, a meaning constructed and maintained through relationship with other men whereby male individuality is conceptualized not only as *different* from female but as *better than* female (Johnson, 1988). (Bird, 1996, p. 121)

Perhaps the pornography found on internet newsgroups is so much more violent than magazine and video pornography precisely because of the homosocial competition that exists between individual producers and between producers and consumers. Internet pornography, particularly the newsgroup stories used in this study, is written by men about their fantasies, and is intended for other men to read without marketplace considerations. The producers of this pornography are freed from formal market constraints and, therefore, participate in an informal masculinist marketplace, competing with other men in an effort to prove who can "do the most . . . ," "last the longest," "have the biggest . . . ," and so on.

Violence against women is thus a currency among men as they jockey for position in the eyes of other men. This is, of course, facilitated by the sexual objectification of women discussed by Bird (1996). The Usenet contains producers and consumers who are no less a social group because their interactions take place in virtual space. They have their own norms, values, symbols, and modes of interaction. We suggest here that this social group is particularly conducive to the hegemonic masculinity that promotes homosocial competition among pornography producers.

Neither magazine nor video pornography suggests such a relationship between producer and consumer. Indeed, constrained by the formal marketplace, magazines and videos promote homosocial collusion between producer and consumer. It is in the best interest of pornography producers from these media to provide their consumers with the most arousing material possible. The line between consumers and producers is clear and well defined, thus facilitating their apparent collusion. By contrast, the boundaries between producer and consumer on the Usenet are blurred; consumers are producers and vice versa.

This collusion between producer and consumer helps explain the minor variations between videos and magazines. As we have noted, in most aspects videos and magazines are not significantly different. The homosocial competition model predicts this, since producers of these pornographic forms are trying to

maximize their profits by providing the most arousing material to the largest proportion of consumers. This should be possible since hegemonic masculinity (and feminist theory) both suggest that men will tend to find the same material arousing. Marketplace adjustments in the amount of violent material contained in pornography would, therefore, eventually stabilize at relatively equal levels.

Of course, hegemonic masculinity is not absolute. Variations on the dominant masculine identity do exist. Hence, certain segments of pornography consumers would not be served by the homogenous pornography produced according to the demands of a hegemonic definition. Instead, microlevel variations would appear in some forms of pornography in an attempt to tap these consumers. However, these microvariations are just that—small scale. Variations from the hegemonic ideal still conform to its general ideology. Hence, women in magazines can be shown as causing violence, but they still are shown as suffering violence more often than men.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided the first systematic and methodologically coherent comparison among three contemporary pornographic media. We found not only increasing levels of violence as we moved from one medium to the next, but also a dramatic shift from magazines and videos on the one hand and the Usenet on the other when we examined both level of violence and the gender of victim and victimizer. While we offered no definitive explanation of these results, we suggested that explanations that stressed simple democratization, psychological addiction, or misogyny were inadequate to fully explain our results. We have therefore offered a sketch of a model that might explain the differences among these media by virtue of homosocial competition. This places the changing levels of violence within a context of men's relations with each other, and in their constant and ceaseless efforts to prove their masculinity in the eyes of other men. The changes in violent content among media, then, has more to do with the definition of hegemonic masculinity than it does with technological proliferation and democratization, or with the psychological propensity to require greater and greater thrills before satiation. Contrary to radical feminist theory, though, these changes in pornography may say more about men's relationships with other men than they do about men's relationships with women. One potentially fruitful avenue of further research would be an examination of commercial internet pornography sites. Presumably, these sites operate under market constraints similar to those experienced by magazines and videos and, therefore, would experience the same collusion between producer and consumer leading to similar rates of violence. Only further research will be able to demonstrate the continued utility of this homosocial competition explanation of the changing violent content of pornography over different media and over time.

Appendix A

Videos in the Sample

The following videos comprise the sample reviewed by this study:

All Little Women
Amateur A Cuppers
Anal Mystique
Anal Persuasion
Anal Playground
Analtown USA #3
Asses Galore
Bad Attitude
Bad Girls #2
Bad Girls #5
Because I Can
Bisexual Anal
Buttfucker #3
Butt Banged
Bicycle Babes
Casting Call #18
Cum in my Holes
Cumming Clean
Damp Spot
Danish Hard Core 104
Dirty Dozen #67
Ebony Experience
Eros Extreme
Filthy Fuckers #60
Girls who Love it Ass Backwards
Hidden Obsession
Impact
Jizz and Tonic
Junkyard Dogs
Kink-o-Rama
Pleasure Zone #22
Plum and Dumber
Private Profits
Sex Freaks
Sex Spa
Snakedance
Spunk Suckers
Strap on Sally #9
Super Diamond Double XX #6
Super Tramp
Superstar Sex Challenge #1
The Big One
Tits a Wonderful Life
Totally Naked
UFO Tracker
Up and Cummers #32
Upbeat Love
Wall to Wall #33
White Chicks #13
Wicked Women
Zane's World

Appendix B

Magazines in the Sample

The following magazines comprise the sample reviewed by this study:

40+
Adult Cinema Review
Asian Beauties
Big Busts
Celebrity Skin[a]
Club Confidential
College Girls[a]
Confidential Letters
Dirty
D-CUP
Dolly[b]
Family Fun
Girls[a]
Gallery
Girls of Penthouse
Graham Cracker[a]
Hot Buns
Hot Stuff
Just Eighteen
Kinky Babes[a]
Leg Action
Leg Sex
Live Nude Girls
Lovers in Heat[a]
Nugget
Original Porn Stars[a]
Panther[a]
Penthouse
Penthouse Letters
Playboy[a]
Playboy Playmates[a]
Playgirl
Portfolio[a]
Rage[a]
Ravers
Score
Turn-ons

[a]contained no stories [b]text not in English

6

Does Censorship Make a Difference?

An Aggregate Empirical Analysis of Pornography and Rape

with Annulla Linders

When the municipal police in Cincinnati, Ohio invoked the state's anti-obscenity law in 1990 to close the Museum of Contemporary Art and arrested the museum's director after the opening of an exhibition of photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe, the century-old debate about censorship and obscenity was again joined. Cincinnati is one of a handful of U.S. cities that ban pornography; since 1984, the city has rigorously enforced a statewide anti-obscenity ordinance, so that peep shows, adult bookstores, bars with nude dancing, escort services, and massage parlors are all prohibited within city limits. Residents cannot rent adult videos at video stores, nor can they purchase over the counter any pornographic magazines.

The Cincinnati trial again raised questions about the relationship between pornography and violence against women, and about the community's rights to restrict the types of materials available to its citizens. The political debate has been joined by social scientists who have attempted to ascertain the relationship between sexual representation and the behaviors and attitudes of real people in the real world. Does pornography cause rape? Does it change consumers' attitudes toward sexuality, rape, and violence? Does it reduce beliefs in the viability of the family and marriage? Does pornography desensitize users to the reality of violence against women?

These questions have been hotly debated both inside and outside the academy; they form the basis for political discussion about pornography, as well as social science research on its effects. Traditionally, the debate was framed between conservatives who sought suppression of all sexual materials, including birth control information, sex education, and abortion, and liberals, who urged more openness in expression, and decriminalization of some behaviors. Since the late 1970s, though, the debate was reframed by feminists. Some claimed that the issue was not one of free speech versus censorship; pornography *was* a form of censorship—the silencing of women. Women Against Pornography claimed that violence is

done against women in its creation, caused by its consumption, and that the larger society is inured to that violence through consumption (see, for example, Dworkin, 1981; Brownmiller, 1975). Other feminists claim that the censorship of pornography, even in the guise of civil rights, would silence women's empowering attempts to express their sexuality (see Ellis, 1985). Men have also entered the debate; Kimmel (1990) collected a group of essays by "pro-feminist" men—men who are sympathetic with feminist goals—who explore the meaning of pornography in the construction of male sexuality and the impact of pornography on men's attitudes, fantasies, and real relationships with women.

Social science research has generally fallen into three categories: studies of sex offenders, laboratory research, and aggregate statistical analyses. Studies of sex offenders examined the relationship between men convicted of sex crimes and exposure to pornography. Marshall (1988), for example, found that 83% of rapists admitted regular use of pornography. Anecdotal evidence corroborated this finding. "For me, seeing pornography was like lighting a fuse on a stick of dynamite," confessed Gary Arthur Bishop, convicted of molesting and murdering five young boys, to a Catholic priest on the eve of his execution in Utah in 1988. "I became stimulated and had to gratify my urges or explode" (cited in *Citizen's Courier,* May, 1990, p. 5).

However, such correlations assume a causation that cannot be demonstrated from the evidence. It is possible that a high percentage of rapists also had copies of the Bible in their homes or that they watched police dramas like *Hunter* or *Hill Street Blues* on television. Would we make similar causal arguments about those media? As researcher Edward Donnerstein argued, "Even if every violent rapist we could find had a history of exposure to violent pornography, we would never be justified in assuming that these materials 'caused' their violent behavior" (cited in the *New York Times,* 22 October 1986).

Other researchers found few differences in exposure to erotic materials between sex offenders, prisoners convicted of nonsex-related offenses (murder, robbery, etc.), and a control sample of "normal" male volunteers (Gebhard, Gagnon, Pomeroy, &Christenson, 1965; Goldstein, 1973). Juvenile sex offenders actually had less exposure to pornography as adolescents (Goldstein, Kant, & Hartman, 1973; see Groth, 1979).

Laboratory studies have assessed the impact of exposure to pornography on men's behaviors and men's attitudes toward women. Both types of research have been inconclusive. Donnerstein and Evans (1975) found that nonviolent, mildly arousing pornography (such as *Playboy* photographs) actually reduced aggressive tendencies in previously angered males. Zillman and his collaborators found nonviolent sexual images increase aggression at roughly the same level as nonsexual, arousing images, such as explicit films of eye operations (Zillman, Bryant, Comisky, & Medoff, 1981). Arousing, nonviolent sexual images do not cause an increase in aggression against women; violent, nonsexual images do lead to some increase in aggression, at roughly the same rate as violent pornographic images

(Donnerstein, Linz, & Penrod, 1987). Research on the effect of pornography on men's attitudes toward women also yields mixed findings. Zillman and Bryant (1982, 1984) found that repeated "massive" exposure to pornographic films increased men's callousness toward women and their acceptance of rape myths. Other researchers found little or no change in attitudes after exposure to nonviolent pornography (see Malamuth & Ceniti, 1986; Donnerstein, Linz, & Penrod, 1987; Linz et al., 1988). Violent pornography did produce more calloused attitudes toward women and an increased acceptance of rape myths (Malamuth & Check, 1985; Malamuth, 1984; Malamuth & Check, 1980). After exposure, men were more likely to trivialize women's postrape trauma, believe that women secretly want to be raped (no matter what they say), sentence convicted rapists to shorter prison terms in mock trials, and assume that the rape victim enjoyed it. These rates were identical to rates obtained for violent, nonsexual materials, like slasher films.

Such experimental studies, based on random assignment to experimental conditions, provide the best methodology for assessing cause and effect relationships in the laboratory. Yet their results on the question of pornography's impact are empirically mixed and ambiguous. What's more, such studies are significantly limited in their external validity. Experimental conditions do not reproduce real world conditions; in fact, they significantly distort the experience of pornography consumption as to make generalizations difficult. The pornography is *decontextualized,* removed from its original context (one's home, movie theater, pornographic bookstore) and detached from its function (sexual arousal, masturbation). Some studies used only those scenes that were sexually explicit, thus removing any semblance of narrative or character development. Controlled laboratory experiments may produce an artificial range of available responses to the exposure, forcing the subjects to respond in ways they would not have chosen in more "natural" settings (see, for example, Fisher & Barak, 1989). Field studies seem to bear this out. Padgett, Brislin-Slutz, and Neal (1989), for example, found no significant changes in attitudes or behaviors among patrons of an adult theater; in fact, this group held more favorable attitudes toward women than did male or female college students.

A third group of research studies uses aggregate statistical analyses to assess the relationship between pornography and violence against women. These studies often compare the circulation rates of various magazines or the number of adult theaters with rates of rape and other sex crimes. Scott (pp. 67–69) found no relationship between rape rates and the number of adult theaters or bookstores, but he did find a correlation with the circulation of "outdoor" magazines, such as *Field and Stream* or *American Rifleman* (see Donnerstein, Linz, & Penrod, 1987). Baron and Straus (1984) found a high correlation between circulation rates of certain softcore pornographic magazines (*Playboy, Penthouse, Hustler, Gallery,* and others) and rape rates. (Their later research also found a positive correlation between rape rates and sales of *Playgirl* [Baron and Straus, 1989].) Sales of the eight major men's

magazines were five times higher per capita in Alaska and Nevada than in other states, and lowest in North Dakota. Rape rates in those states were six times higher per capita in Nevada and Alaska than in North Dakota.

However, Baron and Straus also found positive correlations between rape rates and gender inequality, social disorganization, urbanization, economic inequality, and unemployment. The presumed relationship between magazine circulation and rape rates vanishes statistically when a measure of cultural support for violence is added, which the authors interpret to indicate that "a macho culture pattern independently influences men to purchase more pornography and commit more rapes" (Baron, 1990, 364fn). Thus, magazine consumption and rape are both the outcomes of a larger pattern of traditional masculine attitudes.

The most well-known aggregate social analysis about the relationship between pornography and sex crimes comes from Denmark (see Kutchinsky, 1973, 1983, 1985, and 1990; see also Court, 1976 and 1984). Kutchinsky found that the legalization of pornography did not lead to addictive behaviors, but rather to an extinction curve of consumption, so that today, most consumers of pornography in Denmark are foreign tourists. He also found that the legalization of pornography was accompanied by a *reduction* in the number of reports of sex crimes. This decline was explained not by the legalization of pornography, but by a variety of other social factors, including greater political and social participation for women, and a generally increasing liberal social policy perspective. Child molestation declined about 80%; of 100 offenses reported before legalization, about 20 are reported now. This seems to be a real reduction, not merely a result of changes in the willingness of children or parents to call the police or willingness of the police to act. There was also a reduction in exhibitionism, largely because women are less often reporting it to the police, and a reduction in indecent assaults (which include all forcible physical approaches to women) with the largest reduction in reports of the less serious offenses. Young women, especially, are less likely to report minor annoyances (being physically touched while riding a streetcar, for example); however, the more serious offenses involving force are still being reported.

The Present Study

Would we find the same results in the United States? There are, of course, many differences between the United States and Denmark, after all. Denmark is small (5 million), highly literate, relatively affluent, and homogeneous in race, ethnicity, and cultural history. It has a low crime rate and an excellent social welfare system. What about the inverse corollary question: If legalizing pornography does not lead to an increase in sex crimes, would banning it lead to a reduction of sex crimes? If the anti-obscenity ordinance has "taken the sin out of Cincinnati," as its proponents claim, has it also made that city the one

where women are least likely to be raped, where children are least likely to be the victims of child sexual abuse?

We matched six cities—Cincinnati, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Dallas, Jacksonville (Fla.), and Louisville—on a variety of demographic, SES, and criminological criteria.[1] Two of these cities, Cincinnati and Jacksonville, have laws currently in effect that outlaw pornography within city limits, while the other four do not have or enforce such laws. (Cincinnati enforces a statewide law that Cleveland does not enforce; Jacksonville enacted a separate provision that combines bans on adult live entertainment with restrictions on the sale of alcohol.) We examined the empirical relationship between magazine circulation and rape rates throughout the United States as a whole, in the five states in which the six cities are located, and among the six cities themselves to see if any discernible pattern emerged that might reveal the aggregate relationship between pornography and rape. We hypothesized that if pornography causes rape, then banning pornography should have a significant impact on rape rates; in those cities in which pornography was legal, we would expect to find higher rape rates than those cities in which pornography had been banned.

Data on rape from the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), released yearly by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), were used—for consistency rather than for accuracy of reportage. (Although these data most likely fall considerably below the actual cases, there is little reason to suspect that these inaccuracies are anything but random and spread evenly across the sample.) It is possible, however, that a willingness to report rape is lower in those communities where a conservative, moralistic set of cultural assumptions prevail, which might skew the data in those cities that banned pornography. However, that would be revealed by comparison with the other cities.

Data on pornography availability were gathered from circulation rates of pornographic magazines, released by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC). Eight magazines—*Club*, *Cheri*, *Gallery*, *Genesis*, *Hustler*, *Oui*, *Penthouse*, and *Playboy*—were used over an 11-year period, from 1979 to 1989. Only four magazines could be tabulated for the entire time frame—*Cheri*, *Gallery*, *Playboy*, and *Penthouse*.

The availability of consistent statistical information about these magazines provided us with a functional definition of pornography for the purposes of this study: Pornography is the material contained within any and all of the magazines examined. This definition may limit the generalizability of the findings, especially in light of newly developing pornographic media, such as phone sex, computer sex, and the enormous availability of pornographic videotapes. However, the use of the magazines as a data source has three significant advantages. First, magazine data were utilized in all other aggregate studies, making our findings comparable with other studies. Second, there is a historical moment in magazine sales—the removal of *Penthouse* and *Playboy* from the 7-Eleven chain of convenience stores—that provides a handy historical node on which to examine more immediate "before" and "after" at national, state, and local levels. (Of course, any momentary

fluctuation would appear across all cases, and would not measure immediately the effect of municipal ordinances banning the sale of the magazines.) And, third, since many communities are currently debating the politics of pornographic videos and their availability, this study might be of some use in providing an analogous set of circumstances.

Another potential problem was temporal. If pornography caused rape, how long would it take before the impact of banning pornography would show up in rape rates? We therefore examined the immediate results of banning pornography, and then returned to those same cities two years later, to determine if there was any time lag.

Findings

The Nation

(1) Rape Rates. Rape rates increased dramatically during the 1970s, nearly doubling from 1970 to 1980, remained stable during the first half of the 1980s, and increased slightly during the second half (see Table 6.1). To determine if the increase in rape rates was comparable to other crimes, and especially if the increase in rape rates was solely due to increased reporting of sexual crimes, we compared those rates to the rates of aggravated assault, the crime to which rape is most closely related. Throughout the period, the changes in the rates for aggravated assault followed closely the changes in rape rates.[2]

(2) Availability of Pornography.[3] The circulation of pornographic magazines in the United States has dropped sharply since 1979. Data on all nine magazines in the sample are available from 1979 to 1982, during which total sales declined more than 20%, from 14,814,376 copies per month (1979) to 11,657,666 copies per month (1982). Sales figures for four magazines (*Cheri, Gallery, Penthouse,* and *Playboy*) are available for the whole period (1979–1989); sales declined about 50% from 1979 (11,016,723 copies per month) to 1989 (5,764,931 copies per month). Excluding *Penthouse* and *Playboy* (since they comprise 90% of the sales of the above four magazines), data for four magazines (*Club, Cheri, Gallery,* and *Genesis*) show that sales declined by 30% from 1979 to 1986.

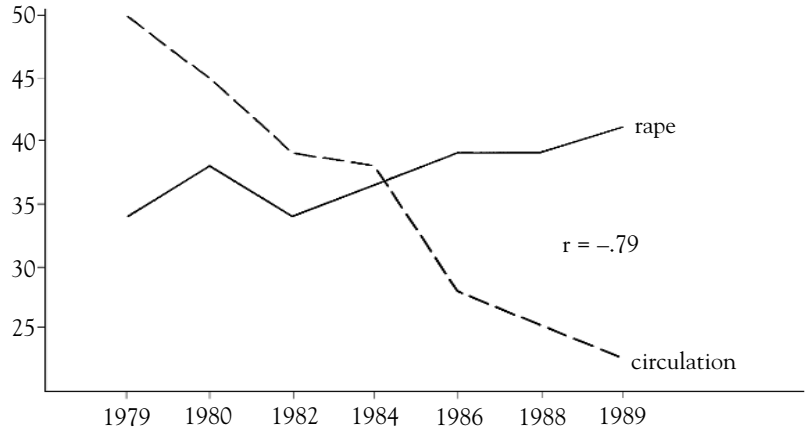
(3) Pornography and Rape. Since 1979, circulation of pornographic magazines has declined markedly, while rape rates have increased slightly (see Figure 6.1). The correlation between circulation rates and rape rates for the whole time period (1979–1989) is strongly negative ($r = -.79$). If the two largest circulation magazines are removed (*Penthouse* and *Playboy*), thus negating the removal of those magazines from 7-Eleven stores (in 1984), the correlation remains negative, and fairly strong ($r = -.54$).

Table 6.1 Rape Rates (per 100,000 population) in Five States, plus U.S. Total, 1970–1989.[1]

State/year	1970	1975	1980	1985	1989
Florida	22.2	35.7	56.9	52.8	49.7
Indiana	17.9	24.3	33.1	24.0	32.3
Kentucky	13.7	15.4	19.2	21.6	24.6
Ohio	16.0	25.3	34.3	36.9	44.7
Texas	21.0	28.0	47.3	51.1	46.8
U.S. Total	18.3	26.3	36.4	36.6	38.1

[1]*Source:* Uniform Crime Report

Figure 6.1 Rape Rates (per 100,000 population), and Circulation Rates (per 1,000 population) of Four Magazines: *Cheri*, *Gallery*, *Penthouse*, *Playboy*, 1970–1989. Total U.S.



The States

(1) Rape Rates. Among the five states (Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and Texas), rape rates increased during the 1970s, with Kentucky's rise at a slightly lower pace than the national average, and Florida at a slightly higher pace. In the 1980s, rates increased in Kentucky and Ohio, decreased in Florida, and fluctuated in reverse directions in Texas (from a high in the mid-1980s and decreasing since) and Indiana (from a low in the mid-1980s and increasing since) (see Table 6.1). A comparison with aggravated assault shows that since 1980, the number of rapes has decreased in relation to aggravated assault in all states but Ohio, where rapes have increased at a higher pace than aggravated assault.

(2) Availability of Pornography. Among the five states, total sales for five magazines (*Club, Cheri, Gallery, Penthouse,* and *Playboy*) dropped drastically from 1979 to 1988: 79% in Texas, around 40% in Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio, and 10% in Florida.[4] As can be seen in Figure 6.2, the effect on sales by the removal of *Penthouse* and *Playboy* from 7-Eleven stores shows up on the level of individual states as well.

(3) Pornography and Rape. For the period 1979 to 1988, correlations between combined circulation rates and rape rates in the five states range from r = −.82 to r = .30 (see Figure 6.2). To test the possibility that the effects of pornography consumption on rape might be delayed in time, we recalculated the correlations with a two-year time lag. The new correlations ranged from r = −.83 to r = .81.[5]

Previous studies have found that states with high rape rates are more likely to have higher rates of pornography circulation, and states with low rape rates to have lower circulation rates (see Baron and Straus, 1989; Scott and Schwalm, 1988). In our small sample of five states, that finding is fairly well replicated;[6] throughout the period (1979–1989), Kentucky has the lowest rates of both rape and pornography circulation, and Florida and Texas alternate as the states with the highest rates, while Indiana and Ohio fall in between, alternating their respective ranking (see Table 6.2).[7]

The Cities

(1) Rape Rates. Since 1979, rape rates have fluctuated markedly in all six cities (see Table 6.3). Looking only at the first and last year, there has been an increase in all cities except Louisville, but since only two cities have their highest rate of the period in 1989 (Cleveland and Indianapolis), and only two their lowest rate in 1979 (Cincinnati and Cleveland), the claim of a steady increase is not warranted.

In a comparison between the cities and their immediate metropolitan surroundings (SMSA, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area), we found that the proportion of rapes reported for the core cities had decreased from 1979 to 1989 in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Louisville, remained fairly stable in Cleveland and Jacksonville, and increased in Dallas. With this comparison, we tried to detect a different pattern for Cincinnati and Jacksonville in zparticular, since in the case of Cincinnati the ordinance regulating pornographic material is enforced primarily in the county of the core city (Hamilton), and in the case of Jacksonville the ordinance regarding adult entertainment is specific to the core city county (Duval).

(2) Availability of Pornography. Little systematic data are available for the six cities, since detailed regional circulation figures are voluntary and infrequently provided. What we do know, however, is that *Penthouse* sales decreased markedly between 1980 and 1989: 43% in Cincinnati, 64% in Cleveland, 49% in Dallas, 53% in Indianapolis, 51% in Jacksonville, and 77% in Louisville. There is no indication that sales declines in the two cities with restrictive policies were greater than in the

Figure 6.2 Rape Rates (per 100,000 population), and Circulation Rates (per 1,000 population) of Four Magazines: *Cheri*, *Gallery*, *Penthouse*, *Playboy*, 1980–1988, in Five States.

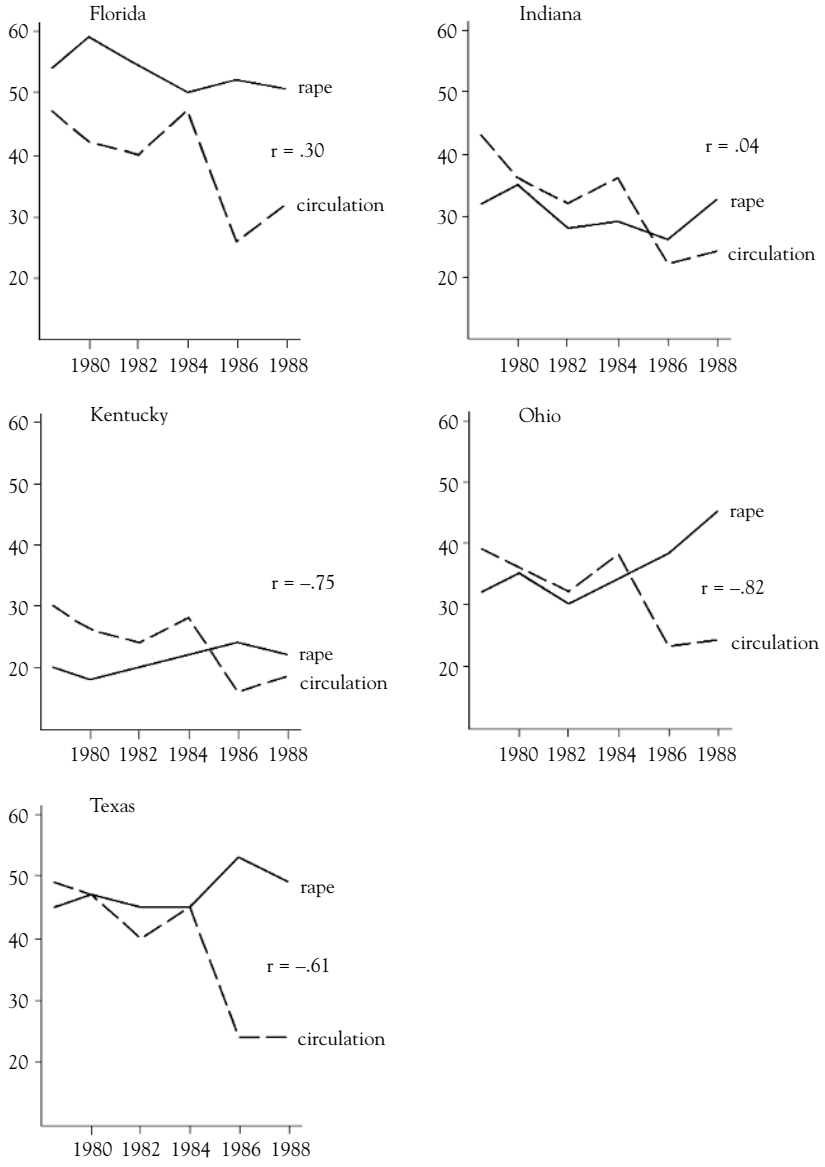


Table 6.2 Rape Rates (per 100,000 population), Combined Circulation Rates (per 1,000 population) for *Cheri, Gallery, Penthouse,* and *Playboy,* in Five States, and between-state Ranking from Highest (1) to Lowest (5) Rates, 1980–1989.[1]

	1980		1982		1984		1986		1988		1989	
State/year	Circ.	Rape	Circ.	Rape	Circ.	Rape	Circ.	Rape	Circ.	Rape	Circ.	Rape
Florida	42.0 (2)	56.9 (1)	39.5 (2)	53.6 (1)	46.6 (1)	50.7 (1)	27.5 (1)	52.7 (1)	32.0 (1)	49.7 (1)	23.3 (1)	49.7 (1)
Indiana	35.0 (4)	33.1 (4)	31.6 (4)	27.8 (4)	34.9 (4)	25.0 (4)	22.3 (3)	25.9 (4)	24.3 (3)	31.0 (4)	20.9 (3)	32.3 (4)
Kentucky	26.3 (5)	19.2 (5)	24.4 (5)	20.0 (5)	27.4 (5)	22.2 (5)	16.6 (5)	23.1 (5)	18.0 (5)	24.4 (5)	16.4 (5)	24.6 (5)
Ohio	35.3 (3)	34.3 (3)	31.7 (3)	29.9 (3)	37.4 (3)	34.7 (3)	21.7 (4)	38.6 (3)	24.0 (4)	42.6 (3)	19.9 (4)	44.7 (3)
Texas	45.7 (1)	47.3 (2)	39.6 (1)	44.6 (2)	44.9 (2)	45.9 (2)	25.3 (2)	51.6 (2)	26.1 (2)	48.4 (2)	20.4 (2)	46.8 (2)

[1]*Source:* Uniform Crime Reports for rape rates and Audit Bureau of Circulation for circulation figures.

Table 6.3 Rape Rates (per 100,000 population) in Six Cities, 1979–1989.[1]

Year	Cincinnati	Cleveland	Dallas	Indianapolis	Jacksonville	Louisville
1979	70	102	111	85	68	47
1980	92	123	124	59[2]	76	46
1981	75	108	120	87	71	53
1982	74	109	114	84	71	36
1983	80	125	89	81	68	27
1984	97	132	104	69	101	48
1985	97	132	115	73	117	41
1986	79	141	110	93	100	41
1987	93	137	125	90	97	32
1988	78	155	128	87	n.a.	n.a.
1989	94	160	119	100	93	43

[1]*Source:* Uniform Crime Reports
[2]Rate based on a different population count

others; in fact, sales in Cincinnati declined the least of all six cities. In 1980, Cleveland had the highest circulation rates of *Penthouse*, followed by Louisville, Dallas, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Jacksonville, while in 1989, Cincinnati had the highest circulation rates, followed by Cleveland, Dallas, Louisville, Indianapolis, and Jacksonville. Circulation figures for *Playboy*, 1990, show that Louisville has the highest circulation rates, followed by Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dallas, Indianapolis, and Jacksonville (see Table 6.4).

(3) Pornography and Rape. Since data on the specific cities are sparse, the findings here are to be regarded as tentative. The relationship between circulation rates and rape rates is presented graphically in Figure 6.3. As can be seen, circulation rates for *Penthouse* decreased drastically, while rape rates increased in Cleveland, Jacksonville, and Indianapolis, and remained fairly stable in Cincinnati, and decreased in Dallas[8] and Louisville. It should be remembered, however, that a "straight line" between two years is an inaccurate representation of the fluctuations in rape rates, while being fairly accurate in relation to pornography circulation.[9]

As was the case on the national and state levels, the city data fail to reveal a positive relationship between changes in rape rates and changes in pornography circulation. Focusing on the two "experimental" cities, it is clear that their respective efforts at reducing "pornography" have not affected the circulation of magazines such as *Penthouse*. Furthermore, since rape rates in the two cities do not show different fluctuation patterns than the ones without restrictive policies, we must conclude that policies like the ones implemented in Cincinnati and Jacksonville have *no* impact on the number of rapes committed.

Figure 6.3 Rape Rates (per 100,000 population), and Circulation Rates (per 5,000 population) for *Penthouse*, 1980 and 1989, in Six Cities.

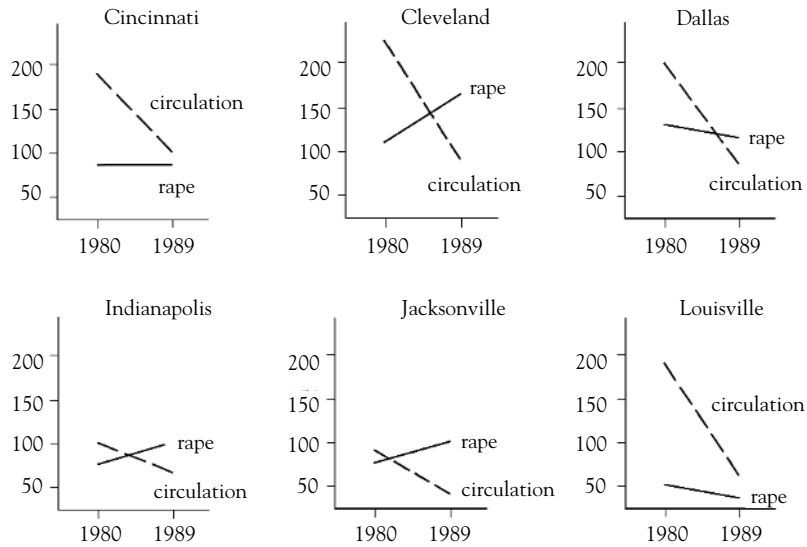


Table 6.4 Circulation Rates (per 1,000 population) for *Penthouse* (1980, 1989) and *Playboy* (1990), in Six Cities.[1]

	Cincinnati	Cleveland	Dallas	Indianapolis	Jacksonville	Louisville
Penthouse 1980	35.9	46.5	38.5	20.0	17.8	38.7
Penthouse 1989	21.1	18.2	17.8	13.5	7.3	13.6
Playboy 1990[2]	31.5	32.8	31.2	30.9	14.6	34.4

[1]*Source:* Audit Bureau of Circulation Rates
[2]Rates are calculated from 1989 population figures

Discussion

The partiality of these data do not permit us to make an argument that the decline in pornography is actually one of the contributing factors in the increases in rapes; such a position would maintain that pornography provides fantasy relief which, if thwarted, may result in the actual commission of some act of violence toward women. But we can clearly see that the rates of rape are, at the very least, unaffected by the rates of circulation of pornographic magazines.

We might speculate that one possible cause for the lack of relationship between pornography and rape might have to do with the measurement of

pornographic consumption solely in terms of magazine circulation. While this may have been an adequate definition in 1980, it is surely no longer an adequate measure by itself. Data from a 1989 National Opinion Research Center poll on rentals of sexually explicit videotapes bear this out, as rentals of at least one sexually explicit videotape in the year previous by men increased from 20% in 1980 to 31% in 1989 (see the *New York Times,* 23 April 1990). However, an increase of 11% in video rentals would not compensate for a nearly 50% reduction in circulation of pornographic magazines during the same period. These magazines continue to be among Americans' favorite magazines, maintaining enviably high circulation throughout the nation. It may be true that continued use of magazine circulation rates as the sole measure of pornographic consumption is less useful, given the increase of videotape rentals, although these measures do permit comparability with earlier studies. We believe that these changes in technology have not dramatically affected the decrease in rates of consumption, nor in their presumed impact on women.

In fact, some might argue that the technological shift from pornographic magazines to X-rated videotapes has been accompanied by a gender democratization of pornography consumption. One survey of 500 video stores found in 1989 that only 40% of renters of X-rated videos were individual men, while 29% were men and women renting together, and 15% were women renting the tapes alone. (The remaining 16% were same sex couples renting together—13% male couples and 3% female couples; cited in the *New York Times,* 23 April 1990). A new group of "feminist pornographers" have been quick to recognize this market among adult women and have created a genre marketed exclusively toward women.[10] The most recent trend, homemade videotapes of average couples having sex, appears to increase this democratizing trend even further, and surely offers no reason to think that consumption or production of pornography involves any increase in coercion. Our review of the empirical and rhetorical literature in the debate about pornography, and the empirical analysis of the aggregate relationships between pornography consumption and rape rates leads to one conclusion: Just as legalizing pornography has not, and, we believe, will not lead to an increase in rape rates, banning pornography will not lead to a reduction in rape rates. Efforts to ban pornography will continue, to be sure. But we are convinced that they will be motivated, as they have always been motivated, less by a concern for the welfare of women than by a moralistic fear of erotic expression.

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III
From Fantasy to Reality
Sexual Identity and Sexual Behavior

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7

Sexual Balkanization

Gender and Sexuality as the New Ethnicities

Oprah: "Do you think society will change if it were proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that you were born that way?"

Gay twin: "It would be easier . . . the acceptance, but you understand that people still don't accept Blacks and Hispanics and handicapped . . . Gays are right in there with them . . . people don't accept obese people."

Oprah (chagrined): "I forgot about that. Let's take a break."

It is axiomatic in physics that for each action there is an equal and opposite reaction. It may also be true that for each social structural movement there will always be cultural countermovements, moments of resistance to global trends, or efforts to return to mythic pasts. Just when totalitarian political control has been globally discredited through the breakup of the Soviet Union, it is reasserted culturally in the efforts to ethnically homogenize the emergent individual states. Strong governments create the conditions under which people resort to ethnicity and cultural nationalism as forms of resistance. Ethnicity gives people a source of identity that derives from primordial sources other than the state; one is Estonian, not a citizen of the USSR. The weakened states, however, must deal with the consequences of that resistance.

It is also probably true that no sooner does one set of academic theories gain ascendency than a countertheory is articulated. Postmodernism in the humanities and social constructionism in the social sciences are two examples. These related perspectives challenge traditional ontological certainties, destabilize concepts through historical and social contextualization, and replace biological constancy with social contingencies. In the social sciences, social constructionism governs most research on human sexuality and studies of gender relations.

Yet recently signs of countertrends, efforts to reimpose biological, ontological, and categorical models onto our understanding of gender and sexuality have come forth. Some feminists argue that women and men constitute different

species that are incapable of government by a universal application of law or of being embraced by traditional analytic categories. Others proclaim a separate culture of "womyn" or "wimmin," a statement designed to expunge all traces of maleness from its label and its content. Biological research on homosexuality now invites us to see lesbians and gay men (and for them to see themselves) as "a distinct type of being, on an ontological par with 'Irish-Americans' or 'Japanese-Americans'" (Epstein, 1987, p. 18). Even men are getting into the act, as some theorists resort to bowderlized Jungian archetypes and misreadings of myths and legends to proclaim a distinctly male culture and community.

In a sense, these developments ought not to surprise us; being an ethnic is quite trendy. Identity politics have infected all political discourse, so that the characteristics of the speaker often outweigh the content of the speech. Everybody is ethnic. There are barely any "Americans" left in the United States, as everyone rushes to claim his or her hyphen. People of African descent, once defined by racial characteristics (Negro) or their lack of whiteness (colored), later insisted on being called black (to denote a proud contrast to white) and people of color. But now, even race is becoming just another ethnicity. Formerly black people want to be called "African American," a term that denotes a status comparable to that of any other ethnicity and, to my mind, obscures the very dimension, coerced versus chosen immigration, that sets their experience apart. (Of course, every group has a right to be labeled what they themselves decide; that is what empowerment means. Sometimes, however, the loss outweighs the gain.) Tit for tat, white racists have demanded inclusion in the great ethnic soup by calling themselves "European Americans" or "White Americans." David Duke and his followers disingenuously demand White Studies courses and an end to discrimination against people of European descent.

This chapter will explore a most unlikely effort to extend identity politics—the ethnicization of sex and gender. Such an effort attempts to undermine the reliance on social constructionist models of sexuality and gender, and to remap identity from the body outward as opposed to observing the ways in which social prescriptions were mapped onto the body. In *Sexual Conduct,* Gagnon and Simon explicated the classic social constructionist position (1973). Such a perspective views all sexual conduct as historically and culturally determined, the meaning of which resides in a *reading* of bodily activity of individuals:

> People become sexual in the same way they become everything else. Without much reflection, they pick up directions from their social environment. They acquire and assemble meanings, skills and values from the people around them. (Gagnon, 1977, p. 2)

Sexuality is acquired and maintained by social structure and culture. To paraphrase Foucault, there are only bodies and pleasures; all the rest is social organization and interpretation. Gender and sexuality are learned forms of conduct and

are linked differently in different cultures. Sexual conduct is a gender enactment. Our understanding of sexuality is itself historically and culturally determined.

By contrast, gender and sexual essentialism refer to primordial biological categories that claim that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity "is a culture-independent, objective and intrinsic property" (Stein, 1992, p. 325). In essentialist models, everyone has a deep, unitary "self" that is relatively stable and unchanging. This self differs among categories, but it is relatively the same for all members of a category. Sexual behavior and gender identity are manifestations of this inner essence. In this way, brain researcher Simon LeVay explains that he is "very much skeptical of the idea that sexual orientation is a cultural thing" (1992, p. 52). Feminist linguist Deborah Tannen (1991, p. 44) states that she "think[s] of genders as different cultural groups," and mythopoetic men's movement guru Robert Bly proclaims that "[t]he structure at the bottom of the male psyche is still as firm as it was twenty thousand years ago" (1990, p. 21).

Behind the new essentialism is a political agenda designed to promote acceptance, if not understanding. If gender and sexuality spring from these deep essentialist wells, then how can we continue to discriminate against those people who had no choice in their behaviors? But, as I will argue, such a political agenda marks a studied retreat from earlier efforts to use socially constructed differences as a vehicle for transforming social life. Perhaps the best one can hope for in this new fragmented essentialism is to be left alone.

Gay Essentialism

The attempt to make sexual orientation a matter of genetics and biology has been the most widespread and controversial effort. Recent research on brain structure, endocrinological research on hormones, as well as strains of spiritualism and culturalism, have posited a distinctly homosexual essence, which will emerge regardless of the cultural conditions that shape its opportunities and experiences. Historically, such research has a century-old lineage. Homosexuality emerged as a distinct identity in the late nineteenth century and was described as an "inborn, and therefore irrepressible drive," according to one nineteenth-century Hungarian physician (cited in Rist, 1992, p. 424). Earlier, there were homosexual *behaviors*, of course, but identity did not emerge from or inhere in those behaviors. "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul," writes Foucault. "The sodomite has been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (1978, p. 124).

In recent decades, biological research has emerged as central in the demonstration of this species's existence and difference from heterosexuals. In the 1970s, Dorner and his associates found that homosexual men possess a "predominantly female-differentiated brain" caused by a "deficiency" of androgen during

the hypothalamic organizational phase in prenatal life, which may be activated to homosexual behavior by normal or above normal androgen levels in adulthood (1975, p. 6). More recently, Simon LeVay found that among homosexual men a part of the anterior hypothalamus—a region of the brain about the size of a grain of sand that has been long associated with sexual behavior—was similar in size and structure to that in women's brains rather than to that in the brains of heterosexual men (1991, p. 1034–37). Research on pairs of monozygotic twins suggests that statistically identical twins have a far higher likelihood of having similar sexualities (either both gay or both straight) than dizygotic twins.

LeVay's research has precipitated an enormous debate within both the gay and the scientific sex-research communities. His data sources were irretrievably skewed, since all the gay men in his sample had died of AIDS, a disease known to affect the brain. All the brains of the gay men were preserved in a formaldehyde solution double the strength of that used to preserve the brains of heterosexual men because of fears of HIV transmission. Yet formaldehyde removes water from the organ, thus having the effect of shrinking brain parts. It is possible that what LeVay measured was the combined effect of HIV infection and preservation in higher densities of formalin solution on postmortem brain structure rather than the differences in brain structure between living heterosexuals and homosexuals.

The scientific veracity of LeVay's and others' research, however, is of less concern to us here than the fact that it exists and the political and cultural excitement it generated. After all, neurological and endocrinological research into the origins of homosexuality has been going on for quite some time. As sex researcher John Money argued, no research suggests the dismissal of social and cultural factors; he claimed that

> there is no human evidence that prenatal hormonalization alone, independently of postnatal history, inexorably preordains either [a homosexual or bisexual] orientation. Rather, neonatal antecedents may facilitate a homosexual or bisexual orientation, provided the postnatal determinants in the social and communicational history are also facilitative. (1987, p. 384)

If gay brain research generated little light on the etiology of sexual orientation, why did it generate such intense political heat?

The promotion of gay essentialism is a political strategy to normalize gayness. "It points out that gay people are made this way by nature," observes Robert Bray, director of public information of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "It strikes at the heart of people who oppose gay rights and who think we don't deserve our rights because we're choosing to be the way we are" (cited in Rist, p. 427). Michael Bailey and Richard Pinnard, the authors of the gay twin study, opined in a *New York Times* essay that a "biological explanation is good news for homosexuals and their advocates" (p. A11). "If it turns out, indeed, that homosexuals are born that way, it could undercut the animosity gays have had to contend

with for centuries," added a cover story in *Newsweek*. Such an understanding would "reduce being gay to something like being left handed, which is in fact all that it is," commented gay journalist and author Randy Shilts in the magazine (ibid.). And even LeVay hoped that homophobia would dissipate as a result of this research, since its basis in prejudice about the unnaturalness of homosexual acts would vanish. Gays would become "just another minority," just another ethnic group, with an identity based on primordial characteristics.

Such efforts must, of course, be understood in the context of twelve years of social and cultural retrenchment from the acceptance-oriented, assimilationist policies of earlier administrations. The Reagan presidency gave the nod of permission to new forms of discrimination against gay men and lesbians, whose demands for inclusion were made even more urgent by the Reagan and Bush administrations' punitive callousness to the mounting AIDS crisis. In that sense, attempting to naturalize and biologize sexuality has been an effort to stay the course, to hold on to what few gains they had made, and to prevent further erosion of their position. (I believe this is also true of women and people of color.)

Such naturalization efforts are vulnerable to political subversion by the very forces they are intended to counteract. For instance, antigay forces could point to a brain defect and suggest possible prenatal interventions for prevention and postnatal "cures." The headline in the *Washington Times* (the Moonie-run newspaper) heralding LeVay's research shouted: "Scientists Link Brain Abnormality, Homosexuality." LeVay himself acknowledges this danger, and comments that "the negative side of it is that with talk of an immutable characteristic, you then can be interpreted as meaning a defect or a congenital disorder. You could say that being gay is like having cystic fibrosis or something, which should be aborted or corrected in utero" (Rist, 1992, p. 427).

The political implications of naturalizing homosexuality are not lost on astute political thinkers like former vice president Dan Quayle, whose response to the research was to place himself squarely in the social constructionist camp. Homosexuality is "more of a choice than a biological situation," he declared. Of course, he added, it is the "wrong" choice (DeWitt, 1992).

What this debate ignores is what we might call the sociology of gay essentialism—specifically, the ways in which gender remains the organizing principle of the homosexual essence. Notice how essentialist research links homosexuality with gender inversion, making *women* the reference point against which gay and straight men are to be measured. Gay men, it turns out, have "female" brain structures; thus, gay men become hermaphrodites, women's brains in men's bodies, a kind of neurological third sex. This idea resonates with some ethnographies of homosexual identities in other cultures, and leads anthropologist Walter Williams and others to suggest a three-gender system: men, women, and homosexuals.

Such arguments beg several issues. First, if gay men and women did have similar brain structures, then the headline in the *Washington Times* cited above should have more accurately castigated heterosexual men as the deviant group.

Heterosexual men, the decided numerical minority, would become the group with the brain abnormalities. Second and more significantly though, these studies miss the social organization of gay sex, that is, the ways in which the who, what, where, when, how, and how many are governed by gender norms. In their sexual activities, rates of encounters, and variations, gay men and lesbians are far greater gender *conformists* than they are nonconformists. Gay men's sexuality looks strikingly like straight men's sexuality except for the rather incidental detail of the gender of one's object choice. Regardless of sexual orientation, however, virtually all sex research points to one conclusion: gender, *not sexual orientation*, is the organizing principle of sexual behavior. Gay men and straight men seek masculine sex; sex is confirmation of masculinity. Straight women and lesbians experience feminine sex; sex is confirmation of femininity.

The gender organization of sexuality also explains the gender distribution of gay essentialism. Recent surveys have shown that, by far, gay *men* believe that their homosexuality is natural, biological, and inborn, while lesbians are more likely to believe that their homosexuality is socially constructed (Whisman, 1992). Gay men are more likely to subscribe to essentialist explanations, Whisman argues, because gender privilege gives them the possibility of access to higher status positions; if their homosexuality is biological, it can be overlooked and they can claim their "rightful" (read: masculine) status. Lesbian sexuality is seen by lesbians as more socially and historically contingent because lesbians are doubly marginalized, and their sexuality and gender identity are conditioned by their ideological connection to feminism. For lesbians, sexual behavior implies a political statement about living outside the mainstream; gay men see their sexual behavior as an accident of birth, which can be overcome by being overlooked.

"Womyn's" Identities

Gender itself has come under attack. Long seen as analytically distinct from biological sex, gender referred to those cultural meanings attached to sex through which males and females developed identities as men and women. Some critics, of course, have never accepted that distinction; antifeminists, for example, have always relied on putative differences between males and females as the basis for gender inequality. But they now seem to have some unlikely allies: feminists themselves. Some feminists suggest that women and men are, at closest, opposite sexes, and, at furthest remove, members of different species. One can sense in the work of Carol Gilligan a claim that women and men possess fundamentally different organizing principles for ethical decision making. Men are animated by an ethic that stresses abstract principles; women are ruled by an ethic of care. Linguist Deborah Tannen argues that women and men have different cognitive maps of the world, and that this fact is expressed in different "genderlects," different forms and patterns of speech. To men, conversations "are negotiations in

which people try and achieve and maintain the upper hand if they can, and protect themselves from some others' attempts to put them down and push them around" (Tannen, 1990, p. 24). Women see conversations as "negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus" (ibid., p. 25). (The use of *gender* as a prefix for a *-lect* is itself revealing of the ethnicization project.)

More than proposing difference, some feminist theorists imply that women may really be *better* than men. Thus Tannen suggests that men's struggle for independence and autonomy is a "hindrance" when they do not have all the information they need to make a decision; women, therefore, "make better managers because they are more inclined to consult others and involve employees in decision making" (ibid., p.181). Other theorists argue for the superiority of "women's way of knowing," which is animated by compassion and caring. Legal theorist Robin West fashions a jurisprudence from women's experience of mothering:

> To the considerable degree that our potentiality for motherhood defines ourselves, women's lives are relational, not autonomous. As mothers, we nurture the weak and we depend upon the strong. More than do men, we live in an interdependent and hierarchical natural web with others of varying degrees of strength. (cited in Harris, 1990, p. 602)

Legal theorist Catharine MacKinnon has been one of the most articulate, if not theoretically slippery, theorists offering this position. Like West, MacKinnon claims that "a unitary, 'essential' women's experience can be isolated and described independently of race, class, sexual orientation and other realities of experience" (ibid., p. 585). Biological sex remains the organizing principle for social inequality; therefore, liberal solutions that grant equal rights to the extent that women are the same as men, do serious injury to women's differences. As a result, male supremacy remains invisible, indistinguishable from liberal conceptions of rationality, law, and order, and the force of male domination "is exercised as consent, its authority as participation, its supremacy as the paradigm of order, its control as the definition of legitimacy" (MacKinnon, 1983, p. 639). Legal equality, MacKinnon claims, demands a jurisprudence that begins with women's and men's essential difference, and moves neither to make them the same nor to make women simply a special category of "non-men" needing extra protection.

The Search for the Deep Masculine

If politics makes strange bedfellows, few could be stranger than the peculiar unacknowledged alliance between feminist essentialists and purveyors of the new "mythopoetic" men's movement. In the recent writings and weekend workshops of Robert Bly, whose *Iron John* topped the hardcover best-seller lists for 1991, and

associates like Jungian psychologists Robert Moore, Michael Meade, and James Hillman, and pop-philosopher Sam Keen (whose *Fire in the Belly* also graced the best-seller lists), we can discern an effort by men to claim a community based on ontological essences. Bly, for example, believes that there is a biological reason that women are better able to express anger, while men are more likely to act out without knowing why. The corpus callosum, the connecting bridge between the two brain hemispheres, is more developed in women, Bly argues, and this development allows a more efficient interplay between language and emotion. "Women have a superhighway going on there," he said in a lecture, while men "have a country road." (Bly believes his own corpus callosum has grown "thicker" over the past two decades.)

The men's movement assumes a deep, essential manhood, and their weekend workshops promise its retrieval. Manhood is a deeply seated essence, an ingrained quality awaiting activation in the social world. Intrinsic to every man, manhood is transhistorical and culturally universal. Moore and Gillette claim that the deep elements of manhood have "remained largely unchanged for millions of years"(1991). Bly reminds us that this man-ness is the polar opposite of woman-ness.

> Male and female make up one pair, the light and the dark another, the one and the many another, the odd and even another . . . Rejoicing in the opposites means pushing the opposites apart with our imaginations so as to create space, and then enjoying the fantastic music coming from each side . . . One can feel the resonance between opposites in flamenco dancing. Defender and attacker watch each other, attractor and refuser, woman and man, black and red. Each is a pole with its separate magnetic charge, each is a nation defending its borders, each is a warrior enjoying the heat of extravagant passion, a distinguished passion which is fierce, eaglelike, mysterious. (1990, p. 67)

Though masculinity is an inner essence diametrically opposed to femininity, individual men do not inherit manhood through their biological composition. Manhood must be achieved and validated by other men; women cannot validate manhood. "It takes work to become a man," write Moore and Gillette (1991). "Achieving adult male status requires personal courage and the support and nurturing of older men." The larger society must facilitate this achievement, because when the actualization of manhood is thwarted, dire consequences result. "If a culture does not deal with the warrior energy . . . it will turn up outside in the form of street gangs, wife beating, drug violence, brutality to children, and aimless murder" (Bly, 1990, p. 38). The route to manhood is perilous, but the consequences of failure are far worse.

The men's movement embraces a traditional, and rather conservative, rendering of psychoanalytic theory. The task of becoming men requires a break from initial identification with mother. In today's world, this break is not simple; men's

repudiation of the feminine is thwarted. More than one man "today needs a sword to cut his adult soul away from his mother-bound soul" (ibid., p. 165). The difficulty lies in the fact that mothers, remaining locked in somewhat incestuous flirtations with their sons, will not let their sons go, and absent fathers do not facilitate the transfer of identity. Father absence is a consequence of modern society. In their mythic history of the Industrial Revolution, mythopoets argue that the "love unit most damaged by the Industrial Revolution has been the father-son bond" (ibid., p. 19). They call this damage the "father wound."

Beyond Essentialism

All across the country, mythopoetic men are gathering to retrieve their deep manhood as they invoke ancient gods and warriors, chant Native American chants, and don traditional warrior wardrobes; "womyn" are invoking goddesses as they smear menstrual blood on redwood trees to restore or protect the environment; and gay men seek mainstream public acceptance because they have gay brains and cannot help being who they are. Such efforts to ground identity in some primordial categorical status is understandable; we are relieved of accountability since responsibility is displaced onto essential structures outside of human volition. We can celebrate difference and obliterate the foundation for inequalities that are based on difference at the same time. Such efforts are, I believe, misplaced. Theoretically, they are ill-conceived; even though the binary oppositions are cast in terms of closed sets, they are always defined in relation to one another. The terms of essential difference are themselves relative concepts. The essentialist impulse assumes a historical universalism; there is no past in this static, mythic construction, and no vision that the future could be any different. Their stories are "all middle, with no beginning or end" (Harris, 1991, p. 182). Myths of essentialist origins are themselves culturally constructed; they have a history, they emerge at certain times and disappear at others. As R. W. Connell argues, our "conception of what is natural and what natural differences consist of is itself a cultural construct" (1987, p. 76). Essentialism also reduces sexuality to sex behavior, which reduces to biological sex, and reduces gender behavior to biological sex, which serves to "flatten the richness of present experience and to miss historical complexity and change" (Harris, 1991, p. 189). As James Baldwin succinctly put it, "homosexual is not a noun."

Despite claims to the contrary, essentialism is historically anachronistic. Irving Howe describes ethnic nationalism in the following way:

> These ethnic groups now turn back—and as they nervously insist, "with pride"—to look for fragments of a racial or national or religious identity that moves them to the extent that it is no longer available. Perhaps, also, *because* it is no longer available. (1997, p. 18)

Finally, essentialism is politically conservative (note how the goal is to *re*store, *re*claim, *re*trieve), serving, as Foucault writes, to "constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative" (1979, p. 21).

There is another ironic political dimension to essentialist constructions. On the surface, essentialism seems to be a way to theorize from the perspective of the "other," thereby normalizing the other. But this theory can be promoted only by the privileged. Thus more gay men than lesbians promote gay essentialism, because men theorize from a place of gender privilege. Far more straight, middle-class white men are interested in exploring their deep, unchanging manhood at Bly's weekend retreats. White women have been the chief proponents of sex-based essentialism. As black feminist legal scholar Angela Harris argues, "it is only white people who have the luxury of 'having no color,' only white people have been able to imagine that sexism and racism are separate experiences" (Harris, 1990, p. 601).

Harris and other critics argue that their drive to make biological sex the transcendent and determinant category that organizes all social experience ends up obliterating the specialness of race or class. "Black women are not white women with color," writes black feminist critic Barbara Omolade (quoted in ibid., p. 601).

Essentialist arguments appear to offer radical reformulations of difference in an effort to promote equality. But in the guise of promoting the categorical equality and comparability of all members of any particular class—women, gays, men—these arguments also assume the persistence of inequality in the relations among those categories. Liberal theory always assumed that differences in individual ability or motivation spelled the origins of social inequality, while Marxism assumed that equality was possible only through the obliteration of categories of difference and the assumption of sameness. Thus liberalism promoted inequality and difference, Marxism promoted equality and sameness. Radical essentialist theories attempt to ground a new politics of equality on the recognition of difference. But when we assume that these differences are ahistorical, biologically based primordial differences, we are guaranteed that such a radical project will not succeed.

In his classic study of social Darwinism, historian Richard Hofstadter concluded with a stinging critique of biological explanations:

> . . . such biological ideas as the "survival of the fittest," whatever their doubtful value in natural science, are utterly useless in attempting to understand society; that the life of man in society, while it is incidentally a biological fact, has characteristics that are not reducible to biology and must be explained in the distinctive terms of a cultural analysis; that the physical well-being of men is a result of their social organization and not vice versa; that social improvement is a product of advances in technology and social organization, not of breeding or selective elimination; that judgments as to the value of competition between men or enterprises or nations must be based upon social and not allegedly biological consequences; and, finally, that there is

> nothing in nature or a naturalistic philosophy of life to make impossible the acceptance of moral sanctions that can be employed for the common good. (1955, p. 204)

When identities are socially constructed, they can be socially deconstructed and reconstructed. Individuals and groups can be held accountable for their actions because we recognize the capacity for change. In the aftermath of the collapse of totalitarian regimes, it would be tragic to reimpose a conceptual Iron Curtain inside our heads.

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8

Hard Issues and Soft Spots
Counseling Men about Sexuality

with Jeffrey C. Fracher

> Nothing shows more clearly the extent to which modern society has atomized itself than the isolation in sexual ignorance which exists among us . . . Many cultures, the most primitive and the most complex, have entertained sexual fears of an irrational sort, but probably our culture is unique in strictly isolating the individual in the fears that society has devised.
>
> —Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*

Sam is a 28-year-old white, single factory worker. He lives alone in a two-family home that he owns and attends night school at a community college.[1] The third of six sons in a blue-collar, Eastern European Catholic family, Sam is a conscientious, hard-working, and responsible man with very traditional values. He describes himself as a sexual late-bloomer, having begun dating only after graduation from an all-male Catholic high school. Although strong and handsome, he has always lacked confidence with women, and describes himself as male peer-oriented, actively involved in sports, and spending much of his leisure time with "the boys."

Prior to his first sexual intercourse two years ago at age 26, Sam had fabricated stories to tell his friends so as not to appear inadequate. He felt a great deal of shame and embarrassment that his public presentation of his sexual exploits had no basis in reality. His limited sexual knowledge caused him great anxiety and difficulty, especially since the woman with whom he was involved had had previous sexual encounters. Upon completion of intercourse, she reported that he "came too fast" (i.e., less than one minute, or after several thrusts), a statement that he reported, "hit me between the eyes." His second attempt at intercourse was no more successful, despite his use of a condom to reduce sensation, and he subsequently broke off this relationship because of the shame and embarrassment about

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Critical reactions from John Gagnon, Murray Scher, and Mark Stevens have been very helpful.

his sexual incompetence and the fear that word would leak out to his friends. He subsequently developed a secondary pattern of sexual avoidance, and when he first came to treatment, indicating that he was "not a real man because I can't satisfy a woman," he had not had sex for two years and was reluctant to resume dating until his premature ejaculation was vastly improved.

Joe is a 34-year-old CPA who has been married for three years. The youngest of five children and the only male in a middle-class Irish American family, Joe feels his father had high expectations for him, and exhibited only neutrality or criticism. Joe was without a male role model who conveyed that it was okay to fail. In fact, he portrayed men as strong, competent, without feelings, and without problems or failings and believes he can never live up to the image his father had for him. Consequently, Joe is terrified that failure to please a woman sexually may result in criticism that will challenge his masculinity; he will not be a "real man." Anticipating this criticism from his wife, his sexual interest is reduced.

When first seen in therapy, Joe evidenced a total lack of sexual interest in his wife but a high degree of sexual interest involving sexual fantasies, pornography, and masturbation. He said "lust is an obsession with me," indicating a high sex drive when sex is anonymous, and though he felt sexually inadequate with his wife, he felt sexually potent with women he devalues, such as prostitutes. He could not understand his almost total lack of sexual interest in his wife.

Bill is a 52-year-old engineer who has been married for 25 years. From a white, middle-class Protestant background he has one grown child, and initially came to treatment upon referral from a urologist. He had seen numerous physicians after experiencing erectile dysfunction three years ago, and has actively sought a physical explanation for it.

Bill's wife, Ann, was quite vocal about her disappointment in his failure to perform sexually. Bill had always been the sexual initiator, and Ann had come to expect that he should be in charge. Both believed that the only "real sex" is intercourse with an erect penis. Ann frequently commented that she felt "emotionally empty" without intercourse, thereby adding to his sense of inadequacy. The loss of his capacity for erection, Bill told the therapist, meant that he had lost his masculinity, and he worried openly about displeasing Ann and her possibly leaving him.

His fear of lost masculinity spilled over into his job performance, and he became depressed and withdrew from social activities. Bill was unaware that as an older man, he required more direct penile stimulation for an erection, since he had never required it in the past, and was unable to ask for it from Ann. He felt that a "real man never has to ask his wife for anything sexually" and should be able to perform without her help. The pattern of erectile dysfunction was part of a broader pattern of inability to tolerate failure, and he had begun to lose self-confidence since his masculinity was almost entirely predicated upon erectile functioning. "Nothing else matters," he confided, if his masculinity (evidenced by a functional erection) was not present. Everything was suddenly on the line—his self-worth, his marriage, and his career—if he proved unable to correct his problem.

Sam, Joe, and Bill manifest the three most common sexual complaints of men seeking therapy. But underlying premature ejaculation, inhibited sexual desire, and erectile dysfunction is a common thread binding these and other sexual problems together. Each fears that his sexual problem damages his sense of masculinity, makes him less of a "real man." In a sense, we might say that all three men "suffer" from masculinity.

This chapter will explore how gender becomes one of the key organizing principles of male sexuality, informing and structuring men's sexual experiences. It will discuss how both gender and sexuality are socially constructed and how therapeutic strategies to help men deal with sexual problems can raise issues of gender identity. This is especially important, of course, since so many therapeutic interventions rely on a diagnostic model that is simultaneously overly individualistic (in that it locates the source of the problem entirely within the individual) and transhistorical (in that it assumes that all cultures exhibit similar patterns at all times). The chapter combines a comparative and historical understanding of how both gender and sexuality are socially constructed with a psychoanalytic understanding of the transformative possibilities contained within the therapeutic relationship. This combination will lead us to discuss both social and therapeutic interventions that might facilitate healthier sexual expression for men.

The Social Construction of Sexuality and Masculinity

Sexuality is socially constructed, a learned set of both behaviors and cognitive interpretations of those behaviors. Sexuality is less the product of biological drives than of a socialization process, and this socialization process is specific to any culture at any particular time. This means that "social roles are not vehicles for the expression of sexual impulse but that sexuality becomes a vehicle for expressing the needs of social roles" (Gagnon & Simon, 1973, p. 45). *That* we are sexual is determined by a biological imperative toward reproduction, but *how* we are sexual—where, when, how often, with whom, and why—has to do with cultural learning, with meanings transmitted in a cultural setting. Sexuality varies from culture to culture; it changes in any one culture over time; it changes over the course of each of our lives. Sexual beings are made and not born; we make ourselves into sexual beings within a cultural framework. While it may appear counterintuitive, this perspective suggests that the elusive quality commonly called "desire" is actually a relatively unimportant part of sexual conduct. As Gagnon and Simon argue (1973, p. 103), "the availability of sexual partners, their ages, their incomes, their point in the economic process, their time commitments . . . shape their sexual careers far more than the minor influence of sexual desire." Sexuality is learned in roughly the same way as anything else is learned in our culture. As Gagnon writes (1977, p. 2):

> In any given society, at any given moment, people become sexual in the same way as they become everything else. Without much reflection, they pick up directions from their social environment. They acquire and assemble meanings, skills and values from the people around them. Their critical choices are often made by going along and drifting. People learn when they are quite young a few of the things that they are expected to be, and continue slowly to accumulate a belief in who they are and ought to be through the rest of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Sexual conduct is learned in the same ways and through the same processes; it is acquired and assembled in human interaction, judged and performed in specific cultural and historical worlds.

If sexuality is socially constructed, perhaps the most significant element of the construction—the foundation upon which we construct our sexuality—is gender. For men, the notion of masculinity, the cultural definition of manhood, serves as the primary building block of sexuality. It is through our understanding of masculinity that we construct a sexuality, and it is through our sexualities that we confirm the successful construction of our gender identity. Gender informs sexuality; sexuality confirms gender. Thus men have much at stake when they confront a sexual problem: they risk their self-image as men.

Like sexuality, gender in general, and masculinity in particular, is socially constructed; that is, what we understand to be masculine varies from culture to culture, over historical time within any one culture, and over the course of any one person's life within any culture. What we consider masculine or feminine in our culture is also not the result of some biological imperative, not some religious requirement, but a socially organized mode of behavior. What is masculine is not set in stone, but historically fluid. The pioneering research on gender by anthropologist Margaret Mead (1935) and others has specified how widely the cultural requirements of masculinity—what it takes to be a "real man" in any particular culture—vary. And these gender categories also shift in any one culture over time. Who would suggest, for example, that what was prescribed among upper-class Frenchmen in the eighteenth century—rare silk stockings and red patent leather high heels, profuse amounts of perfume and facial powder, powdered wigs and very long hair, and a rather precious preoccupation with love poems, dainty furniture, and roses—resembles our contemporary version of masculinity?

The assertion of the social construction of sexuality and gender leads naturally to two related questions. First, we need to specify precisely the dimensions of masculinity within contemporary American culture. How is masculinity organized as a normative set of behaviors and attitudes? Second, we need to specify precisely the ways in which this socially constructed gender identity informs male sexual development. How is masculinity expressed through sexuality?

David and Brannon's (1976, p. 12) summary of the normative structure of contemporary American masculinity is relevant here. Masculinity requires the

avoidance and repudiation of all behaviors that are even remotely associated with femininity ("no sissy stuff"); this requires a ceaseless patrolling of one's boundaries, an incessant surveillance of one's performances to ensure that one is sufficiently male. Men must be "big wheels" since success and status are key determinants of masculinity, and they must be "sturdy oaks," exuding a manly air of self-confidence, toughness, and self-reliance, as well as reliability. Men must "give 'em hell," presenting an aura of aggression and daring, and an attitude of constantly "going for it."

The normative organization of masculinity has been verified empirically (see Thompson & Pleck, 1986) and has obviously important implications for male sexuality. In a sense, sexuality is the location of the enactment of masculinity; sexuality allows the expression of masculinity. Male sexual socialization informs men that sexuality is the proving ground of adequate gender identity and provides the script that men will adopt, with individual modification, as the foundation for sexual activity.

In a sense, when we examine the normative sexuality that is constructed from the typical organization of masculinity, it is not so much sexual problems that are of interest, but the problematization of "normal" sexuality, understanding perhaps the pathological elements within normal sexual functioning. This allows us to bridge the chasm between men who experience sexual dysfunction and those who, ostensibly, do not and to explore how men array themselves along a continuum of sexual expressions. Because masculinity provides the basic framework of sexual organization, and because masculinity requires adherence to certain rules that may retard or constrain emotional expression, we might fruitfully explore how even "normal" male sexuality evidences specific pathological symptoms, so that men who present exaggerated versions of these symptoms in therapy may better perceive their problems in a larger sociological context of gender relations in contemporary society.[2] The social construction of male sexuality raises a crucial theoretical issue. In the past, both social science research and clinical practice were informed by a model of discrete dichotomies. Categories for analysis implied a dualistic worldview in which a phenomenon was classified as either X or Y. Thus one was either male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, normal or pathological. Since the pioneering studies of Alfred Kinsey and his associates (see Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948), however, this traditional model of mutually exclusive dichotomous variables has given way to a model of a continuum of behaviors along which individuals array themselves. The continuum model allows individuals to reposition themselves at different moments in the life course, and it allows the researcher or clinician a point of entry into a relationship with the behaviors being discussed. The people we study and the people we counsel are less some curious "other" and more a variation on a set of behaviors that we ourselves embody as well. The articulation of the continuum model also requires that the level of analysis of any behavior include a social analysis of the context for behavior and the social construction of definitions of normality. It thus permits a truly *social* psychology.

The Male Sexual Script

Male sexual socialization teaches young men that sex is secret, morally wrong, and pleasurable. The association of sexual pleasure with feelings of guilt and shame is articulated early in the young boy's development, and reinforced throughout the life course by family, school, religion, and media images of sexuality. Young males are instructed, in locker rooms and playgrounds, to detach their emotions from sexual expression. In early masturbatory experience, the logic of detachment accommodates the twin demands of sexual pleasuring and guilt and shame. Later, detachment serves the "healthy" heterosexual male by permitting delay of orgasm in order to please his sexual partner and serves the "healthy" homosexual male by permitting numerous sexual partners without cluttering up the scene with unpleasant emotional connection. (We will return to an exploration of the similarities between heterosexual and homosexual male sexuality later.)

Detachment requires a self-objectification, a distancing from one's self, and the development of a "secret sexual self" that performs sexual acts according to culturally derived scripts (Gagnon & Simon, 1973, p. 64). That men use the language of work as metaphors for sexual conduct—"getting the job done," "performing well," "achieving orgasm"—illustrates more than a passing interest in turning everything into a job whose performance can be evaluated; it reinforces detachment so that the body becomes a sexual machine, a performer instead of an authentic actor. The penis is transformed from an organ of sexual pleasure into a "tool," an instrument by which the performance is carried out, a thing, separate from the self. Many men report that they have conversations with their penises, and often cajole, plead with, or demand that they become and remain erect without orgasmic release. The penis can become the man's enemy, ready to engage in the most shameful conspiracy possible: performance failure. Is it any wonder that "performance anxiety" is a normative experience for male sexual behavior?

Men's earliest forays into sexuality, especially masturbation, are the first location of sexual anxiety. Masturbation teaches young men that sexuality is about the detachment of emotions from sex, that sex is important in itself. Second, men learn that sex is something covert, to be hidden; that is, men learn to privatize sexual experience without skills to share the experience. And masturbation also teaches men that sexuality is phallocentric, that the penis is the center of the sexual universe. Finally, the tools of masturbation, especially sexual fantasy, teach men to objectify the self, to separate the self from the body, to focus on parts of bodies and not whole beings, often to speak of one's self in the third person.

Adolescent sexual socialization reinforces these behavioral demands that govern male sexuality. Passivity is absolutely forbidden, and the young male must attempt to escalate the sexual element at all times. To do otherwise is to avoid "giving 'em hell" and expose potential feminine behaviors. This constant pressure for escalation derives from the phallocentric component to male sexuality—"it only counts if I put it in," a student told one of us. Since normative heterosexuality

assigns to men the role of "doer" and women the role of "gatekeeper," determining the level of sexual experience appropriate to any specific situation, this relentless pressure to escalate prevents either the male or the female from experiencing the sexual pleasure of any point along the continuum. No sooner does he "arrive" at a particular sexual experience—touching her breast, for example—than he begins strategizing the ways in which he can escalate, go further. To do less would expose him as less than manly. The female instantly must determine the limits of the encounter and devise the logistics that will prevent escalation if those limits have been reached. Since both male and female maintain a persistent orientation to the future (how to escalate and how to prevent escalation), neither can experience the pleasure of the points en route to full sexual intercourse. In fact, what men learn is that intercourse is the appropriate end-point of any sexual encounter, and that only response derives from the man's relationship to an ideal vision of masculinity. The construction of this masculine ideal therefore needs to be addressed since it often creates the imperative command—to be in a constant state of potential sexual arousal, to achieve and maintain perfectly potent erections on command, and to delay ejaculation for a long time—that results in the performance anxiety that creates the symptom in the first place.

Sex therapy exercises, such as those developed by William Masters and Virginia Johnson and others, are usually effective only when the social context of gender ideals has also been addressed. This is accomplished by exploring and challenging the myths of male sexuality, modeling by the therapist of a different version of masculinity, giving permission to the patient to fail, and self-disclosure by the therapist of the doubts, fears of inadequacy, and other anxieties that all men experience. These will significantly reduce the isolation that the patient may experience, the fear that he is the only man who experiences such sexually linked problems. These methods may be used to reorient men's assumptions about what constitutes masculinity, even though the therapist will be unable to change the entire social edifice that has been constructed upon these gender assumptions. Both the cognitive as well as the physical script must be addressed in treating sexual dysfunction; the cognitive script is perhaps the more important.

Recall these specific examples drawn from case materials. Sam's sexual performance was charged with anxiety and shame regarding both female partners and male peers. He was adamant that no one know he was seeking therapy and went to great lengths to assure that confidentiality be preserved. He revealed significant embarrassment and shame with the therapist in early sessions, which subsided once the condition was normalized by the therapist.

Sam had grown up with exaggerated expectations of male sexual performance—that men must perform sexually on cue and never experience any sexual difficulty—that were consistent with the social milieu in which he was raised. He held women on a pedestal and believed that a man must please a woman or risk losing her. The stakes were thus quite high. Sam was also terrified of appearing "unmanly" with women, which resulted in a high degree of performance anxiety,

which in turn prompted the premature ejaculation. The cycle of anxiety and failure finally brought Sam to treatment. Finally, Sam was detached from his own sexuality, his own body both sexually and emotionally. His objectification of his penis made it impossible for him to monitor impending ejaculation, and he was therefore unable to moderate the intensity of sensation prior to the point of ejaculatory inevitability. This common pattern among men who experience premature ejaculation suggests that such a response comes not from hypersensitivity but rather an atrophied sensitivity based on objectification of the phallus.

Sam's treatment consisted of permission from another man—the therapist—to experience this problem and the attempt by the therapist to normalize the situation and reframe it as a problem any man might encounter. The problem was redefined as a sign of virility rather than an indication of its absence; Sam came to understand his sexual drive as quite high, which led to high levels of excitement that he had not yet learned to control. The therapist presented suggestions to control ejaculation that helped him moderate the intensity of arousal in order to better control his ejaculation. The important work, however, challenged the myths and cognitive script that Sam maintained regarding his sexuality. The attention given to his sexual performance, what he demanded of himself and what he believed women demanded of him, helped him reorient his sexuality into a less performance-oriented style.

Joe, the 34-year-old CPA, experienced low sexual desire with his wife though he masturbated regularly. Masturbatory fantasies involving images of women wanting him, finding him highly desirable, populated his fantasy world. When his self-esteem was low, as when he lost his job, for example, his sexual fantasies increased markedly. These fantasies of prowess with devalued women restored, he felt, his worth as a man. Interest in pornography included a script in which women were passive and men in control, very unlike the situation he perceives with his wife. He complained that he is caught in a vicious cycle, since without sexual interest in his wife he's not a "real man," and if he's not a "real man" then he has no sexual desire for her. He suggested that if he could only master a masculine challenge that was not sexual, such as finding another job or another competitive situation, he believed his sexual interest in his wife would increase. He felt he needed the mastery of a masculine challenge to confirm his sense of self as a man, which would then find further confirmation in the sexual arena. This adds an empirical confirmation of Gagnon and Simon's argument (1973) that genital sexuality contains many nonsexual motives, including the desire for achievement, power, and peer approval. Joe came to therapy with a great deal of shame at having to be there and was especially ashamed at having to tell another man about his failures as a man. He was greatly relieved by the therapist's understanding, self-disclosure, and nonjudgmental stance, which enhanced the therapist's credibility and Joe's commitment to treatment.

One cognitive script that Joe challenged in counseling was his embrace of the "madonna/whore" ideology. In this formulation, any woman worth having (the

madonna—mother or wife) was perceived as both asexual and as sexually rejecting of him, since his failures rendered him less of a real man. A "whore," on the other hand, would be both sexually available and interested in him, so she is consequently devalued and avoided. He could be sexual with her because the stakes are so low. This reinforces the cultural equation between sexual pleasure and cultural guilt and shame, since Joe would only want to be sexual with those who would not want to be sexual with him. This common motif in male sexual socialization frequently emerges in descriptions of "good girls" and "bad girls" in high school. Joe's therapy included individual short-term counseling with the goal of helping him see the relationship between his self-esteem and his inhibited sexual desire. Traditional masculine definitions of success were the sole basis for Joe's self-esteem and these were challenged in the context of a supportive therapeutic environment. The failure of childhood male role models was contrasted with new role models who provide permission to fail, helping Joe view sexuality as noncompetitive and nonachievement-oriented activity. Joe began to experience a return of sexual desire for his wife as he became less phallocentric and more able to see sex as a vehicle for expressing intimacy and caring rather than a performance for an objectified self and other.

Bill, the 52-year-old married engineer, presented with erectile failure, which is part of a larger pattern of intolerance of failure in himself. The failure of his penis to function properly symbolized to him the ultimate collapse of his manhood. Not surprisingly, he had searched for physiological etiologies before seeking psychological counseling and had been referred by a urologist. It is estimated that less than 50% of all men who present themselves for penile implant surgery have a physiological basis for their problem; if so, the percentage of all men who experience erectile disorders whose etiology is physiological is less than 5%. Yet the pressure to salvage a sense of masculinity that might be damaged by a psychological problem leads thousands of men to request surgical prosthesis every year (see, for example, Tiefer, 1986).

Bill and his wife, Ann, confronted in therapy the myths of male sexuality that they embraced, including such dicta as "a real man always wants sex," "the only real sex is intercourse," and "the man must always be in charge of sex" (see Zilbergeld, 1978). The therapist gave Bill permission to fail by telling him that all men at some time experience erectile dysfunction. Further, Bill was counseled that the real problem is not the erectile failure, but his reaction to this event. Exercises were assigned in which Bill obtained an erection through manual stimulation and then purposely lost the erection to desensitize himself to his terrible fear of failure. This helped him overcome the "what if" fear of losing the erection. Bill was counseled to "slow down" his sexual activity, and to focus on the sensations rather than the physical response, both of which were designed to further remove the performance aspects from his sexual activity. Finally, the therapist helped Bill and Ann redefine the notion of masculinity by stating that "a real man is strong enough to take risks, eschew stereotypes, to ask for what he needs sexually from a partner, and, most of all, to tolerate failure."

As Bill and Ann's cognitive script changed, his ability to function sexually improved. Though Bill still does not get full erections on a consistent basis, this fact is no longer catastrophic for him. He and Ann now have a broader script both physically and cognitively, which allows them to have other sexual play and the shared intimacy that it provides.

As one can see from these case studies, several themes run consistently through therapeutic strategies in counseling men about sexual problems, and many of these themes also relate directly to issues of social analysis as well as clinical practice. For example, the therapeutic environment must be experienced as supportive, and care must be taken so that the therapist not appear too threatening or too "successful" to the patient. The gender of the therapist with the male patient will raise different issues at this point. A male therapist can empathize with the patient and greatly reduce his sense of isolation, while a female therapist can provide positive reactions to fears of masculine inadequacy and thereby provide a positive experience with a woman they may translate to nontherapeutic situations.

Second, the presenting symptom should be "normalized," that is, it should be cast within the wider frame of male socialization to sexuality. It is not so much that the patient is "bad," "wrong," or "abnormal" but that he has experienced some of the contradictory demands of masculinity in ways that have become dysfunctional for his sexual experiences. It is often crucial to help the patient realize that he is not the only man who experiences these problems, and that these problems are only problems seen from within a certain construct of masculinity.

In this way, the therapist can help the patient to dissociate sexuality from his sense of masculinity, to break the facile identification between sexual performance and masculinity. Masculinity can be confirmed by more than erectile capacity, constant sexual interest, and a long duration of intercourse; in fact, as we have argued, normal male sexuality often requires the dissociation of emotional intimacy and connectedness for adequate sexual functioning. Raising the level of analysis from the treatment of individual symptoms to a social construction of gender and sexuality does not mean abandoning the treatment of the presenting symptoms, but rather retaining their embeddedness in the social context from which they emerge. Counseling men about sexuality involves, along with individualized treatment, the redefinition of what it means to be a man in contemporary American society. Therapeutic treatments pitched at both the social and the individual levels can help men become more expressive lovers and friends and fathers, as well as more "functional" sexual partners. That a man's most important sexual organ is his mind is as true today as ever.

9

Bisexuality
A Sociological Perspective

with John H. Gagnon and Cathy Stein Greenblat

This chapter is divided into two major parts, the first theoretical, the second empirical. The first part is itself twofold. We first attempt to deconstruct the conventional wisdom about "bisexuality," and *second,* propose a way of thinking about sexuality (indeed, all of social life) that takes into account that the ways in which scientists or intellectuals think about conduct and the conduct that is being thought about share a common and interactive terrain. Our goal in the theoretical segment of the chapter is to offer a "temporary" or "local" theory of the variety of patterns of sexual conduct that are discussed in the second part of the chapter (Geertz, 1973, 1983). In the second part of the chapter there is discussion of some of the wide variety of the socially and culturally situated ways in which it is possible for persons to have sex with both men and women in the contemporary United States and the lack of fit between this variety of sociosexual practice with any unicausal or multicausal conception of "bisexuality."

We do this not because there is any particular pleasure in being a cultural or intellectual vandal, but because it is our view that the cultural constructions that we use to think about and to contain the sexual practices that are organized by the term "sexual object choice" or sexual orientation or sexual preference are profoundly coercive and profoundly muddled. If we simply substitute the term "gender" in each of these phrases, as in gender object choice or gender orientation and gender preference, it would provide a modicum of clarity about what it is that we choose, orient toward, or prefer in erotic relations (Gagnon, 1988).

Sex with Both Women and Men as Ideology

The contemporary conception of "bisexuality," here in quotes to indicate its equivocal status, is, like all scientific ideas, the result of a long process of historical and cultural construction and deconstruction. Its current status, like that of those

terms that are its conceptual ancestors and that frame it like a pair of parentheses, homosexuality and heterosexuality, is the result of ongoing intellectual and sociocultural changes that have their roots in the hegemonic growth of medical, psychiatric, and sexological thought since the middle of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the collection of diverse and unlike sexual practices that we attempt to contain by uncritically applying the term "bisexuality" to them are the result of other social and cultural processes that are quite independent of the scientific conceptions of bisexuality.

To understand the contemporary status of the concept requires taking a few steps backward in time to try to historically and culturally situate not only bisexuality as an ideology and a practice, but "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" as well. It is now a commonplace observation to point out that the term "homosexuality" emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century as part of the larger medicalization of the domain of the sexual (Weeks, 1981). In a paraphrase of Foucault, this was one element in the medical psychiatric occupation and reconstruction of a terrain of knowledge and practice that was previously part of the territory controlled by an alliance between the state, as embodied in the legal system, and religion, as embodied in dogma and institutional practices. This specific reconstruction was part of the general scientificization and secularization of all of social life in the nineteenth century (Foucault, 1978, 1979). The "otherness" represented by the social practice of men who had sex with men and of women who had sex with women created a world of perverted biological or psychological development with a new nomenclature and practice that would reach its culmination in the diagnostic manuals of psychiatrists in the middle of the twentieth century (Bayer, 1981).

The early and primitive social constructions of the unnatural or abnormal categories of the "homosexual" and "homosexuality" logically required the construction of its natural or normal opposite, the "heterosexual" or "heterosexuality" (Katz, 1983; Gagnon, 1992). While no one, at the time that these terms were invented, thought of themselves as heterosexuals or homosexuals, it is one of the signal successes of the radical medical profession that this terminology and the social practices that flow from such a dichotomy between the normal and the abnormal represent the dominant modes of discourse and practice about these matters at the present time.

Most contemporary "heterosexuals" rarely think of themselves as "heterosexuals," except in moments when they think about "homosexuals" or "homosexuality." Perhaps none conceive of the sex that they practice as a contingent domain of social practice called "heterosexuality." "Heterosexuals" simply act in a gendered sexual manner, without reflexivity, as if their gender preference in erotic relations were unproblematic. This is true despite the fact that it is clear that the "normality" of their sexual conduct is in part dependent on the abnormality of the sexual conduct of those who have same-gender or mixed-gender sexual preferences or practices. The unproblematic or unmarked

status of opposite-gender erotic preferences and the problematic or marked status of same-gender erotic preferences and practices in daily life and in science has resulted in a research program about the origins and practices of men who have sex with men and those women who have sex with women, but only a minuscule interest in the origins and practices of the majority category: persons who have sex with the opposite gender.

This massive positivist research program about homosexuality has obscured the fact that these polar categories, the heterosexual and the homosexual, are themselves based on a changing discourse and practice related to the larger set of social relations between women and men. The nineteenth century was a period in which the transformation of social life by the market, the factory, the city, and new forms of social stratification—in a shorthand phrase, the rise of hegemonic capitalism—included the transformation of all relations between women and men. Heterosexuality was the medical term that came to be fitted to the folk categories of correct sexuality that emerged in the new middle classes, folk categories that were themselves based on a newly constituted polarity (what feminists have identified as separate social spheres) between women and men. In the medicalized (and ultimately biologized and psychologized) language of gender, there emerged a newly defined dichotomy between masculinity or maleness and femininity or femaleness (Tavris, 1992; Fausto Sterling, 1985).

In this medicalized version of the sexual world, heterosexuality was the natural outcome of the sexual attraction between gendered opposites, homosexuality the unnatural outcome of the sexual attraction between gendered similars. Therefore, men who had sex with men were insufficiently masculine or excessively feminine, women who had sex with women were insufficiently feminine or excessively masculine. It is the conflation of these two dimensions, that of gender discourse and practice (the ideology and practice of social relations between the genders) and of gender preference in erotic relations (the ideology and practice of sexual relations between the genders) that has been the confounding element in thinking about sexuality for nearly a century.

It is this confusion between gender preferences in erotic relations and masculinity and femininity as they are constituted in gender definitions that resulted in Hirschfeld's invention of "intermediate sexual types" as a way to map "homosexuals" and "homosexuality" onto the gender continuum between completely masculine men and completely feminine women. It was a resistance to and acceptance of these typologies of gender and sexuality that led (not only in Germany) to a belief in and practice of a "classical homosexuality" in which pure masculine men would have sex with each other uncontaminated by femininity or the penetrations of the body celebrated in heterosexuality and effeminate homosexuality (Oosterhuis, 1991).

Freud's observation, which is so often quoted today, represents the nineteenth-century culmination of this belief in the new dominance of gender in defining the normality of sexual relations:

> The most striking distinction between the erotic life of antiquity and our own no doubt lies in the fact that the ancients laid the stress on the instinct itself, whereas we emphasize its object . . . We despise the instinctual activity in itself and find excuse for it only on the merits of the object. (Marcus, 1975, xxvii)

The merits of the object in this case are the appropriately gendered actor with whom intercourse occurs only in marriage and with the correlative goals of reproduction and a muted pleasure. The virtuous object serves to legitimate and channel the instinct.

This conception of a polarized heterosexuality and homosexuality mapped upon a polarized masculinity and femininity became the *taken-for-granted* mode of thinking about sexual desire for the next three quarters of a century. As with all theories (scientific or folk) that succeed in becoming the dominant mode of discourse within a community (scientific or folk), this view of object choice as the central organizing feature of normal and abnormal desire organized the perceptions and research of a majority of scientists. In the usual way that science proceeds, observations were sought and techniques developed that satisfied the needs of the central scientific dogma.

This dogma was based on the existence of two opposed and completely separate essentialisms: heterosexuality and homosexuality. It was generally believed in the scientific and professional communities that had the responsibility for managing sexuality, that these two forms of behavior had separate etiologies (though only the etiology of homosexuality was ever explored since heterosexuality was an outcome that was so natural that it needed no explanation) and were the automatic outcomes of the normal and abnormal pathways of development. While it is true in Western societies that nearly all forms of sexual expression were (and are) problematic, after overcoming these general difficulties, being heterosexual was not. In addition, heterosexuality and homosexuality as they were thought about (rather than as they were practiced) in Western Europe and the United States between 1890 and 1950 took on trans-historical and universal significance as essential features of sexual conduct in all times and in all places.

Having fixated on this dogma of the homosexual as person and personality (which was abstracted from the actual social practices of men who had sex with men and women who had sex with women) and the heterosexual as requiring no explanation (definable only by its lack of a homosexual taint), women and men who had sex with *both* women and men were a troubling anomaly, much as the advance of perihelion of the planet Mercury was to the classical physicists of the turn of the nineteenth century (Kuhn, 1970). Clinical and criminological studies had early identified the existence of persons who had sex with both men and women, and such persons quickly became labeled as bisexuals, ambisexuals, or intersexuals ("bisexual" contrasted with monosexual, "ambisexual" was rooted in the idea of ambidextrous, and "intersexual" carries the resonance of being between the sexual polarities of homosexual and heterosexual) (Kinsey et al., 1948).

Traditional psychoanalysis, which had acquired the primary responsibility for theoretically patrolling the terrain of what it labeled sexual object choice, proposed a number of solutions, the most popular of which in the United States has been to discriminate (in the language of psychoanalysis) between "true," "obligatory," or "exclusive" homosexuals and a number of other transitional perversities or situational practices that had different origins than "real" homosexuality (Socarides, 1978). These forms of "bisexuality" were not intermediate types between the pure types of homosexuality and heterosexuality, but rather mixed practices with quite different etiologies and consequent character structures. The behavior of such persons was thought to be pathological in its origins and expression, but often transitory (e.g., the prostitution of delinquent boys or sexual contact among same-gender adolescents) or situational (as between men in the military or prisons). While such sexual practices were somewhat of an embarrassment theoretically, they could be explained away in a manner that preserved the essential differences between the homosexual and the heterosexual. In this historically and culturally situated discourse, there existed a pure or true homosexual personality type that had a common set of psychological or biological origins and a common adult character structure organized around a perverse sexual object choice.

The criminal-legal system during this period, and extending to the present moment in many jurisdictions, also patrolled the terrain between the homosexual and the heterosexual by focusing on the gender of the actors in the sex act (Gebhard et al., 1965). In such a practice those who had sex with both men and women were treated the same way as those men who had sex only with men or women who had sex only with women. While the existence of a "heterosexual" practice as evidenced by marriage or children might mitigate the offense or reduce the penalty, all persons who engaged in such acts were treated by the law as if they were "homosexual." The act is the evidence for the perversity, and "homosexuals" and "bisexuals" were gathered together as a single group as they are in the HIV/AIDS risk group "homosexual and bisexual men," which has been constructed by epidemiologists (CDC, 1992; Openheimer, 1988). In both AIDS-think and crime-think, it is easier to include men who have sex with both women and men with those men who have sex only with men than it is to create an alternative classification: "heterosexuals and bisexuals."

Kinsey, in one of the major theoretical breaks in the history of sex research, treated the "problem" of those who had sex with both men and women as unproblematic (Kinsey et al., 1948). Kinsey's treatment of bisexuality involved a radical critique of the relation between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Theoretically, he argued specifically against prior conceptions of the homosexual and homosexuality, and by creating the 0 to 6 scale (or, as it was called at the Institute for Sex Research at that time, the H-H scale) he proposed that the heterosexual and homosexual acts of persons could be best understood as the proportion of other-gender and same-gender sexual acts (here including mental acts) in which they had engaged. The relation between heterosexuality and homosexuality was to be

treated as continuous rather than discrete, and individuals could move from one place to another on the continuum by adding new acts of the two different types.

What Kinsey opposed was the well-established theoretical belief that persons with substantial amounts of same-gender erotic experience represented a unitary category of persons with similar psychological or biological biographies whose lives were entirely governed, or at least strongly influenced, by the gender of the persons they sexually desired. Kinsey's theoretical counter to the biomedical-psychiatric-criminological view that each homosexual was possessed of a defect in biology or very early education—was to take an equally strong biological line, but one that emphasized the evolutionary history of the species rather than the defective status of the individual. This is essentially the theoretical position he took about all sexual conduct, approved and disapproved. He argued that homosexuality, masturbation, and oral sex (to take the triad he most often discussed when dealing with these issues) were common activities in "the mammalian heritage" as well as among human groups where cultural repression of the sexual was not the norm. Hence, such activities represented the diversity of nature rather than perversities and deviations from a biological or cultural standard for the sexually correct individual (Kinsey et al., 1948). This is an argument of extraordinary originality, one which allows Kinsey to bring what was thought to be unnatural under the umbrella of a larger and more copious nature. It shares with the Freudians a view that there is a severe tension between the offerings of nature and the strictures of culture; however, Kinsey's vision of what nature offers is closer to Rousseau's than it is to Hobbes's.

The moral and political legitimacy of same-gender sexual acts (whether exclusive or in some mixture with opposite-gender sexual acts) could thus be created by treating them as part of a natural world that should not be limited by the artifices of culture. Kinsey's opposition between nature and culture thus rests on a distinction between the bounty and variety of the natural world (read here the diversity of species in an unmanaged nature) as opposed to a civilized world of agriculture in which nature is pruned and limited. In much the same way as agriculture gives the fields over to monocrops, sexually repressive cultures cultivate procreative heterosexuality as their sole flower, treating all else as weeds. Kinsey remained true to his prior evolutionary and ecological concerns: It is in the biology of abundance and adaptation that he finds the template for the normal, not in the individual organismic views that characterize the defect-finding traditions in psychiatry, psychology, and biology.

The H-H or 0 to 6 continuum rested at least in part on this understanding of nature. As Kinsey wrote:

> Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents

> categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behavior the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex. (Kinsey et al., 1948, p. 639)

That continua are as much human inventions as dichotomies, and that there is, for certain purposes, a utility to distinguishing between sheep and goats, are reasonable intellectual responses to Kinsey's positivist view that the continua in the mind mirror the sexual facts in the world. However the important issue is Kinsey's decision to make heterosexuality and homosexuality (and hence bisexuality) a question of acts rather than a question of common origins, common personalities, or common behavioral performances (in the case of males: effeminacy, artistic temperament, a broader pelvis, occupational preference, scores on Terman-Miles MF scale) (Kinsey et al., 1948, p. 637). It is the mixture of heterosexual and homosexual performances that impresses Kinsey; the record of "experience and psychic reactions" (ibid., p. 639) that fluctuates across the life course, even within a single sexual occasion.

The scale is an empirical attempt to undermine all of the usual sharp distinctions that were made between individuals who had sexual contacts with the same and the other gender. By focusing on flexibility and change in conduct across the life course, it counters arguments that same-gender erotic preferences start early in life, are fixed across the life course, and are influential in all spheres of life. By focusing on acts rather than persons, Kinsey tries to protect those who are persecuted as "homosexual" because of a few homosexual acts as well as to counter the argument that there is an essential homosexual personality. Thus, a single act or a small number of same-gender erotic acts does not a homosexual make (Kinsey did not make the corollary argument that a single or small number of heterosexual acts did not a heterosexual make). More trenchantly there is no such thing as a homosexual person, only persons with various mixtures of acts. Kinsey remains quite consistent in arguing that the intermediate numbers on the scale are not to be treated as a social type called "bisexuals," but rather represent persons with a mixture of homosexual and heterosexual acts either at that moment in time or throughout their lives. These persons were simply those who had sex both with men and women, activities that were well within the mammalian potential for sexual action.

The impact of Kinsey's theorizing and research on our thinking about the triad homosexuality-bisexuality-heterosexuality has been extraordinarily ambiguous and has come about primarily as a result of his reconstruction of ideas about homosexuality. Three separate threads can be identified—the *first* is the impact of his work on sexual reform and reconstruction of the image of "the homosexual," the *second* is the ways in which his ideas remained supportive of traditional thinking about gender and sexuality, and the *third* is perhaps a noninfluence, that is the way in which ideas that were important to Kinsey failed to have an influence in everyday or scientific thought.

Perhaps the most important impact of Kinsey's work was its role in breaking up traditional psychoanalytic and psychiatric thinking about homosexuality as a personality trait and the posing of the notion that homosexuality was both prevalent and, in some deep sense of the natural, normal. It was these conceptions that provided the scientific basis that informed the early stages of gay liberation (there are many of us and we are not crazy or abnormal) and scientific research programs that challenged the belief in the psychological and social homogeneity of the category homosexual.

However, in three important ways Kinsey's ideas on gender and sexuality remained continuous with the past: *first,* he accepts the belief that the gender of the person with whom one has sex is a centrally organizing feature of sexual conduct—it does make a difference whether one has sex with a man or a woman; *second,* mixed-gender sexual practices are viewed as being bracketed by the two poles of heterosexuality and homosexuality; and *third,* heterosexuality and homosexuality are treated as natural rather than as socially constructed categories. Each of these continuities with the past focuses our attention on gender as the pivotal element in provoking sexual desire and treats heterosexuality and homosexuality as biological essences rather than as social practices.

It is perhaps the crucial idea that gave Kinsey the ability to criticize the prior medicalized constructions of homosexuality that has had the least impact. Kinsey's view that persons are mixtures of heterosexual and homosexual acts rather than social or personality types failed to recognize that such "folk categories" were part of the individual and collective reality of everyday sexual life in the United States. Persons with same-gender erotic experiences viewed themselves, and were viewed by others, as enacting or resisting the social roles provided for the expression of same-gender desire in the then existent homosexual/heterosexual culture. Sissies, queers, dykes, fems, butches, trade, and faggots were (and are) experienced as real states of being to be embraced or denied. In gay culture today, individuals treat their sexual desires as ways of being rather than as ways of acting. Perhaps no one has ever experienced himself or herself as a person with 50 percent heterosexual and 50 percent homosexual acts. Contra Kinsey, persons with what they thought to be equal desires for or experiences with women and men have taken over the scientific nomenclature and labeled themselves "bisexuals."

Kinsey's work may be treated as the opening move in the social constructionist critique of the traditional essentialist views of homosexuality based on psychoanalytic, psychiatric, or biological beliefs. This critique was at first limited to a deconstruction of traditional perspectives on homosexuality (one end of the continuum of gender preference in erotic relations) by pointing out that the theories did not fit the facts and, moreover, that the theories were used to enforce the oppressive conditions of homosexual life. The point of this critique was to create an open space in which a new practice of same-gender desire could be fashioned or socially constructed. Willy-nilly gay male and lesbian cultures began to emerge from the ruins of nineteenth-century ideas about homosexuality (Humphreys,

1972; D'Emilio, 1983). What was frequently unobserved was that these new cultures were themselves socially constructed and did not represent the natural order of things any more than did the ideologies and practices that preceded them. While gay male and lesbian cultures were different and appeared to be better ways to live, they did not have any privileged status, but only a status that could be secured by continuous political self-defense.

In addition, the recognition that the ways in which homosexuality was socially constructed and practiced had fundamentally changed after the emergence of gay culture did not immediately force a recognition that the two other elements in the triad, heterosexuality and bisexuality, were themselves cultural constructions and social practices. Only a few thinkers began to consider what would happen if *what appeared to be* the most natural of all forms of conduct, the conventionalized sexual relations of women and men, was treated as problematic and the topic of history, anthropology, and sociology rather than biology, psychiatry, and individualistic psychologies. To entertain the belief that the sexual desires of the majority are as much the result of a social construction as are the desires of all sexual minorities is a classic example of what is bad (perhaps even intolerable) to think, much less to practice. As a consequence of this resistance to a "temporary existence" even within the gay male and lesbian communities, neoessentialisms continue to flourish.

One of these neoessentialisms has been the folk creation of a new "bisexual identity" that stands for that collection of individuals who (1) have sex with both women and men and (2) seek a subcultural identity based on the gendered aspects of their sexual practices. These developments follow from the emergence of a new social type that appeared during the liberated climate of the late 1960s, when a new ideological set of concerns about bisexuality emerged in the popular and academic literatures (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1976a, 1976b). Some persons who had sex with both men and women reported that they did so because they enjoyed sex with both and that the erotic satisfactions that they received from one gender were not equivalent to those they received from the other. In the sexually experimental climate of the times bisexuality became, at least for some persons, a way of trying out various concurrent identities (Duberman, 1974).

Ideologically, this is where most theorists stand today in dealing with the historic triad of heterosexuality-bisexuality-homosexuality. Social constructionist thinking applied only selectively to those essentialisms that seem socially regressive. While it widely recognized that the "homosexuality" created by biology, medicine, and psychiatry is a social construction, the "gay male" and "lesbian" identities that are the products of the gay and lesbian movement are rarely treated as similarly socially constituted and historically transitory (important examples of those who recognize contemporary identities as socially constructed are DeCecco and Shively 1983–84 and Califia 1983). Heterosexuality is nearly universally treated as an essence even by those who recognize its compulsory status (Rich, 1983). Finally, most scientists who study "bisexuality" and many of the better-educated persons

who have sex with both men and women aspire to give bisexuality an essentialist status coequal with that of "gay men," "lesbians," and "heterosexuals."

Sex with Both Women and Men as Practices

Perhaps the best way to counter these neoessentialist trends is to apply the strategy of those who created the social constructionist critique of the essentialist biological and medical versions of "homosexuality." This strategy involves two concurrent arguments. The first simply points out the remarkable diversity of the forms of conduct that are labeled bisexual and the inadequacy of "bisexuality" as a simple label or as a set of theories to account for this diversity of practices. The second argument points out that the sexual desires that are evoked in the particular circumstances of any of these specific practices (e.g., swinging, male prostitution to males, sex in prisons) exists without reference to and often in spite of the gender of the sexual partner.

The sheer empirical diversity of cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripts within the population of men who have sex both with women and men and women who have sex both with women and men (the population treated as "bisexual") within the United States (much less the practices in non-Western cultures, see Herdt 1981, 1984; Virulak 1989; WHO/GPA/Social and Behavioral Research Unit 1989a, 1989b) should persuade us to avoid the facile use of the term "bisexuality" and its essentialist consequences, no matter how seductive these might be. In this case, it is hoped that simple description will overwhelm the seductive delights of theory, and that paying attention to the details of difference will offer a better understanding than the search for fictive commonalities that result from the use of the narrow lens of theory.

Another support for this approach to the study of persons who have sex with both women and men is the very tiny number of persons who report such conduct at any given time. Both surveys of the general population and specialized studies of gay men and lesbians indicate that far more persons never have sex with persons of the same gender than commit to a lifelong identity as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Lever et al., 1992; Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1977). Still other surveys indicate that while many people may have had sex with both women and men at some point in their lifetime, very few report having such experiences during the year prior to the date when they were interviewed (Michael et al., 1992; Fay et al., 1989; Stall et al., 1991). The moderately high lifetime incidences of having sex with women and men are the results of quite sporadic and infrequent experiences among disparate groups of individuals with quite different scripts for the conduct.

What follows are descriptions of some (though not all) of the most common patterns of having sex with both women and men in the contemporary United States. Each of these patterns can be labeled "bisexual," though they are often

quite different from each other. It is the variability in the patterns that is the most important to consider as one attempts to make sense of the ways in which sexual scripts are modified and reorganized to include partners of both genders.

Adolescent Sexual Experimentation

The largest number of people who have had sex with both women and men usually acquire that experience in early to middle adolescence and young adulthood. The United States offers little meaningful guidance about sexuality to young people during the period of transition from childhood to adulthood, and while the tilt of the society is toward increasing emotional and sexual experimentation with opposite-gender partners, there are occasions for some (or much) parallel emotional and sexual activity with persons of the same gender during adolescence (Herdt & Boxer, 1990). It is thus possible for young people to develop passionate attachments (develop a "crush") to persons of the same gender during adolescence. These emotional attachments may lead to physical sexual activity, but not in all cases.

Young people may engage in a wide variety of sexual practices with same-gender partners while at the same time they are beginning to associate with members of the opposite gender and experiment sexually with them. For most young people, all early sexual experimentation, regardless of the gender of their partners, is linked to the motivational content of adolescence rather than to the more complete and fixed sexual commitments of adults. This mixed pattern of sexual commitment is vastly reduced as young people are required to choose (or drift into) a commitment to one pattern or another.

Many young people in adolescence may make a substantial commitment to affection and sexual life with someone of their own gender, and then find that the object of their affection has fallen in love with someone of the opposite gender and begun to move toward an other-gender pattern. For a young person moving toward a gay or lesbian commitment, the loss of this adolescent lover may be deeply troubling because it may have involved overt sexuality for both of them and deep affection on the part of at least one of them. Another pattern also occurs, though less frequently: An opposite-gender pair may break apart because of the increasing same-gender commitment of one member of the pair.

Very few young people resolve such conflicts by making a strong commitment to sex with both genders, and the capacity of these few to sustain a dual commitment is weakened by increasing social emphasis on an exclusive gender commitment in sexual relations during young adulthood. Also, there is probably some difference in scripting for the same-gender and the other-gender commitments—one or the other can come first in time, be more important emotionally, be defined as more (or less) socially acceptable, or be largely a physical interest in contrast to an emotional one.

It is not entirely clear to what degree such experiences during adolescence with persons of both sexes might be integrated into a bisexual identity or practice later in life. It is also not known how many of the young people involved in adolescent sexuality with both genders would continue a bisexual or a major or exclusive same-gender commitment if this lifestyle were viewed to be as acceptable as an opposite-gender commitment. At present, the mixed or gay or lesbian patterns are not equally competitive with the opposite-gender pattern during adolescence.

In the last decade, a fashionable "bisexual chic" has appeared among some sophisticated urban young people who participate in the "club scene." This fashion appears to be based on the assumption that many rock stars are "bisexual," an assumption that some rock stars have deliberately fostered (e.g., Madonna and David Bowie). This is based on an assumption that bisexuality is a measure of sexual freedom in the pop music world (particularly among "new wave" groups). The existence of role models as well as participation in the "dance club scene" that exists in many large cities provides an opportunity for young people to drift through transitional bisexual practices or identity. Some will even reverse traditional patterns and claim a bisexual "identity" without actually engaging in sex with both women and men.

The Hustling World

Among adolescents, both delinquent and nondelinquent, youthful members of the military, and young men detached from family life who largely prefer sex with women, there are some who have sex with men for favors (Boles, 1989). Such favors can involve money, housing, food, drink, or any other thing that men often need. At no point before, during, or after the sexual act do these young men define themselves as homosexual or as experiencing or performing a homosexual act. Even though they become erect and ejaculate (following all the events of the sexual response cycle), they do not consider that they are responding to a homosexual stimulus.

There are a number of symbolic revisions of script elements that allow these young men to define their experience in this way. The first is that the act may occur only a few times, with different men, and for money—the activity is "playing the queers," not bisexuality or homosexuality (Reiss, 1961). Even when they are involved over a longer period with a number of people or a number of experiences with the same persons, other script modifications are possible to make the conduct congruent with their self-conception as "straight." Commonly such young men refuse to allow hugging or kissing or anything sexual above the waist. As long as the partner's head is below the belly button and contact is solely on the penis, it is the other person who is *being* homosexual. Without affection (such as there might be in sex with a woman) and reciprocity (the young man does not define what he is doing as active) there is no reason to define the self as bisexual or homosexual.

The money, the genital focus, the lack of affection, and the physical "inactivity" are all components that offer the young man a heterosexual script for the act. Further, it is possible for the young man to think about his girlfriend or other women while the act is going on—some do, in fact, report that they cannot become aroused unless they have an opposite-gender fantasy (an intrapsychic script) in their heads.

The person having sex with such a young man may run a grave personal risk since not all young men have the scripting skills to protect their heterosexual self-conception. Some of them, particularly those with little experience with other men, may find it very difficult to manage the sexual experience in these limited and neutral terms. This response is sometimes labeled a "homosexual panic," because the young men feel that their identity as a "man" is threatened. As a consequence, they may feel the need to beat up or rob their customer in order to bolster their belief in their own masculinity and heterosexuality. In other cases, the customer makes a mistake by trying for more than a purely genital relationship and seeks a more affectional contact. This sometimes provokes a violent reaction on the part of the young man, who has defined the situation differently.

These reactions suggest a basic theme in such encounters. The young man is able to revise the script because he believes that "homosexuals" are or have the attributes of women. They are defined as weak, inferior, and submissive. If a person is active in certain sexual acts (fellatio), or passive in others (the object of anal intercourse), or responds to the sexual acts that are being performed, he violates the masculine image. To do these things indicates that a person is weak and therefore homosexual. The boundary being defended is the boundary between brave, strong, violent men and cowardly, passive, weak men, the boundary between "heterosexual men" and "homosexual men," and ultimately the boundary between women and men. Symbolic manipulations are required for *why* the sex goes forward, *who* the other person is defined to be, and *what* the permitted sex acts are.

There are probably many young men who have had this kind of sexual experience one or two times in their lives. Some of them may do it more frequently and earn the label "male prostitute" or "hustler." Such young men seek the bright lights of the major cities (Times Square in New York, for example), or hang around the hotels of small cities and towns offering their services to other men. They often act and look conventionally masculine, perhaps even tough and delinquent, for this version of "machismo" has a certain appeal to some clients (who have also been taken in by the imagery of masculinity).

Such young men are often called "trade" or, if they look particularly tough, "rough trade." There is a saying in the gay community that "this year's trade is next year's competition"—meaning that the "heterosexual" young man you pay this year will want to pay another man for sex next year. What this suggests is that the protective script breaks down, that the continued contact with homosexual acts and experiences is seductive, and that young men who begin to have sex with men for money will eventually continue for pleasure. Given the usually transitory nature of the male prostitute role, however, it is unlikely that this happens to

many young men. What may contribute to this impression is that some of the young men who hustle actually have same-gender sexual preferences but conceal their same-gender desires because many clients want "real" heterosexuals as well as masculine-appearing young men. As these young men move into more open sexual relationships with other men, they may produce the impression of a regular movement of young men from heterosexual to homosexual lifestyles.

The contemporary hustling world is complex. It is composed of these "straight" young men who may have sex with a man for money or favors once or twice, as well as "straight" young men who may have such sex frequently, neither of these two groups conceives of itself as gay.[1]

Each of these two groups represents a "bisexual" adaptation. At the same time there are hustlers who are themselves gay and work the streets, the escort services, and the telephone lines in much the same manner as do women sex workers. At any given moment most of the actual paid same-gender sex is probably being performed by these more or less professional sex workers, but on any given day there are probably more "straight" young men having sex with men for money than there are gay-identified young men.

Gender-Isolated Groups

Groups of healthy and active people of one gender who prefer sex with persons of the other gender may sometimes be effectively isolated from these partners. Such groups may contain a mix of people with histories of sex with and erotic interests in women and men. When the isolation involves a great deal of effort and commitment (an army in combat), a relatively brief separation (a submarine cruise or an expedition to climb a mountain), or starvation and forced labor (a concentration camp, a penal colony, or a prisoner of war camp), sexual activity of any kind is probably rare. However, in peacetime armies, in single-gender schools, and in prisons, gender segregation can result in both short-term and long-term contacts with persons of the same gender by both women and men.

Prisons are probably the exemplary institutions for the study of mixed-gender sexual practices of those who usually have sex only with opposite-gender partners. Same-gender sexual activity occurs fairly often in some prisons and less often in others. Everyone does not engage in such sexual relationships, even in loosely administered institutions where cliques and even subcultures that foster same-gender sex have existed over a number of years. Even among serious offenders serving long sentences only about half have had overt sex with other men, and this experience tends to be sporadic rather than frequent and continuous. Interviews with 700 men prisoners by members of the Institute for Sex Research showed that, adding together all sources of sexual activity (masturbation, orgasm during dreams, sex with other men), very few of the prisoners had levels of sexual activity that reached even 10 percent of what they usually experienced outside prison (Gebhard et al., 1965).

The prison is usually an antisexual environment for both women and men, and it is so by design. Prisons are environmentally dull, behavior is regulated by the clock, many movements from one place to another are performed in groups. Individuals have limited opportunities for personal privacy, and there are programs of active surveillance to reduce or eliminate close personal ties (including sexual ties) between prisoners. While some prisons allow conjugal visits for some prisoners (the rules for sexual encounters between men and women prisoners and their spouses vary from state to state and prison to prison) and some prisons for men allow men's magazines such as *Playboy,* the denial of sexual expression is usually seen as one of the normal punishments visited on those who have violated the law and who have been sentenced to prison. Sexual deprivation is part of the general deprivation of liberty.

The lack of erotic stimuli in prison is not solely the absence of a sexual partner of a preferred gender, but the lack of the social situations that are associated with the experience of desire in the free community. The search for a sexual partner outside of prison involves both activities (going out on the town, drinking, hanging out, chatting up prospective sexual partners) as well as everyday erotic stimuli (seeing attractive women or men) that keep sexual interest alive. Sex does occur among prisoners, but among men it may occur without choice and in violent circumstances (Sykes, 1958).

The problem of sex in prison is not one of orgasms or sex acts, but rather of the meanings of the sex acts. Many heterosexual male prisoners view the sexual world very much as do the heterosexual male prostitutes described above and they often share common social attitudes toward gender and sex. That is, the sexual act between men in prison is defined as being heterosexual for one person and homosexual for the other. One man is defined as masculine, strong, powerful, and controlling, while the other is feminine, weak, subordinate, and controlled. The stronger inserts his penis into the weaker—the act of penetration parallels the act with women, and assures a symbolic continuity with experiences in the world outside the prison.

These patterns begin in reform schools and other institutions for young men in which the stronger and more powerful induce or threaten the physically weaker or more feminine appearing into sexual activity as the "female" partner. Once this process of seduction or coercion has occurred, the "female" partner can go from relationship to relationship with older boys or men (and from institution to institution) having been categorized and defined as a "punk" or "sissy" by the other men in the institution. In come cases men with same-gender preferences find themselves in this role in prison and are coerced into sex by aggressive males (see Giallombardo, 1974).

The majority of sexual encounters between men in prison do not involve affection. They are more often motivated by aggression, violence, and control, and are often less important in terms of the ejaculation they produce than the way they enhance the dominant partner's masculinity. The ability to dominate and control,

to make someone else do what you want, is extremely important in most male status rankings. Sexual coercion is one of the few ways for prisoners to achieve status in prison. Many men in prison are aggressive and assertive outside, but in prison their capacity to be aggressive or assertive is highly restricted. The guards, walls, guns, marching, working, eating, and showering to the ringing of bells deny them the freedom to affirm their masculinity in the ways they are used to: with sex and aggression. By including sex in their domination of other men (becoming "wolves" or "jockers"), they give a different meaning to sexual acts between men and make them serve the same purposes as sexual acts between men and women.

The men who are coerced have a very different experience. Some of them, because they are fearful and physically weak, drift into a transitory adaptation for the sake of protection by their lovers from other aggressive men. Men with either same or other-gender preferences may be forced to comply in order to protect themselves from rape. Such men often suffer the same degradation as women who are raped: because they are unable to protect themselves sexually, prison officials see them as weaklings, as not "manly" enough to protect themselves. Sharing the attitude that masculinity requires a capacity for physical violence, prison officials and guards do not do much to safeguard the peaceful, weak, and unprotected.

Affectionate relationships are possible in male prisons, but they are not as frequent as they are among men in the outside community. The submissive member of the pair may develop an emotional commitment to the dominant one, but this pattern is often not reciprocated. Emotional misunderstandings can occur when one man with casual emotional standards has had sex with someone who wants love, and violence can occur when the dominant male changes sexual partners. In long-term prisons, the release of a man who has developed a long-term relationship with another can result in a period of emotional crisis for the man who remains.

Women also respond to prison life by having sex with each other, but where men model themselves on the sexual dimension of the man-woman couple, the women often recreate the family dimensions of the same social relationships. Women inmates tend to develop sexual relationships within the context of a complex quasi-kinship system (Giallombardo, 1966, 1974; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). In adolescent institutions, this may mean recreating the extended family. Where the dominant, sex-initiating men are called "jocks" and "wolves" and their submissive partners are called "punks" and "sissies," the female parallels are "poppas" and "mamas." In adolescent institutions, there are even brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, imitating the traditional kinship patterns of the family.

Prison sexuality among women appears to be slightly less common than it is among men, but it does tend to involve much higher levels of emotional commitment. Since women's prisons contain women with extensive criminal histories as well as women who have committed serious offenses but who lack a prior criminal career, prior sexual histories are mixed. Getting an affair started may take a long courtship, both because this is what most women expect and because they

have limited practice in initiating sexual contact of any kind. If the prison population includes women who have had sexual experience with other women in the community, starting up an affair is easier. The amount of sex in these relationships is often minimal, out of preference or lack of privacy, but they may be quite emotional and long-term, which produces trauma when one partner is released.

Many women and men in prison are attempting to resist the institution and trying to maintain their identities, despite all the coercive forces around them. Their sexuality in prison can thus be interpreted as a form of social and psychological resistance to a threatened destruction of identity. They fight the prison's efforts to drive individuals apart, by attempting to form sexual relationships. For men, this often means exploiting and using other men, creating an informal status ladder that the institution says should not exist. For women, it means attempting to create a family where one does not exist. For both, sex becomes a vehicle of resistance to depersonalization.[2]

Most prisoners involved in such contacts who did not have prior strong sexual commitments to others of the same gender apparently do not continue their prison adaptation in the outside community. It is less clear whether the prison experience can move male adolescents toward an easier acceptance of same-gender identifications or hustler roles in the outside world. Prisoners who have sex with persons of the same gender only in prison do not commonly seek to imitate their prison experience in the outside community; they return to the sexual lifestyle scripts they had outside. In these cases, the gender preference is substituted into their existing model of sexual relationships. The script is kept as unchanged as possible while it is applied to a new situation, and is still available when they are freed.

Cultural Variations in the United States

As the United States has become a more multicultural society, patterns of having sex with both women and men that have their origins in other societies have been transferred along with other cultural practices (e.g., food, religion, languages) to the United States. The best-studied of these sexual practices is a pattern observed among men who have come to the United States from the Spanish-speaking areas such as Mexico and Central and South America (Carrier, 1976, 1980, 1989; Magana, 1989; Shifter, 1989). Other studies have identified similar patterns in Brazil (Parker 1987, 1990). Among most Latin (ultimately Mediterranean) cultures there is a sharp division between the genders, with clearly exclusive cultural and behavioral territories reserved for men and women. This includes the expression of sexual desire.

In this cultural world, particularly in the countries of origin, men who have sex with women are "men," and men who have sex with other men are defined in some significant ways as being like women, but with one major exception. Normatively, though not always in practice, the masculinity of a man who has sex both

with women and with other men can be defined by his role in the sexual act, the one who always is the inserter is defined as masculine, the one who is inserted into is the "woman." The former is *activo,* the latter is a *passivo*. This well-defined cultural pattern allows some men, how many is unknown, to have sex with other men without thinking of it as homosexual or feminine or passive. Analogical symbolic definitional strategies can be found in prison populations, though it is important to note that they do not have the same cultural origins, nor are they culturally persuasive. It is important to emphasize that these script changes are not considered definitional strategies by the actors themselves, but as part of the natural order of things (see Carrier, 1985).

The existence of AIDS has been the motivation for recent studies of bisexuality in African-American communities in the United States. Peterson (1989, 1992) interviewed African-American bisexual men about their sexual behaviors and AIDS-related attitudes and beliefs. He found that the bisexual men he studied had a higher number of sexual partners and higher frequency of unsafe sexual practices with both primary and secondary partners than did those African-American men who had only men or only women partners. Unsafe sexual activity was positively correlated with a low perceived susceptibility to HIV infection, high enjoyment of the sexual activity, and a low level of awareness of AIDS. What is driving these patterns of sexual activity, the scripts that are involved, and the relationship to the larger African-American sexual culture is currently obscure.

The Heterosexually Coupled Person with Same-Gender Desire

As a result of the heterosexual tilt of the culture of the United States, some people may find themselves in a heterosexual marriage that does not satisfy their desires for affectional and sexual relations with persons of their own gender. In some cases, people who have strong sexual desires for persons of the same gender may marry because "it is what is expected of them" or because they think marriage would "cure" them of their "homosexuality." Indeed, some therapists have recommended heterosexual marriage to their patients as a way out of the conflict between the social expectations and the individual's own desires. In other cases, people, perhaps more often women, have married and in the process of the marriage discovered that they want the emotional and erotic company of persons of the same gender. In both of these cases, the people involved may have children, and resolving the conflict between their sexual desires and the obligations to their spouses and children produces profound personal conflicts.

In some cases, these individuals define themselves as really "homosexual" and may sustain their marriages, sexually and socially, to meet the needs of social convention. This was a very common pattern in the past, though more and more often at the present time, marriages and families are being dissolved in order to realign the sexual desires of the individual and his or her social arrangements.

More recently, at least some of these men have worked out new adjustments—some joining the gay community while attempting to continue to have social relations with former or current wives and children. Few studies of this latter population exist. It is reasonable to expect these practices to exist in minority communities as well as among whites, but it is only in the latter population where research has been conducted.

Before gay liberation, those women and men who were married who felt truly homosexual shared "the closet" with those who did not define themselves as something that they would call "really homosexual," but reported that they felt uneasy, unhappy, or unable to deal with the demands of heterosexuality without some sort of same-gender attachment. Both of these groups wanted to have sex with persons of the same gender, but many did not do so because of the fears of social ostracism, loss of family connections, being fired from work, and being persecuted by the police. Such closeted individuals who have rare or intermittent sex with persons of the same gender still exist (Ross, 1971).

Most of the people we *know about* in this situation are men. Such men may feel a strong need for some homosexual experience—it is often such men who have same-gender contacts away from home or in public restrooms and parks (Humphreys, 1970). Their sex with men is a source of guilt and fear, and they wish to keep it secret from their wives and children, who are unlikely to understand. Because the man does not have extensive experience with conventionally scripted man-man relations, his sexual conduct with men is rarely impersonal. These men have not historically participated in the gay community, except when out of town, and then only as sexual transients. They occasionally surface on the police blotter and in little scandals that break up families or result in therapeutic interventions, and more recently, they have been the subject of concern as their clandestine sexual behavior was thought to be a route by which AIDS might be carried into the heterosexual population (Randolph, 1988; Mayo & Doll, 1990).

The sex that many of these men have with other men tends to have a genital and impulsive focus, and it seems to the man to be a force, or power, or compulsion (many other socially unsupported strong feelings have this aspect) over which he has limited control. For many of these men, there is considerable risk of discovery and exposure, for they are caught not merely between two sexual preferences, but also between two social preferences (Hays & Samuels, 1989). They are similar in some ways to heterosexual men who go to prostitutes for one-night stands, and who are thus risking marriage and family. The latter's risk is smaller in terms of social stigma, but many of the psychological problems remain the same. In the case of bisexual men, it is not clear that they prefer homosexual acts to heterosexual acts; rather the two domains seem to be serving different purposes for the sexual.[3]

In more recent years, there is evidence that there have been greater attempts to keep these woman-man relationships together, and that these attempts are important in forging a "bisexual identification" on the part of one or another of the partners (Coleman, 1985; Wolf, 1985; Brownfain, 1985). Most of the persons

who fall into these studies come from therapeutic or convenience samples and are middle class in origin. One element in sustaining many of these relationships may be the therapeutic intervention that involves identity work on the part of the couple. Many of the convenience samples have found their subjects in "swinging" or other alternative lifestyle groups in which some identity work has already occurred, at least in the form of more liberal sexual values and practices (D. Dixon, 1985). At the same time, many of these relationships break up because of the deep sense of betrayal that women feel when they discover their partner has been having sex with men during their relationship (Hays & Samuels, 1989). How much this sense of betrayal is exacerbated by the risk of HIV infection in recent years is recorded only in the popular literature.

Women who have sex with other women while staying married seem to bring different meanings to the experience (the search for emotional connection rather than sexual outlet) (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1976b). This may reflect women's higher likelihood to disclose their activity more readily and openly than men. It is likely to be true that there are married women who have an interest in having sex with women who are more deeply closeted than are men. Such women are not looking solely for sexual release, but for emotional contact and an enduring relationship (J. K. Dixon, 1985). At the same time they have a strong commitment to their children and conventional marriage. Many such women express their same-gender erotic desires only after a divorce.

The Indifference to Gender

There are sexual situations in which people are not aware of or interested in the gender of who is doing what to whom sexually. This is usually a result of either heightened excitement, the legitimating context of group sex, or a focus on orgasm without reference to other aspects of the sexual encounter. Much of group sex in society continues to involve either opposite-gender couples or all-male sexual groups. In group sex with a mixture of women and men and gender contact, anxieties often arise—more commonly with men than with women—about the meaning of same-gender sexual contact. Women seem to be better able than men to manage the changes in sexual script that are involved. For some women it may be doing what men want to see that produces rescripting; for others it may be an autonomous interest in finding out what happens.

In such group-sex situations, people find themselves touching others of the same and opposite sex with equal interest. For some participants it turns out that some skin is hairy, and some is not, that mouths are often very similar, and that the general excitement of the activity subdues the differences in gender. Such rescripting is often transitory, lasting only during the event and not transferring to other circumstances. Only a few people use the occasion to begin a longer-term sexual commitment.

Another form of gender indifference is more individual and less contextual. As we argued above, there are people who have sex with both women and men, and who do not care much about gender. It is not that they are positively attracted to both, but rather that their script requires just another body. They will do very much the same things with both women and men; the rescripting is private and the critical element becomes the activity, not the gender. This adaptation is more common among men than among women, although it is rare among both. It is as if the script did not contain a gender differentiation. Sometimes other usual script elements may be reduced in significance as well.

Another pattern that occurs nearly exclusively among men is what might be described in the words of the participants, as "messing around." There is an indifference to the gender of the sexual partner under various conditions that include drinking, drug use, and feeling "horny." After an evening of unsuccessful sexual pursuit or when sexual pursuit is restricted by fatigue, lack of time, or income, any sexual partner will do. Women are preferred, but men are acceptable under certain conditions. "Getting your rocks off" or "getting your ashes hauled" are traditional male argot for sexual contacts that do not involve interpersonal involvement and that are motivated by a desire indifferent to its object (Peterson, 1989). Often such activity is promoted by the participation of groups of men in which the sexual activity of the individuals is strongly influenced by the willingness of other men to go along with whatever sexual opportunities that present themselves.

Gender Ideology and Sexual Practice

Finally, women and men engage in same-gender sexual experimentation as an outgrowth of a specific ideology. Of particular importance are two ideologies: feminism and sexual libertarianism. For some women, a consequence of feminist ideology is the belief that sexual relationships with men are, by definition, occasions for domination and oppression (Rich, 1983). Some of these women consciously choose to become "political lesbians" and cease sexual activity with men because they will not "sleep with the enemy." A more common pattern is that the intense emotional ties that arise among members of a social movement are broadened to include sexual activity, thus resembling the first route identified above (similar escalations of personal ties also occur between women and men in revolutionary groups, or political campaigns).

As a result of the increased emotional warmth that women experienced with each other in the feminist movement and as a result of intellectual persuasion, a number of women have undoubtedly tried sexual/affectional relationships with other women. Some have discovered that they preferred contact with women, others have maintained a partial commitment to both women and men, while still others did it only as an experiment. For many lesbians, this experimentation was

an affront, since they felt they were being exploited by people without a true commitment to a lesbian identity.

Sexual libertarianism is the other ideological commitment that would encourage people to experiment sexually—the desire to be open to new sexual experience is a key element in this ideology. In the libertarian tradition there is a focus on expanding an individual's social acceptance of "nontolerated" forms of conduct and "nontolerated" persons. In many cases the goal is to go well beyond "toleration" to acceptance, understanding, and sharing. In this circumstance, the ideology could justify same-gender sexual experimentation.

A more complex version of ideological work is involved in creating communities of desire based on nongendered attributes. Thus, Califia has argued that sex between gay men and lesbians is a form of "gay sex" that is neither "homosexual" nor "heterosexual" in the traditional sense.

> I live with my woman lover of five years. I have lots of casual sex with women. Once in while I have casual sex with gay men. I have a three-year relationship with a homosexual male who doesn't use the term *gay*. And I call myself a lesbian . . . I call myself a fag hag because sex with men outside the context of the gay community doesn't interest me at all. In a funny way, when two gay people of opposite sexes make it, it's all gay sex. (Califia, 1983, p. 25)

Constructing the Bisexual Identity

Out of this welter of different practices there are some people whom ideological bisexuals prefer to call "true" bisexuals. These are people emotionally and sexually attracted to both women and men, and who have relations with them accompanied by all the "correct" emotions when having sex with either. Unlike the person who has sex with women or men without focusing on gender, there is among the "true" bisexual a positive response to women and men in their gendered difference, one that is affectionately caring and desiring. It would appear that such people are rarer than most other kinds, even given the prestige offered to people who can define the world in such terms.

In the 1950s, Ellis argued that people unable to have sex with both genders were being psychologically and sexually rigid and cutting themselves off from half the world (Ellis, 1962). Bisexuality was not only psychologically healthy, but exclusive homosexuality and heterosexuality appeared to be compulsive, perhaps illnesses, or at least less healthy. Ellis has since changed his views in this matter and now regards exclusive homosexuality as an illness, but there are people still committed to his earlier line of reasoning. They believe, and announce, that the capacity for such bisexual experiences is the mark of mental health and that bisexuality is the normative sex of the future. Such a prescription for sexual health

seems similar to the heterosexual prescriptions of the past: tyranny masking as freedom. However many such people there are, they represent a minority of all people who have had sex with both genders.

A less prescriptive stance has been adopted by a number of researchers and advocates who have adopted the political stance that bisexuality is an "identity" in the same way that being "gay" or "lesbian" is an identity (Klein, 1978; Fox, 1992). Many of these advocates have affiliated with gay and lesbian creating organizations that are labeled "Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual" Alliances. These groups are largely composed of middle-class persons, and the bisexuality that they espouse is unlike the bisexuality of prisoners, hustlers, or any of the other groups that we have described earlier. In part, such labels indicate that a "bisexual" identity is in the process of construction, at least for those who have the appropriate social and psychological responses when they have sex with both men and women. Linking bisexuality with gay men and lesbians does differentiate it from the heterosexual majority and, by indicating its presence as more than a behavior, may become an opportunity for creating a new and well-defined sexual minority (Paul, 1984).

At the same time as bisexuality is becoming an identity, many people who have sex with both women and men continue to find themselves under pressure to "be one thing or the other." This is not so true of people who maintain secret or sequential commitments, or whose mixed-gender sexual patterns are transitional and impersonal, but it is true of those whose sexuality is marked by emotional or ideological commitment. In these cases, there is great pressure from same-gender partners on the one side and other-gender partners on the other to make up their minds.

This occurs for a number of reasons. If a person is likable, affectionate, and a decent lover, then most people whom he or she is with will want to have him or her around most of the time. The pressure on them is similar to that on a person with two lovers of the same sex. There is insistence that the person choose one or the other. The fact that the other lover or lovers are of the opposite sex merely provides a greater incentive for complaint. Accusations of not really being heterosexual or of not really being homosexual abound from both sides (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1977). The preferential bisexual makes everyone nervous because he or she is not in anyone's camp. Such an independent sexual posture makes people with fixed positions uneasy.

Bisexuality and AIDS

With the onset of the AIDS epidemic, men who had sex with both men and women very quickly became identified as a potential bridge for infection from the gay community (Rogers & Turner, 1991; Mayo & Doll, 1990). The concern for disease transmission required that the research pose questions in the usual epidemiological form: How many bisexual persons were there? Whom did they have

sex with? How often? How many were currently infected? Did they engage in those behaviors that have been identified as risky? Such questions quickly melded into a concern for behavioral change: How could such groups be identified? Were there different channels of education that needed to be accessed for different groups of bisexuals? How secret were these practices and how difficult would it be to locate such persons?

But questions posed in this form assume the existence of either one or perhaps a couple of "bisexual" categories of persons. Many epidemiological studies have been based on an essentialist model, looking for a unitary category of persons called "bisexual" rather than at (1) the important discrepancy between the number of people who engage in bisexual activities and the number of people who label themselves bisexual (Lever et al., 1992), and (2) perhaps more important, the variety of scripts that exist in order to facilitate different forms of having sex with both women and men.

However, even simple recognitions of differences in behavioral patterns are important if successful intervention is to be made among those men who have sexual contact with other men as well as with women. For example, unsafe sexual practices are more common among married, closeted, bisexual men than among openly gay men. Since many bisexual men are closeted, they are not reached by traditional sources of safer-sex information in the gay community. However, bisexual men who are socially and sexually active in the gay community are at less risk than bisexual men who self-identify as heterosexual. Thus, the female partners of those bisexual men who self-identify as heterosexual are at greater risk for HIV infection than those females whose bisexual male partners actively participate in gay community life (WHO, 1989a).

Conclusion

The less culturally structured a particular sexual practice is, the greater the variety of scripts that will begin to emerge around it. Thus, sex between men and women may be more constrained in its expression because it is locked into so many conventional social contexts and institutions. Sex between men and men, or women and women, is less so, but "homosexuality" or "gay and lesbian sex" have a long and complex social history and a chain of subcultural institutions that structure sexual scripts. Those who have sex with both women and men represent a great variety of practices and scripts and "bisexuality" as an ideology and practice is only now beginning to receive both publicity and support. As a consequence, "bisexual" scripts show great variability. They illustrate that sexual scripts can be modified in many ways to justify sexual contact. Because the variations include changes in the reasons (the why of the script) for doing sex (for love, lust, or resistance to social pressure) and in the person (the who of the script) (by using partners in a sequence of symbolic substitutions), it is clear that sex serves many purposes and motives.

Most persons who have sex with both women and men do so without much ideological work. They do what they do without much reflection or symbolic manipulation. However, there are some persons who have sex with both women and men that are looking for social and psychological identities to match up with their practices. Such sense-making activities are the source of new social identities and practices and will become the *taken-for-granted* realities of future generations if they succeed. There is a certain irony in this process since the major activity of the social constructionists has been to deconstruct such matches between identity and practice in same-gender sex—perhaps in opposite-gender sex as well (Gagnon, 1992). It is unlikely that all of these different practices will find a common script or definition, but it will not be for the want of scientific and ideological trying.

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10

The Kindest Un-Cut

Feminism, Judaism, and My Son's Foreskin

Although it was a little late by traditional religious standards, the entire family and many friends gathered in our home three weeks after our son, Zachary, was born. We had gathered for his *bris,* the moment when a young Jewish boy is first brought into the family and the community, the moment of his formal entrance into the world of Judaism. At such symbolic moments, one feels keenly the sinews of connection to family and friends that sustain a life, animate it, give it context and meaning.

The *mohel* (the traditional name for the circumcisor) of course, was running late. When he arrived, everyone gathered in the living room, where we had set up a table on which were placed the various items we would use in the ceremony. A special chair had been reserved for the *sandek,* the honored family male elder, often the baby's grandfather or great-grandfather, who would hold the baby during much of the proceedings. (In our case, a godmother and godfather shared this role.)

As family and friends drew closer together, glasses of wine and champagne in their hands, the ritual began with prayers over the wine and bread. Our first toast was to this new creature who had entered all our lives. Then the mohel began the naming ceremony, and some relatives and friends offered their wishes for this young life. Amy, my wife, and I each offered a thought to the other and to Zachary as we entered this new phase of our lives as parents together. For my part, I quoted Adrienne Rich, who had written that "if I could have one wish for my own sons, it is that they should have the courage of women." I wished nothing more for Zachary—that he would have Amy's courage, her integrity, and her passion.

Then it was the moment for which we had all carefully prepared, about which we had endlessly talked, debated, argued, discussed. We took a pitcher of water and a bowl to the door of the house. Amy and I carried Zachary over to the threshold. With one hand I held his little body and with the other held his tiny legs over the bowl. Amy poured some water over his feet and rubbed it in. Then she held him and I did the same. Throughout, the mohel chanted in prayer. And in that way, we welcomed Zachary into our home and into our lives.

By now you are, of course, waiting for the "real" bris to begin, for the mohel to stuff a wine-soaked handkerchief into his mouth to muffle his cries and slightly anesthetize him and then circumcise him, cutting off his foreskin in fulfillment of God's commandment to Abraham that he mark his son, Isaac, as a sign of obedience.

Sorry to disappoint, but that's the end of our story, or at least the end of the story of Zachary's bris. There was no circumcision on that day. We had decided not to circumcise our son. Although he enters a world filled with violence, he would enter it without violence done to him. Although he will no doubt suffer many cuts and scrapes during his life, he would not bleed by our hand.

This was not an easy decision, but we had plenty of time to prepare—six months, to be exact. From the moment we saw the sonogram and read the results of the amniocentesis, the debate had been joined. Would we or wouldn't we? How would we decide? The remainder of this essay charts that process.

First, we talked. Constantly. Just when we thought the issue settled, we'd open it again. Each time one of us would read something, think something, pull something new off the Internet, we would reopen the discussion anew. We talked with friends, family members, religious authorities, doctors, and nurses. We asked our heterosexual women friends whether they had a preference for cut or uncut men. We each sought counsel from the email discussion groups to which we belonged, and we consulted organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Association. We ordered and read more than a dozen books and pamphlets.

We contacted advocacy groups like the National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC), National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males (NOHARMM), and Doctors Opposing Circumcision (DOC). But these organizations, while eager, were too one-sided and tended to minimize the difficulty of our decision.

And we didn't even bother calling the organizations like Brothers United for Future Foreskins (BUFF), National Organization of Restoring Men (NORM), and RECover a Penis (RECAP) that encourage men who might "feel victimized by the unnecessary loss of their natural anatomical wholeness" (Zoske, 1998, p. 199) to undergo penile reconstructive surgery to "correct" the circumcised penis. Such procedures (involving either attaching a new flap or pulling the remaining tissue down over the glands to create a pseudo-foreskin) seem as unnecessary as circumcision, and no doubt attend to psychological distress that has only the most tenuous connection to a small flap of penile tissue.

Pros and Cons

We heard a lot of arguments, for and against. To be sure, there is no shortage of arguments in favor of circumcision. Some are aesthetic and offer a psychological

theory based on that aesthetic. He will look different from his father and thus develop shame about his body. He will look different from other Jewish boys, especially in our heavily Jewish neighborhood and thus become subject to ridicule and teasing and develop a sense that he does not belong. As one man on an email list to which I posed the question wrote, "I don't want my kid to be an object of interest while taking public showers, such as in gym class or in athletic clubs" (David Garnier, personal communication).

Other arguments are medical. After all, male circumcision is the most common surgical procedure in the United States—and medical insurance carriers routinely cover hospital circumcision (which raises the incentives of medical practitioners to advocate the procedure). His risks of penile infection, STD, and especially penile cancer will be significantly lower if he were to be circumcised. The likelihood of uterine cancer in his female sexual partners will be higher if he were not.

In addition, there were conflicting reports on the effects of circumcision on sexual functioning. There is some evidence from sex surveys that circumcised men are more sexually active and more sexually adventurous, especially with regards to oral and anal sex. Circumcised men masturbate more often. And because circumcised men have less sexual sensitivity—after all, the foreskin contains about 1,000 nerve endings—fully one-third of the organ's pleasure receptors—there is some evidence that it delays ejaculation somewhat.

And, of course, the weight of family, history, and culture do not rest lightly on the shoulders of the new parent. As Jews, we knew full well the several thousand-year-old tradition of following one of the most fundamental of God's commandments to Abraham that "every male among you shall be circumcised . . . and that shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you" (Gen. 17:10–12).

In the end, though, none of the arguments in favor of circumcision was fully persuasive. Taken together, however, they raised issues that spoke to the core of our identities as a man and a woman, as parents, as feminists, and as Jews. Each of the points of contention seems worth discussing in a bit more detail.

The Psychological Aesthetics of Difference

That he would look different from his father was easily negotiated. We decided that we will simply tell him that Daddy had no choice about his own body and especially his penis, but that now, as parents, we loved him so much that we decided we didn't want to hurt him like that—turning something that could be a cause of embarrassment into a source of pride.

And he will look more and more like the other boys rather than different. Circumcision of newborns is decreasing in popularity, performed routinely only in the United States (and here as a medical procedure in the hospital) and Israel, where it remains a significant religious ceremony. (Adolescent circumcision

remains the norm in most Islamic nations.) After these two countries, only Canada (25%) and Australia (10%) have rates of newborn circumcision in double digits; in European nations it is virtually nonexistent among non-Jews. Over four-fifths of all men in the world are uncircumcised.

Here in the United States, rates have fallen from well over 85% in 1960 to about two-thirds in 2000, so there was every reason to believe that more and more boys would look like Zachary and that he had little to fear by way of social ostracism. In our own neighborhood in heavily Jewish Brooklyn, about half the baby boys born in our local hospital are circumcised in the hospital (though there is no information about those who have circumcision performed as a religious ceremony in their homes or elsewhere).

Medical Ambivalence

And while it is true that risk of penile cancer or infection is virtually nonexistent among circumcised men, rates are higher, though still minuscule among circumcised men as well. In 1991, the American Academy of Pediatrics finally lifted its longtime advocacy of routine hospital circumcision for health reasons and now takes no position on the question, thus leaving the decision entirely up to the parents' aesthetic or religious beliefs. They concluded that there were no medical benefits to circumcision as long as the boy was instructed on proper cleanliness.

Even the redoubtable Benjamin Spock changed his mind over the years. Having always stood for the conventional wisdom that parents know best, Spock told *Redbook* in an interview in 1989 that his preference "if I had the good fortune to have another son, would be to leave his little penis alone" (cited in Ollivier, 1998). In a pamphlet, "Circumcision: A Medical or Human Rights Issue?" one doctor went as far as to suggest that removing the foreskin for strictly hygienic purposes was analogous to removing the eyelid for a cleaner eyeball.

Future sexual functioning didn't weigh particularly heavily in our minds either. For one thing, sexual functioning is so profoundly variable; we expect that if we teach Zachary to develop respect for his and others' bodies as well as their personal integrity, sexual pleasure will not be an issue for him or his partners. Second, the evidence is inconsistent. While circumcised men in the United States seem to have more sex, more varied sex, and masturbate more often, this may be more of a function of race, class, education and religion than with whether or not the man is circumcised. It's middle-class white men—who tend to be the most secular and the most sexual—who still compose the majority of circumcised men. Among blacks and Hispanics, rates of oral sex and masturbation are significantly lower than among white men, and middle-class men are more sexually active and adventurous than working-class men. "People with graduate degrees are the most likely to masturbate," noted Ed Laumann, a sociologist and one of the principal researchers in the University of Chicago sex survey in the early 1990s.

Nor were we persuaded by the eventual effect on potential women partners. An informal poll among heterosexual women friends yielded a mixed anecdotal response. Most said they preferred circumcised men, and one or two indicated significant aesthetic discomfort with intact men. But an article in the January 1999 *British Journal of Urology* reported that women who had slept with both circumcised and intact men preferred sex with men who were not circumcised. The article reported that the women achieved orgasm faster, and were more likely to achieve multiple orgasms (see O'Hara and O'Hara, 1999).

The Burden of History

Actually, the historical record of medical opinion consistently pushed us further into the anticircumcision camp. The more we learned about the medical history, the more we were convinced that concerns other than for the health of the baby drove the routine practice. Before the 1870s in the United States, routine medical circumcision was quite rare, hovering around 5–6% of all newborn baby boys. Subscribers to the new Victorian sexual morality sought to reduce what critics perceived as rampant sexual promiscuity, and especially masturbation, which, they believed, resulted in all sorts of debilities and even death. Masturbation was said to cause all manner of emotional, psychological, and physiological problems, from bed-wetting to adolescent insolence, acne to mental retardation, insanity, psychological exhaustion, and neurasthenia.

Circumcision's well-established ability to curb sexual appetite and pleasure was prescribed as a potential cure for sexual profligacy. Lewis Sayre, a prominent New York physician, hailed as "the Columbus of the prepuce" by his colleagues, experimented with circumcision as a cure for paralysis and other muscular ailments. Sayre's colleagues also noted that Jews had a lower rate of STDs than non-Jews, and hypothesized that this had to do with circumcision. (Actually this had to do with the fact that Jews had very little sexual contact with non-Jews.)

Another physician, Dr. Peter Remondino, advocated universal male circumcision since the foreskin, which he labeled "an unyielding tube," left the intact male "a victim to all manner of ills, sufferings . . . and other conditions calculated to weaken him physically, mentally, and morally; to land him, perchance, in jail, or even in a lunatic asylum." And Robert Tooke's popular *All About the Baby* (1896) recommended circumcision to prevent "the vile habit of masturbation" (all in Ollivier, 1998).

J. H. Kellogg, pioneering health reformer, cereal inventor, and general medical quack also sounded the alarm; his best-selling health advice book, *Plain Facts for Old and Young* (1888), included nearly 100 pages on the dangers of masturbation. Circumcision is almost always successful in curbing masturbation, he counseled, and he suggested that the operation be performed "by a surgeon without administering anesthetic, as the brief pain attending the operation will have

a salutary effect upon the mind . . ." (see Kimmel, 1996). (Though this may have begun the tradition of not using anesthesia to perform circumcision, Kellogg did not pretend that the baby feels no pain during the procedure. Anyone who has ever witnessed a routine medical circumcision performed without anesthesia knows only too well how much pain the infant does feel.)

Victorian morality was pervasive. And as waves of uncircumcised immigrants entered the United States, circumcision of newborns was a way to stake a claim for a truly "American" morality. Rates jumped to 25% by 1900. After World War II, when the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that rates of STD were higher among blacks and uncircumcised white men, rates continued to climb, and by 1980, nearly nine of every ten American boys were circumcised.

But it now appears that the rapid spread of circumcision as a routine medical procedure had more to do with Victorian hysteria about sexuality than it did with hygiene. And given the American Academy of Pediatrics' recent backpedaling on the issue—from ritual endorsement to anxious agnosticism to its most recent resigned disapproval—there seems to be no medical argument, historical or hygienic—to compel the procedure.

The Weights of Tradition

The combined weight of family and religious culture were not so easily negotiated. As predicted, the future grandmothers were somewhat more sanguine about the prospect of noncircumcision than were the future grandfathers. It's ironic that it has always been women—even within Judaism—who have opposed circumcision as a violence done to their babies, and circumcised males who have supported it. Perhaps it is analogous to fraternity or military initiation ceremonies, where the salutary outcomes of feeling a sense of belonging to the larger homosocial group is deemed worth any price, including the removal of a third of one's potential sexual pleasure.

In our case, neither Amy nor I felt any strong compulsion toward circumcision, but I was more strongly opposed on moral grounds. Amy's opposition would come later, when she first held Zachary in her arms and she felt a visceral rage that anyone would do anything that would ever hurt this new creature. In very gender stereotyped terms, Amy's opposition grew from her emotional, visceral connection to the baby; mine grew first from a principled opposition grounded in a sense of justice and ethics.

But equally gendered, I suppose, I felt that my Judaism had always given me the ability to stand up against injustice, that the imperative of the post-Holocaust generation of "Never Again!" impelled me to speak out against injustices wherever I saw them (see Kimmel, 1986).

Ultimately, it came down to Judaism. Jewish law is unequivocal on the subject—it has been a time-honored tradition since the celebrated covenant with

Abraham, the founding moment of monotheism. In Genesis 17, God appears before an aged Abraham—he's 99!—and commands that Abraham circumcise himself, his son, and all male members of his household (slaves and servants included).

Though originally, perhaps for reasons of cleanliness, today circumcision is seen simply as a mitzvah, linking the family to a four thousand-year history of a people. In his masterful compendium of Jewish law and lore, *Essential Judaism*, George Robinson writes that today it is a mitzvah "one performs for its own sake as a subordination of oneself to a larger entity" (Robinson, 2000, p. 146). What's a tiny foreskin compared to four thousand years of tradition? And so it appeared that Jewish tradition might yet extract its pound of flesh—well, more likely about a quarter of an ounce—from yet another innocent baby.

So circumcision seems essential, but there the consensus ends. Judaism seems hardly as monolithic as we once thought. Even in biblical times there seems to have been some dissent. If one follows the ritual as prescribed by Jewish law, the baby is held during the circumcision on what is called the Chair of Elijah, named after the prophet "who railed against the Jews for forsaking the ritual of circumcision," so that today he stands as a mute witness in the maintenance of the covenant (Robinson, p. 146). What this story says to me is that not long after circumcision was instituted, there were a lot of people who were already resisting it. That the circumcision be performed on the eighth day after the birth of the son is so iron-clad that it is perhaps the only Jewish ritual that may not be postponed for the Sabbath or even for Yom Kippur. Those who were interested in enforcing circumcision were determined that there be no excuses—no doubt because a lot of people were trying to wiggle their way out.

And ever since, there's been a lively opposition to circumcision within Judaism. In her research, Amy found that at the middle to the end of the nineteenth century in Eastern Europe and Russia, there was a widespread move to stop the practice—ironically, just when it was becoming more widespread in the United States. Led by women—what a surprise!—who thought the practice barbaric and patriarchal, the movement eventually even convinced Theodore Herzl, the founder of the modern Zionist movement, who refused to allow his own son to be circumcised.

It is, after all, quite perplexing: Why would God ask Abraham do such a thing to himself and all the males of his household—especially his son? For years, I had a little cartoon in my study that depicted Abraham, standing alone on top of a mountain, looking up at the sky, forlorn and exasperated. The caption read, "Let me see if I have this right: You want us to cut the ends of our dicks off!?!"

The circumcision as ritual makes sense, however, in three ways—one sexual, one political, and one symbolic. Throughout history, commentators on circumcision have agreed that the goal was to transform men's (and women's) sexual experience, and thus make men more eager to study Torah. The only thing they disagreed on was how, exactly, circumcision would accomplish this feat of sublimation.

Most observers assumed it would make a man less sexually sensitive, reduce his sexual ardor, and constrain his sexual impulses. In his fascinating study, *Eros and the Jews,* David Biale finds two contradictory impulses leading toward the same conclusion. Ancient Jews, such as Philo, understood circumcision as "the symbol of the excision of excessive and superfluous pleasure" (in Biale, 1992, p. 39). In *The Guide of the Perplexed,* the great medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides prefigured J. H. Kellogg by nearly a millennium when he wrote that the commandment to circumcise was "not prescribed with a view to perfecting what is defective congenitally, but to perfecting what is defective morally." A chief reason for the ritual was "the wish to bring about a decrease in sexual intercourse and a weakening of the organ in question, so that this activity be diminished and the organ be in as quiet a state as possible." After all, he continued, "the fact that circumcision weakens the faculty of sexual excitement and sometimes perhaps diminishes the pleasure is indubitable."

While Maimonides argued that the physiological pain was "the real purpose" of the ritual, others believed that the psychological impact far outweighed the physical. An early medieval Midrash Tadshe suggests that the "covenant of circumcision was therefore placed on the genitals so that the fear of God would restrain them from sin" (in Biale, 1992, pp. 91, 48). Later thinkers took the physical to new extremes. The early nineteenth-century scholar, Nahman of Bratslav, great grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, argued that circumcision symbolizes the complete excision of sexual pleasure so that the "true zaddik" (holy man) experiences pain, not pleasure, during intercourse.

So on the one hand, writers were convinced that men would feel less—much less, and therefore their frustration would lead inevitably toward holier devotion to study. On the other hand, some writers were convinced that circumcised men would experience far more sexual excitement—so much more, in fact, that it would leave both him and his partner so frustrated that they wouldn't want to have sex again. In an astonishing passage, Isaac ben Yedaiah, a late thirteenth-century French follower of Maimonides described the difference in such overheated prose that it borders on the salacious (which alone makes it worth quoting at length):

> [A beautiful woman] will court a man who is uncircumcised in the flesh and lie against his breast with great passion, for he thrusts inside her a long time because of the foreskin, which is a barrier against ejaculation in intercourse. Thus she feels pleasure and reaches an orgasm first. When an uncircumcised man sleeps with her and then resolves to return to his home, she brazenly grasps him, holding on to his genitals and says to him, "Come back, make love to me." This is because of the pleasure that she finds in intercourse with him, from the sinews of his testicles—sinew of iron—and from his ejaculation—that of a horse—which he shoots like an arrow into her womb. They are united without separating and he makes love twice and three times in one night, yet the appetite is not filled. And so he acts with

> her night after night. The sexual activity emaciates him of his bodily fat and afflicts his flesh and he devotes his brain entirely to women, an evil thing.
>
> But when a circumcised man desires the beauty of a woman . . . he will find himself performing his task quickly, emitting his seed as soon as he inserts the crown . . . He has an orgasm first; he does not hold back his strength. As soon as he begins intercourse with her, he immediately comes to a climax. She has no pleasure from him when she lies down or when she arises and it would be better for her if he had not known her . . . , for he arouses her passion to no avail and she remains in a state of desire . . . (cited in Biale, 1992, p. 94)

So more excitement means less pleasure—for both him and his female partner. Ancient rabbis, like Philo, had argued that not only did circumcision restrain male sexual ardor, but diminished women's pleasure. "It is hard for a woman to separate herself from an uncircumcised man with whom she has had intercourse." And everyone now seemed to agree that circumcision reduces the pleasure of the woman, which is precisely why it seems to have been prescribed. And precisely why Amy and I were growing increasingly suspicious.

There were political issues involved as well. It's interesting to observe the expansion of the ritual in terms of the relationship between Jews and their neighbors. Originally, apparently, the ritual consisted of only the *brit milah*—which is the excision of a small part of the foreskin. This enabled some Jewish men to continue to "pass" as gentiles in the ancient edition of those locker room showers that my friends continually discussed. Disgruntled rabbis then added the *brit periah*, which removed the entire foreskin, making it impossible to pass as gentile. (It's an ironic twist of history that it is the brit periah that was adopted by modern medicine when it still prescribed routine neonatal circumcision.)

But this expansion also raised, for us, the thorniest political and moral dilemma. A close friend, a child of Holocaust survivors, told me the story of his uncle, who was not so lucky. His was the now-classic story of the young man, sneaking his way onto a train leaving Germany under the watchful eyes of the Nazis. When caught, he was forced to strip in the station, and when it was discovered that he was circumcised, he was shot on the spot.

Here was a political reason to circumcise, a slap in the face of anti-Semitism, a way to connect my son to a history of resistance against anti-Semitism and to recognize the ways in which physical difference (whether congenitally or culturally derived) is grounds for discrimination.

(Recall, also, that some historians claim that the brit periah, the moral extensive circumcision was first used by the Egyptians to mark their Hebrew slaves, so that they would be readily and permanently identifiable. Ironic then, that once free, these same Hebrews made the more dramatic statement a matter of their own *inclusion*.)

But what was ultimately decisive for us was the larger symbolic meaning of circumcision, particularly the gendered politics of the ritual. After all, it is not circumcision that makes a man Jewish, one can certainly be Jewish without it. Religious membership is passed on through the mother: If the mother is Jewish then the baby is Jewish and nothing that the baby does—or that is done to him or her—can change that basic fact. A rabbi is trained to counsel parents of mixed religious backgrounds (in which the man is Jewish and the woman is not) that circumcision does not make their son Jewish, but that only the mother's conversion will make him so.

No, the circumcision means something else: the reproduction of patriarchy. Abraham cements *his* relationship to God by a symbolic genital mutilation of his son. It is on the body of his son that Abraham writes his own beliefs. In a religion marked by the ritual exclusion of women, such a marking not only enables Isaac to be included within the community of men—he can be part of a minyan, can pray in the temple, can study Torah—but he can also lay claim to all the privileges to which being a Jewish male now entitles him. Monotheistic religions invariably worship a male God, and exhibit patriarchal political arrangements between the sexes. (Looked at this way, since both Judaism and Islam practice circumcision, it is really Christianity that is the deviant case, and it would be worth exploring how Christianity justified its evasion of the practice since it is certain that Jesus was circumcised.)

Circumcision, it became clear, is the single moment of the reproduction of patriarchy. It's when patriarchy happens, the single crystalline moment when the rule of the fathers is reproduced, the moment when male privilege and entitlement is passed from one generation to the next, when the power of the fathers is enacted upon the sons, and which the sons will someday then enact on the bodies of their own sons. To circumcise our son, then, would be, unwittingly or not, to accept as legitimate four thousand years not of Jewish tradition but of patriarchal domination of women.

Our choice was clear.

We welcomed Zachary into our family on that morning without a circumcision. We decided that we want him to live in a world without violence, so we welcomed him without violence. We decided that we want him to live in a world in which he is free to experience the fullness of the pleasures of his body, so we welcomed him with all his fleshy nerves intact. And we decided that we want him to live in a world in which male entitlement is a waning memory, and in which women and men are seen—in both ritual and in reality—as full equals and partners. So we welcomed him equally, his mother and I, in the time-honored way that desert cultures have always welcomed strangers to their tents: We washed his feet.

IV
Sex and Violence

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11

What's Love Got to Do with It?

Rape, Domestic Violence, and the Making of Men

As a nation, we are preoccupied by violence. We fret about "teen violence," complain about "inner-city crime," or fear "urban gangs." We express shock at the violence in our nation's public schools, where metal detectors crowd the doorways, and knives and guns compete with pencils and erasers in students' backpacks. Those public school shootings left us speechless and sick at heart. Yet when we think about these wrenching events, do we ever consider that, whether white or black, inner-city or suburban, these bands of marauding "youths" or these troubled teenagers are virtually all young men? Rarely do news reports mention the fact that virtually all the violence in the world today is committed by men. Imagine, though, that all these phalanxes of violence were composed entirely of women. Would not a gender analysis be the center of every single newspaper story? The fact that these are men seems so obvious as to raise no questions, generate no analysis.

And just as in the streets and in our schools, so too at home. Violence is so deeply woven into the fabric of daily life that we accept violence as a matter of course—within families, between friends, between lovers. Most victims of violence know their attackers; many know them intimately. Nearly one in five victims of violence treated in hospital emergency rooms were injured by a spouse, a former spouse, or a current or former boyfriend or girlfriend. Violence can be a very private, personal, and intimate language, just as it can be the mode of public address between societies and social groups.

The gender imbalance of intimate violence is equally staggering. Of those victims of violence who were injured by spouses or ex-spouses, women outnumber men by about 9 to 1. Eight times more women were injured by their boyfriends than there were men injured by girlfriends (*New York Times*, 25 August 1997). The United States has among the highest rates for rape, domestic violence, and spousal murder in the industrial world (U.S. Department of Justice,

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Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997). Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women, claiming nearly four million victims a year. Between one-third and one-half of all women are assaulted by a spouse or partner at some point during their lives. Between 30 and 40% of all women who are murdered are murdered by husband or boyfriends, according to the FBI (Siegel, 1996, p. 3). Every six minutes a woman in the United States is raped; every eighteen seconds a woman is beaten, and every day four women are killed by their batterers (Rhode, 1997, p. 108; Stephenson, 1991, p. 285).

It doesn't have to be this way, of course. Anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday (1981) found that the best predictors of "rape-proneness" were levels of militarism, interpersonal violence in general, ideologies of male toughness, and distant father-child relationships. Those societies in which rape was relatively rare valued women's autonomy (women continued to own property in their own name after marriage) and valued children (men were involved in child rearing). Stated most simply, "the lower the status of women relative to men, the higher the rape rate (Baron & Straus, 1987, p. 481)." What does that tell us about women's status in the United States?

The United States has the highest rate of reported rape in the industrial world—about 18 times higher than for England. Between 12 and 25% of all American women have experienced rape, and another 12–20% have experienced attempted rape. That means that between one-fourth and nearly one-half of all women have been sexually assaulted, and between two-thirds and four-fifths of these rapes involve acquaintances. One calculation estimates that between 20 and 30% of all girls now 12 years old will suffer a violent sexual attack during the rest of their lives (Scully, 1990; Russell, 1984; Johnson, 1980).

Different theoretical schools pose different explanations for rape. Biological arguments that men are driven by testosterone, for example, toward acts of rapacious violence are unconvincing. Why would rape rates vary across cultures so much if the impulse to rape is biological? Equally unconvincing are psychological arguments that rape is an isolated, individual act, committed by sick individuals who experience uncontrollable sexual impulses. After all, almost three-fourths of all rapists plan their rape. Only about 5% of rapists can be categorized as psychotic. And blaming alcohol or drugs is unconvincing—why wouldn't women lose control in the same way? An adequate explanation of rape has to remember that it is men who rape women, and ask the more frightening question: Why do so many typical, normal men commit rape? Sociologist Allan Johnson asks, how can such a pervasive event be the work of so few lunatics?

> It is difficult to believe that such widespread violence is the responsibility of a small lunatic fringe of psychopathic men. That sexual violence is so pervasive supports the view that the focus of violence against women rests squarely in the middle of what our culture defines as "normal" interaction between men and women. (1980, p. 145)

The reality is that rape is committed by all-American, regular guys. Yet it is equally true that most men do not commit rape. In several surveys, many men indicated that they would consider it—if the conditions were right and they knew that they would not get caught. In another survey of American college men, over one-fourth (28%) indicated that they would be likely to commit rape and use force to get sex; 6% said they would commit rape but not use force, and 30% said they might use force but would not commit rape. Forty percent—less than half!—indicated that they would neither use force nor commit rape. In another survey, 37% indicated some likelihood of committing rape if they were certain they would not be caught.

Something still holds men back, whether it is simply the fear of being caught, or because they can't quite take demonstrating their masculinity to that level. In a sense, what we now see is not that rapists are nonconformists, psychologically unbalanced perverts who couldn't otherwise get sex, but that rapists are actually overconformists—overconformists to a set of norms about masculinity that makes every encounter with every women potentially about sexual conquest, that turns every date into a contest. "The most striking characteristic of sex offenders," writes one researcher, "is their apparent normality" (Herman, 1988, p. 426). So, any discussion of rape has to take account of the ordinariness of the crime within the normative definition of masculinity.

In a fascinating study of convicted rapists, Diana Scully found that rapists have higher levels of consensual sexual activity than other men, are as likely to have significant relationships with women, and are as likely to be fathers as are other men. This should effectively demolish the evolutionary arguments that men who rape do so out of sexual frustration, desire for relationships with women, or are "losers" in the sexual marketplace. Rape was used by men "to put women in their place," as one convicted rapist put it:

> Rape is a man's right. If a woman doesn't want to give it, a man should take it. Women have no right to say no. Women are made to have sex. It's all they are good for. Some women would rather take a beating, but they always give in; it's what they are for.

Men rape, Scully concludes, "not because they are idiosyncratic or irrational, but because they have learned that in this culture sexual violence is rewarding" and because "they never thought they would be punished for what they did" (1990, pp. 74, 140, 166, 159).

Rape is a crime that combines sex and violence, that makes sex the weapon of an act of violence. It's less a crime of passion than a crime of power, less about love or lust than about conquest and contempt, less an expression of longing than an expression of entitlement. You might think that when men think about rape, then, they think about the power they feel. But listen to the voice of one young man, a 23-year-old stockboy named Jay in a San Francisco corporation, who was asked by author Tim Beneke to think about under what circumstances he might

commit rape. He has never committed rape. He's simply an average guy, considering the circumstances under which he would commit an act of violence against a woman. Here's what Jay says:

> Let's say I see a woman and she looks really pretty and really clean and sexy and she's giving off very feminine, sexy vibes. I think, wow, I would love to make love to her, but I know she's not interested. It's a tease. A lot of times a woman knows that she's looking really good and she'll use that and flaunt it and it makes me feel like she's laughing at me and I feel degraded . . . If I were actually desperate enough to rape somebody it would be from wanting that person, but also it would be a very spiteful thing, just being able to say "I have power over you and I can do anything I want with you" because really I feel that they have power over me just by their presence. Just the fact that they can come up to me and just melt me makes me feel like a dummy, makes me want revenge. They have power over me so I want power over them. (1982, p. 165)

Jay speaks not from a feeling of power, but from a feeling of powerlessness. In his mind, rape is not the initiation of aggression against a woman, but a form of revenge, a retaliation following an injury already done to him. But by whom?

Beneke explores this apparent paradox by looking at language. Think of the terms we use in this culture to describe women's beauty and sexuality. We use a language of violence, of aggression. A woman is a "bombshell," a "knockout," a "femme fatale." She's "stunning," "ravishing," "dressed to kill." We're "blown away," "done in." Women's beauty is experienced by men as an act of aggression—it invades men's thoughts, elicits feelings of desire and longing against their will, makes men feel helpless, powerless, vulnerable. Then, having committed this invasive act of aggression, women reject men, say no to sex, turn them down. Rape is a way to get even, to exact revenge for rejection, to retaliate. These feelings of powerlessness, coupled with the sense of entitlement to women's bodies expressed by the rapists Scully interviewed, provides a potent mix—powerlessness and entitlement, impotence and a right to feel in control. The astonishingly and shamefully high U.S. rape rate stems from that fusion.

These feelings of both powerlessness and entitlement are also part of the backdrop to the problem of violence in the home. Though the family is supposed to be our refuge from the dangerous outside world, a "haven in a heartless world," it turns out that the home is, for women and children, perhaps the single most dangerous place they can be. Not even the legal "protection" of marriage keeps women safe from the threat of rape, and the levels of violence against women in the home is terrifyingly high. Family violence researcher Murray Straus and his colleagues concluded that "the American family and the American home are perhaps as or more violent than any other American institution or setting (with the exception of the military, and only then in time of war)" (1980, p. 4).

Being married certainly doesn't protect women from rape. In one study of 644 married women, 12% reported having been raped by their husbands (Russell, 1982). In another study, among 393 randomly selected women, a date or a spouse were more than three times more likely to rape a woman than a stranger, a friend, or an acquaintance. Fully one-half of their sample reported more than 20 incidents of marital rape, and 48% indicated that rape was part of the common physical abuse by their husbands. In that study, David Finklehor and Kersti Yllo also found that nearly three-fourths of the women who had been raped by their husbands had ever successfully resisted; that 88% reported that they never enjoyed it; and that less than one-fourth (22%) had ever been sexually victimized as children (1985, pp. 217, 208).

One of the more dramatic changes in rape laws has been the removal of exemptions of husbands from prosecutions for rape. As recently as 1985, more than half of the states in the United States still expressly prohibited prosecution for marital rape, on the premise that women had no legal right to say no to sex with their husbands. When a woman says "I do," it apparently also meant "I will . . . whenever *he* wants to." And although by 1993, all states had declared marital rape was a crime "at least where force is used," according to the National Clearinghouse on Marital and Date Rape, as of 1996, the exemption still applies in several states where the couple is living together (not separated), and only five states have extended such protection to unmarried couples who lived together. Family researcher Richard Gelles described the scope of this problem in his testimony before the New Hampshire state legislature in 1981 as that state was considering removing the marital exemption from prosecution:

> In reality, marital rape is often *more traumatic* than stranger rape. When you have been intimately violated by a person who is supposed to love and protect you, it can destroy your capacity for intimacy with anyone else. Moreover, many wife victims are trapped in a reign of terror and experience repeated sexual assaults over a period of years. When you are raped by a stranger you have to live with a frightening memory. *When you are raped by your husband, you have to live with your rapist.* (cited in Schulman, 1981, p. 345)

Marital rape is also a significant problem in other countries: Husbands remain excluded from prosecution, since a man is legally entitled to do whatever he wants with his property. And wife abuse is also a chronic problem in other countries. In Hong Kong and Quito, Ecuador, for example, estimates are that 50% of all married women are regularly beaten by their husbands (Ehrenreich, 1994, p. 30).

Rates of wife abuse in the United States are still among the highest in the world. Battery is the single major cause of injury to women in the United States. More than 2,000,000 women are beaten by their partners every year. Between 2,000 and 4,000 women a year are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends. Another study found that nearly half of all women murdered in New York City

were killed by their husbands or boyfriends—only about 3% of all male homicides are committed by wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends (Bachman & Saltzman, 1994; Strauss & Gelles, 1990; Kellerman & Marcy, 1992; Bachman & Saltzman, 1992; Briere & Malamuth, 1983).

Not only are the rates for spousal murder significantly different, so are the events leading up to it. R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash and their colleagues argue that

> men often kill wives after lengthy periods of prolonged physical violence accompanied by other forms of abuse and coercion; the roles in such cases are seldom if ever reversed. Men perpetrate familial massacres, killing spouse and children together; women do not. Men commonly hunt down and kill wives who have left them; women hardly ever behave similarly. Men kill wives as part of planned murder-suicides; analogous acts by women are almost unheard of. Men kill in response to revelations of wifely infidelity; women almost never respond similarly, though their mates are more often adulterous. (1992, p. 81)

It is also worth noting that these disparate rates of spousal homicide in Western societies are relatively modest compared with the rates in developing societies, where the ratio is even greater. Where patriarchal control is relatively unchallenged, assault, rape, and even murder may be seen less as a crime and more of a prerogative (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1996).

One might think that these convincing data would generate a tremendous outburst of sympathy for these women from men. After all, men are traditionally women's "protectors." Yet the most vocal chorus of men is the one that shouts about the problem of "husband abuse." When one sociologist made the claim that husband abuse by wives is the most underreported form of domestic violence, suddenly legions of antifeminists trot out the claim in policy discussions. Some of these new studies suggest that women are "as likely" to hit men as men are to hit women, and that women commit 50% of all spousal murders, and provide "facts" like 1.8 million women suffered one or more assaults by a husband or boyfriend, and over 2 million men were assaulted by their wives or girlfriends; that 54% of all violence labeled as "severe" was committed by women; or that among teenage dating couple, girls were more violent than boys. (Ironically, the people who claim equivalent rates of domestic violence are often the same ones who argue that women and men are biologically different, and that women are not biologically suited to enter the military.) One obviously confused journalist suggests that since "only" 3–4% of women are battered each year, "we ought to consider it the unfortunate behavior of a few crazy men" (Brott, 1994). (If 3–4% of all men were stricken with testicular or prostate cancer each year, or were victims of street assault, this same journalist would no doubt consider it a national emergency and mobilize the entire medical community or the National Guard—or perhaps both!)

If these data were true, you might ask, why are there no shelters for battered men, no epidemics of male victims turning up in hospital emergency rooms, no legions of battered men coming forward to demand protection? Partly, these pundits tell us, because men who are victims of domestic violence are so ashamed of the humiliation, of the denial of manhood, that they are unlikely to come forward, and more likely to suffer in silence the violent ministrations of their wives—a psychological problem that one researcher calls "the battered husband syndrome." And partly, they tell us, because the power of the "feminist lobby" is so pervasive that there has been a national cover-up of this demonstrably politically incorrect finding.

These data are hopelessly flawed, and the inferences drawn from them are even more unwarranted. For example, in "The Battered Husband Syndrome," sociologist Susan Steinmetz surveyed 57 couples. Four of the wives were seriously beaten, but no husbands were beaten. From this finding, she concluded that men just don't report abuse, and that therefore there is a serious problem of husband abuse and that 250,000 men were hit every year—this, remember, from a finding that no husbands were abused. By the time the media hoopla over such bogus data subsided, the figure had ballooned to 12 million battered husbands every year! (Steinmetz, 1978; cf. also Pagelow, 1985; Storch, 1978; Straton, 1994).

One problem concerns the questions asked in the research. Those studies that found that women hit men as much as men hit women asked couples if they had ever hit their partner during the course of their relationship. And an equal number of women and men said yes. The number changed dramatically, though, when they were asked who initiated the violence (was it offensive or defensive), how severe it was (did she push him after he's broken her jaw?), and how often the violence occurred. When these three questions were posed, the results looked like what we knew all along: The amount, frequency, severity, and consistency of violence against women is far greater than anything done by women to men.

Another problem stems from who was asked. The studies that found comparable rates of domestic violence asked only one partner about the incident. But studies in which both partners were interviewed separately found large discrepancies between the reports from women and men. The same researcher who found comparable rates has suggested that such results be treated with extreme caution, because men underreport severe assaults. (Perhaps that is because it is equally unmanly to beat up a woman as it is to be beaten up by one, since "real men" are taught never to raise a hand against a woman [Stets & Straus, 1987].)

A third problem results from when the people were asked about violence. The studies that found comparability asked about incidents only in one year, thus equating a single slap with a history of domestic terror that may have lasted decades. And while the research is clear that violence against women increases dramatically following divorce or separation, the research that found comparable results excluded incidents that occurred after separation or divorce. About 76% of all assaults take place then, with a male perpetrator more than 93% of the time (U.S. Department of Justice, 1984).

Finally, the research that suggests comparability is all based on the Conflict Tactics Scale, which does not distinguish between offensive and defensive violence, equating a vicious assault with a woman hitting her husband while he is assaulting their children (Russell, 1984, p. 99). Nor does it take into account the physical differences between women and men, which lead to women being six times more likely to require medical care for injuries sustained in family violence (Kaufman Kantor & Janinski). Nor does it include the nonphysical means by which women are compelled to remain in abusive relationships (income disparities, fears about their children, economic dependency). Nor does it include marital rape or sexual aggression. As one violence researcher asks, "Can you call two people equally aggressive when a woman punches her husband's chest with no physical harm resulting and a man punches his wife's face and her nose is bloodied and broken? These get the same scores on the CTS" (Yllo, personal communication).

Of course, there is some research evidence that suggests that women are capable of using violence in intimate relationships. According to the Department of Justice, females experienced over ten times as many incidents of violence by an intimate than men did. On average, women experienced about 575,000 violent victimizations, compared with about 49,000 for men. Perhaps it's a bit higher; about one in eight wives report having ever hit their husbands. And when women are violent, they tend to use the least violent tactics and the most violent ones. Women tend to shove, slap, and kick as often as men. And they tend to use guns almost as often as men do (Bachman & Saltzman, 1992, p. 6; see also Straus, Murray & Gelles, 1990).

Domestic violence varies as the balance of power in the relationship shifts. When all the decisions are made by one spouse, rates of spouse abuse—whether committed by the woman or the man—are at their highest levels. Violence against women is most common in those households in which power is concentrated in the hands of the husband. Interestingly, rates of violence against husbands are *also* more common (though much less likely) in homes in which the power is concentrated in the hands of the husband, or, in the extremely rare cases, in the hands of the wife. Concentration of power in men's hands leads to higher rates of violence, period—whether against women or against men. Rates of wife abuse and husband abuse both plummet as the relationships become increasingly equal, and there are virtually no cases of wives hitting their husbands when all decisions are shared equally, that is, when the relationships are fully equal.

Women and men do not commit acts of violence at the same rate; nor do they do it for the same reasons. Family violence researcher Kersti Yllo argues that men tend to use domestic violence instrumentally, for the specific purpose of striking fear and terror in their wives' hearts, to insure compliance, obedience, and passive acceptance of his rule in the home. Women, by contrast, tend to use violence expressively, to express frustration or immediate anger, or, of course defensively, to prevent further injury. But rarely is women's violence systematic, purposive, and routine. As two psychologists recently put it:

> in heterosexual relationships, battering is primarily something that men do to women, rather than the reverse . . . [T]here are many battered women who are violent, mostly, but not always, in self-defense. Battered women are living in a culture of violence, and they are part of that culture. Some battered women defend themselves: they hit back, and might even hit or push as often as their husbands do. But they are the ones who are beaten up. (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998, p. 36)

In the results of some surveys that simply add up all violent acts women and men might appear to be equally violent. But the hospital emergency rooms, battered women's shelters, and county morgues suggest that such appearances are deadly deceptive.

Violence against women knows no class, racial, nor ethnic bounds. "Educated, successful, sophisticated men—lawyers, doctors, politicians, business executives—beat their wives as regularly and viciously as dock workers" (Saline, 1984, p. 82). Yet there are some differences. For example, one of the best predictors of the onset of domestic violence is unemployment. And a few studies have found rates of domestic violence to be higher in African-American families than in white families. One study found that black men hit their wives four times more often than white men did, and that black women hit their husbands twice as often as white women. While subsequent studies have indicated a decrease in violence among black families, the rates are still somewhat higher than among white families (Hampton & Gelles, 1994; Hampton, 1987).

Among Latinos the evidence is contradictory: One study found significantly less violence in Latino families, while another found a slightly higher rate. These contradictory findings were clarified by separating different groups of Latinos. Kaufman Kantor and colleagues found that Puerto Rican husbands were about twice as likely to hit their wives as Anglo husbands (20.4% to 9.9%), and about 10 times more likely than Cuban husbands (2.5%) (Kaufman Kantor et al., 1994). In many cases, however, these racial and ethnic differences disappear when social class is taken into account. Sociologist Noel Cazenave examined the same National Family Violence Survey and found that blacks had *lower* rates of wife abuse than whites in three of four income categories—the two highest and the lowest. Higher rates among blacks were reported only by those in the $6,000–$11,999 income range (which included 40% of all blacks surveyed). Income and residence (urban) were also the variables that explained virtually all the ethnic differences between Latinos and Anglos as well. The same racial differences in spousal murder can be explained by class; two-thirds of all spousal murders in New York City were in the poorest sections of the Bronx and Brooklyn (Cazenave & Straus, 1990; Belluck, 1997).

Of course, gay men and lesbians can be victims of domestic violence as well. A recent informal survey of gay victims of violence in six major cities found that gay men and lesbians were more likely to be victims of domestic violence than of antigay hate crimes. One study presented to the Fourth International

Family Violence Research Conference found that abusive gay men had a similar profile to heterosexual batterers, including low self-esteem and an inability to sustain intimate relationships (Haddock, 1996).

Domestic violence is a way in which men exert power and control over women. And yet, like rape, domestic violence is most likely to occur not when the man feels most powerful, but when he feels relatively powerless. Violence is restorative, a means to reclaim the power that he believes is rightfully his. As one sociologist explains "abusive men are more likely to batter their spouses and children whenever they feel they are losing power or control over their lives" (cited in Stephenson, 1991).

Violence takes an enormous social toll, not just on those who are its victims, but in the massive costs of maintaining a legal system, prisons, and police forces. And it takes an incalculable psychic cost—an entire nation that has become comfortable living in fear of violence. "To curb crime we do not need to expand repressive state measures, but we do need to reduce gender inequalities," writes the criminologist James Messerschmidt (1993, p. 185). And assuaging that fear, as criminologist Elizabeth Stanko puts it, "will take more than better outdoor lighting" (1990, p. 3).

Of course, better lighting is a start. And we have to protect women from a culture of violence that so often targets them. At the turn of the century, the great sociologist Charlotte Perkins Gilman made this issue central as she poked through the veneer of masculine chivalry. When she refused a man's offer to escort her to her door, the man looked distressed. "But you need a man to protect you," he exclaimed. "From whom?" Gilman asked. At the same time, we must also protect boys "from a culture of violence that exploits their worst tendencies by reinforcing and amplifying the atavistic values of the masculine mystique" (Miedzian, 1991, p. 298). After all, it is men who are overwhelmingly the victims of violence—just as men are overwhelmingly its perpetrators.

Often, biological explanations are invoked as evasive strategies. "Boys will be boys," we say, throwing up our hands in helpless resignation. But even if all violence were biologically programmed by testosterone or the evolutionary demands of reproductive success, the epidemic of male violence in America would still beg the political question: Are we going to organize our society so as to maximize this propensity for violence, or to minimize it? These are political questions, and they demand political answers—answers that impel us to find alternative, nonviolent routes for men to express themselves as men.

"All violent feelings," wrote the great British writer John Ruskin, "produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things." Until we transform the meaning of masculinity, we will continue to produce that falseness—with continually tragic consequences.

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Gender Symmetry in Domestic Violence

A Substantive and Methodological Research Review

Domestic violence has emerged as one of the world's most pressing problems. The United Nations estimates that between 20% and 50% of all women worldwide have experienced physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner or family member (*State of the World Population Report,* 2000). In the United States, more than one million cases of "intimate partner violence" are reported to police each year, according to the U.S. Department of Justice (see Goldberg, 1999, A16). One of the major platforms for action adopted at the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was "the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls."

Efforts to prevent domestic violence and to facilitate the successful prosecution of batterers have followed research and advocacy on behalf of its victims. New laws, police procedures, and medical and forensic efforts to collect and preserve evidence have all encouraged prosecution; at the same time, refuges and shelters for battered women and education and therapy groups for men who are violent toward their partners have sought to transform the conditions that have traditionally supported and sustained domestic violence.

In recent years, a serious debate has erupted among activists, activist organizations, and individuals about the nature of domestic violence, and especially the gender of the perpetrators. Decades after first bringing the problem to public awareness, feminist activists now confront a growing chorus of researchers and political activists who claim that women and men are victimized by domestic violence in roughly equal numbers.

Despite numerous studies that report the preponderance of domestic violence to be perpetrated by males against females, there are also now nearly 100 empirical studies or reports that suggest that rates of domestic violence are

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equivalent (see, for example, Archer, 2000; Fiebert, 1997). In the United States, numerous studies have found that women and men are equally likely to report to researchers of having hit their partner during the preceding 12 months. In Great Britain, also, 4.2% of women *and* men said that they had been physically assaulted by a partner during the previous 12 months (Tendler, 1999).

Thus, activists for "men's rights" have suggested that policy-oriented efforts for women have been misplaced, because they focus entirely on women as the victims of domestic violence. Instead of the picture painted by feminist researchers and activists, these activists argue that, as one writer put it, "men are the victims of domestic violence at least as often as women" (Brott, 1994). Domestic violence, they argue, exhibits *gender symmetry*—an equal number of women and men are its victims.

While such activists draw our attention to the often-ignored problem of men as victims of domestic violence, their efforts are also often motivated by a desire to undermine or dismantle those initiatives that administer to women victims. To many of these advocates of gender symmetry, compassion is a zero-sum game, and when we show any compassion for women who are the victims of domestic violence, we will never address the male victims.

These apparent discrepancies between claims of gender symmetry and claims of dramatic asymmetry have led to significant confusion among policy makers and the general public. Is domestic violence a "women's" issue, or do equivalent rates indicate that the "problem" of domestic violence is a problem shared by women and men equally, or even not a problem at all? In this essay, I examine the claims of gender symmetry in domestic violence. I review existing sources of data on domestic violence and suggest why the rates of domestic violence appear so varied. I offer some ways to understand and reconcile these discordant data, so that both scholars and policy makers alike may acknowledge the male victims of domestic violence within the larger context of domestic violence.

The Idea of Gender Symmetry

Reports of gender symmetry have come to play a significant role in public and media discussions of domestic violence. Since these reports run counter to existing stereotypes of male-female relationships, they often have the headline-grabbing value of a "man-bites-dog" story. One review of the literature (Fiebert, 1997) found 79 empirical studies and 16 reviews of literature that demonstrated gender symmetry among couples. In a more recent meta-analytic review of this literature, Archer (2000) looked at 82 studies that found gender symmetry.

These empirical studies raise troubling questions about what the public is thought to "know" to be true of domestic violence—that it is something that men overwhelmingly "do" to women and not the other way around; that domestic violence is among the leading causes of serious injury to women every year; and, that

worldwide, men's violence against women is one of the most widespread public health issues worldwide.

The questions these studies raise are indeed troubling—but the questions they themselves *ask* are far from clear. For example, does gender symmetry mean that women hit women *as often* as men hit women? Or does it mean that an equal number of men and women hit each other? Or does symmetry refer to men's and women's motivations for such violence, or does it mean that the *consequences* of it are symmetrical? These questions are often lumped together in reviews of literature and "meta-analyses" that review existing data sets.

The two large-scale reviews of literature that demonstrate gender symmetry are useful indicators of the types of evidence offered and the arguments made by their proponents (Archer, 2000; Fiebert 1997). Of the 79 empirical articles that Fiebert (1997) reviews, 55 used the same empirical measure of "family conflict," the Conflict Tactics Scale, as the sole measure of domestic violence. This same scale was also used in 76 out of the 82 studies that Archer (2000) examined. In addition, 28 of those studies noted by Fiebert (1997) discussed samples composed entirely of young people—college students, high school students, or dating couples under 30—and not married couples. (These two groups overlap somewhat, as 13 of those studies of young, dating couples also used the CTS.) I will discuss the CTS at some length later, and also examine some of the reasons that studies of college-age and dating couples yield different rates of violence and aggression than studies of somewhat older married couples.

Of the remaining nine studies in Fiebert's 1997 survey that used neither the CTS nor sampled only young, dating, unmarried couples, two were based on people's perceptions of violence but offered no data about violence itself, while another was based on reports of witnessing violence that contained no useful data (Fiebert, 1997). Another was a study of spousal homicide that did not include homicides by ex-spouses (to which I shall also give some attention). One was a study of young people that had no comparisons by gender (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). And one was based on violence in American comic strips in 1950 (Saenger, 1963). Of the three remaining studies, two were based on clinical samples undertaken by my colleagues (Tyree & Malone, 1991; O'Leary et al., 1989). While these studies suggest that couples who seek clinical therapeutic help have high rates of mutual aggression, O'Leary has insisted that the age of the individuals dramatically changes the data, and that clinical samples cannot necessarily be generalized to a national population. Even so, as Fiebert (1997) notes, the study by Tyree and Malone (1991) found that women's violence was a result of a "desire to improve contact with partners," by which they meant that the women tended to slap or push their partner in order to get him to pay attention, but not to hurt him.

It would appear, therefore, that Gonzalez's unpublished master's thesis (1997), written apparently under Fiebert's supervision, is the only quantitative survey that purports to find gender symmetry without relying on the CTS. While it

may be of interest that most of the women said their violence was a "spontaneous reaction to frustration," Gonzalez did not survey males nor administer to a sample of males the same questionnaire, and thus, one can make *no inferences whatever* about gender symmetry.

Fiebert's (1997) scholarly annotated bibliography thus turns out to be far more of an ideological polemic than a serious scholarly undertaking. But since it has become a touchstone for those who support a gender symmetry analysis, it is important to consider the studies on which it is based. Despite the vituperative ideological debates, there are serious and credible social science researchers who have used reliable social science and found gender symmetry. Later, I examine (1) the Conflict Tactics Scale, especially what it measures and what it does not measure; and, (2) the effects of age and marital status on domestic violence.

Those who insist on gender symmetry must also account for two statistical anomalies. First, there is the dramatic disproportion of women in shelters and hospital emergency care facilities. Why is it that when we begin our analysis at the end point of the domestic violence experience—when we examine the serious injuries that often are its consequence—the rates are so dramatically asymmetrical? Second, claims of gender symmetry in marital violence must be squared with the empirical certainty that in every single other arena of social life, men are far more disproportionately likely to use violence than women. Why are women so much more violent in the home that their rates approach, or even exceed, those of men, while in every other nondomestic arena men's rates of violence are about nine times those of women (on rates of violence generally, see Kimmel, 2000)?

How Do We Know What We Know: Types of Data

Our understanding of domestic violence has relied on a wide variety of evidence, from clinical observations to narrative accounts of victims and batterers, the experiences of advocates, and qualitative data gleaned from police and medical sources. Large-scale surveys have fallen into two distinct types (see, for example, Bachman, 1998, 2000; Nazroo, 1995). These are "crime victimization studies," which rely on large-scale aggregate data on crime victimization and "family conflict studies," which measure the prevalence of aggression between married or cohabiting couples. These two sources of data find very different rates of domestic violence—in part because they are measuring two different things.

Crime Victimization Studies. Data about crime victimization are gathered from a variety of sources. Some are obtained from household surveys, such as the National Violence Against Women in America Survey (NVAW), sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (see Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). This nationally representative sample surveyed 8,000 women and 8,000 men representing 16,000 households in the

United States. Other crime studies are compiled from police statistics, the National Crime Survey, and the National Crime Victimization Study (NCVS) in which 60,000 households are surveyed annually. Police data typically relies on calls to domestic violence hot lines or calls to police departments.

Crime victimization studies have large sample sizes, in part because they are funded by national, state, and local government agencies. Crime victimization studies typically include a wide range of assaults, including sexual assault, in their samples. They ask not only about assaults by a current partner (spouse or cohabiting partner) but also by an ex-spouse or ex-partner. But they ask only about those events that the person experiences—or even reports to municipal authorities—as a crime, and therefore miss those events that are neither perceived as nor reported as crimes. They also find significantly lower rates of domestic violence than family conflict studies—ranging from significantly less than 1% to about 1.1% of all couples. One reason that they find lower rates of violence is that crime victimization studies include all individuals in a household over age 12, even though rates of domestic assault are far lower for women over age 65 and between 12–18. All family members are interviewed, which also may prevent some respondents from disclosing incidents of violence out of fear of retaliation. (For a summary of these findings, see Straus, 1999; see also DeKeseredy, 2000; and Gelles, 2000).

These studies uniformly find dramatic gender asymmetry in rates of domestic violence. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, of the one million cases of "intimate partner violence" reported to police authorities each year, female victims outnumber male victims by more than five to one. The National Crime Victimization Survey (1994) found females reported ten times as many incidents of violence as men did—3.9 incidents per 1,000 of population for male perpetrators, and 0.3 per 1,000 women (see also Dawson & Langan, 1994). The NVAW (1998) found that men physically assaulted their partners at three times the rate at which women assaulted their spouses. Crime victimization studies report high rates of injury to women from domestic assault, from 76% (NVAW), 75% (NCS), and 52% (NCVS).

Crime victimization studies further find that domestic violence increases in severity over time, so that earlier "moderate" violence is likely to be followed by more severe violence later (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). This emerges also in discussions of spousal homicide, where significant numbers of women killed by their spouses or ex-spouses were also victims of previous violence. In sum, crime victimization studies typically find that domestic violence is rare, serious, escalates over time, and is primarily perpetrated by men.

Family Conflict Studies. By contrast, family conflict studies are based on smaller-scale nationally representative household surveys such as the National Family Violence Survey (Straus & Gelles, 1990) or the National Survey of Families and Households, and the British and Canadian national surveys. These surveys interview respondents once and ask only one partner of a cohabiting couple (over 18)

about their experiences with various methods of expressing conflict in the family. Other survey evidence comes from smaller-scale surveys of college students or dating couples, and some draw from clinical samples of couples seeking marital therapy. Still other data are drawn from convenience samples of people who responded to advertisements for subjects placed in newspapers and magazines. According to Fiebert (1997), the total number of respondents for *all* studies that find gender symmetry is slightly more than 66,000—that is, slightly more than the single annual number of one of the crime victimization studies in any one year.

These surveys both expand and contract the types of questions asked to the respondents compared to crime victimization studies. On the one hand, they ask about all the possible experiences of physical violence, including those that are not especially serious or severe and that do not result in injury—that is, those that might not be reported, or even considered a crime. On the other hand, they ask questions only about cohabiting couples (and therefore exclude assaults by ex-spouses or ex-partners) and exclude sexual assault, embedding domestic violence within a context of "family conflict." So, for example, the Conflict Tactics Scale asks respondents about what happens "when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, or just have spats or fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason" (Straus, 1997, p. 217).

Family conflict studies tend to find much higher general rates of domestic violence than crime victimization studies—typically about 16% of all couples report some form of domestic violence (Straus, 1990). One summary of 21 of the approximately 120 studies that have explored family conflict found that about one-third of men and two-fifths of women indicated using violence in their marriages (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989). As surprising as it may be to see high levels of violence, the most surprising finding has been the gender symmetry in the use of violence to try to resolve family conflicts; as Fiebert (1997) writes, "women are as physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships" (p. 273).

These studies also find much lower rates of injury from domestic violence, typically about 3% (Stets & Straus, 1990). When "minor" forms of injury (such as slapping, pushing, and grabbing) are excluded from the data, the yearly incidence falls significantly, from the 16% noted earlier to around 6% of all couples (Straus & Gelles, 1986). They also find that violence is unlikely to escalate over time (see Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). In sum, then, family conflict studies tend to find high rates of domestic violence, stable levels of severity, low rates of injury, and find it perpetrated equally by women and men.

How are such different conclusions to be reconciled? A first step is to make the sources of data similar and make sure they are asking similar questions and comparing the same sorts of events. Crime victimization studies rely on two types of data—surveys of national probability samples that are representative of the population at-large and "clinical" samples—calls to police and shelters and visits to

emergency rooms. Family conflict studies are based on three sources of data: nationally representative probability samples, clinical samples, and convenience samples based on responses to advertisements.

Nationally representative probability samples are the only sources of data that are consistently reliable and generalizable. While clinical samples may have important therapeutic utility, especially in treatment modalities, they are relatively easy to dismiss as adequate empirical surveys since they do not offer control groups from the nonclinical population and therefore offer no grounds whatever for generalizability. Therefore, I shall omit from further discussion both types of clinical data—police, shelter, and emergency room data and data drawn from marital therapy cases.

Recruitment via ads in newspapers and magazines offer related problems of the representativeness of the sample and therefore undermine efforts at generalizability. Often people who respond to such ads respond because they have a "stake" in the issue, and feel that they want to contribute to it somehow. The representativeness of such people to the general population is unclear at best.[1]

Virtually all the "family conflict" surveys rely on the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS and CTS-2), a survey measure developed by New Hampshire sociologist Murray Straus and his collaborators, so we must examine that scale a bit further.

The Conflict Tactics Scale

Developed by Murray Straus and his colleagues over the past two decades, the Conflict Tactics Scale is enormously useful, especially for eliciting the quotidian, commonplace acceptance of violence as a means to "communicate." Let's begin our discussion where the CTS begins. Here is the opening paragraph to the survey as administered:

> No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, or just have spats or fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason. They also use many different ways of trying to settle their differences. I'm going to read some things that you and your (spouse/partner) might do when you have an argument. I would like you to tell me how many times . . . in the past 12 months you . . . (Straus, 1990)

Such a framing assumes that domestic violence is the result of an argument, that it has more to do with being tired or in a bad mood than it does with an effort to control another person. (For critiques of the CTS and CTS-2 generally, see Brush, 1993; Currie, 1998; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998a; Dobash et al., 1992; Kurz, 1993; and Okun, 1986).

The CTS asks about frequency, although only for one year. Asking how often in the past year either spouse or partner hit the other may capture some version of reality, but it does not capture an ongoing systematic pattern of abuse and violence over many years. This is akin to the difference between watching a single frame of a movie and the movie itself,

Context. The CTS simply counts acts of violence, but takes no account of the circumstances under which these acts occur. Who initiates the violence, the relative size and strength of the people involved, the nature of the relationship all will surely shape the experience of the violence, but not the scores on the CTS. Thus, if she pushes him back after being severely beaten, it would be scored one "conflict tactic" for each. And if she punches him to get him to stop beating their children, or pushes him away after he has sexually assaulted her, it would count as one for her, none for him.

In response, Straus and his colleagues acknowledge that the context is important, but believe that it is preferable to explore the context separately from the incidence. This response is unpersuasive. Imagine simply observing that death rates soared for males between 19 and 30 during a period of a few years without explaining that a country has declared war. Context matters.

Initiation. Some critics (see, for example, DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998b; Currie, 1998) have argued that simply asking how many times a person or his/her spouse used a series of conflict tactics is inadequate to measure the initiation of the violence. Straus (1993) argues that, using the CTS, initiation is about even, and that self-defense is not the motivation for most women. Straus finds that women initiated in 53% of the cases; 42% reported that their husbands initiated the aggression, and about 3% said they could not tell who initiated it. Data from other studies, however, indicated that women were far more likely to use violence defensively against the aggression of their partner (DeKeseredy et al., 1997). With such discordant findings, the CTS's value is limited unless there are a variety of measures incorporated to adequately ascertain the motivation for violence.

Intention and Motivation. Asking people how often they used various conflict tactics during an argument assumes that people use violence *expressively*—that is, in the heat of anger, as a way to settle an argument, to get one's point across, or to get the spouse or partner to listen or pay attention. It misses the way violence might be used *instrumentally*—to control or subdue, to reproduce subordination. Such an absence would be analogous to discussing rape and only focusing on those date and acquaintance rapes in which there had been some sexual foreplay and the boundaries were less than fully clear, while ignoring, for example rapes that ended in homicides, rape as a systematic policy of militarily subduing a population, rape in prison, and rape of strangers that has nothing to do with sexual ardor. In short, motivation for violence matters.

Does Location Matter? The Public/Private Split. In general, men are more aggressive than women (see Kimmel, 2000, for a summary of this research). In fact, violence is the only behavioral variable for which there are intractable and overwhelmingly skewed results showing gender differences. While gender differences on a host of other variables such as spatial orientation and visual perception, academic achievement and ability have been demonstrated, these differences are typically quite small. Rates of violence based on gender, however, are large and consistent. In their pathbreaking work, *The Psychology of Sex Differences* (1974), Maccoby and Jacklin found that violence exhibits the greatest gender variation; twenty years later, an analysis by Baron and Richardson (1994) found the same thing. So we would have to ask why would women hit men inside the house in roughly equal numbers but almost never commit violence toward men—or women—outside the home?

Studies that propose gender symmetry must explain this apparent paradox. Some argue, for example, that women assume that their violence toward their male partners is harmless (see Fiebert & Gonzalez, 1997). Straus believes that slapping a man might actually be considered appropriately feminine behavior (Straus, 1999). It is likely that each of these has some validity, but neither addresses the motivation of the women's violence nor the context in which it occurs. Actually, most empirical research on female aggression points in a very different direction. For example, Bjorkqvist and Niemela (1992) found that females are as aggressive as males—but *only* when they are in no danger of being recognized, that is, when the target is not a family member and there is no danger of retaliation. When parties know each other, women's violence tends to be defensive and men take the initiative (Adams, 1992). Obviously, domestic violence cannot fit the pattern of women retaining their anonymity.

Two final criticisms of the CTS—one methodological and one substantive—deserve somewhat fuller elaboration.

The Methodological Problem of Memory: Retrospective Analysis and Reporting Bias. One methodological problem invariably skews substantive results. The CTS relies on retrospection, asking people to accurately remember what happened during the past year. (It shares this method with crime victimization studies, and these biases may well extend to those studies as well.) Retrospection may not be completely reliable because memory often serves our current interests, but is unlikely to provide an accurate rendition of what actually happened. There is some evidence that the gender symmetry of domestic violence breaks down when retrospective studies are used alone. Why?

One argument commonly made (see, for example, Brott, 1994) is that men would be likely to underestimate how often they were victimized because being hit by a woman is so emasculating that they would be too ashamed to admit it, while women would tend to overestimate how often they were hit because it might serve their interests to make false allegations of domestic assault in divorce or custody

proceedings. Both of these assumptions turn out to be empirically groundless; in fact, the evidence points decidedly in the other direction.

Both women and men tend to see their use of violence as gender *non*conforming, but the consequences of this nonconformity might lead women and men to estimate their use of violence and their victimization quite differently. Women are socialized not to use violence, and, as a result, they would tend to remember every transgression. As Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, and Daly (1998) write, "women may be more likely to remember their own aggression because it is deemed less appropriate and less acceptable for women than for men and thus takes on the more memorable quality of a forbidden act or one that is out of character" (p. 405)—and thus one which one is more likely to remember. Men however, might find it emasculating to reveal that their assumed control over "their women" is so tenuous that they are forced to use violence to "keep her in line." They may find it difficult to admit that they cannot "handle their wives." *Thus, men might underestimate their violence, and women might tend to overestimate theirs.*

What's more, in addition to overestimating their own violence, women may also tend to underestimate their partner's violence given the norms of domestic life, which frequently find women discounting, downplaying, or normalizing their partner's violent behavior, or even excusing it since they "deserved" it. By the same token, in addition to underestimating their own violence, men may *overestimate* their partner's violence, for the same norms of masculinity. American men, at least, believe violence is legitimate if used as retaliation for violence already committed (see, for example, Mead, 1950; Kimmel, 1996). The expression "having a chip on one's shoulder" actually has its literal origin among young, southern white boys after the Civil War, placing a piece of wood on their shoulder and daring someone to knock it off, so that they might legitimately fight and prove their manhood. Initiating violence is never legitimate according to the norms of traditional masculinity in America; retaliating against a perceived injustice with violence is always legitimate. *As a result, men will tend to overestimate their victimization, and women will tend to underestimate theirs.*

In response to the notion that men would be too ashamed or humiliated to call the police or go to the hospital if they were beaten by their wives, available empirical evidence suggests a very different picture: that men who are assaulted by intimates are actually likely to call the police, more likely to press charges, and less likely to drop them (Schwartz, 1987; Rouse, Breen, & Howell, 1988; Ferrante et al., 1996). This makes sense in the terms outlined above, as women would be more likely to forgive being hit, to normalize it with statements about how he really does love her. Another study found that men underreport the violence they perpetrate against women by 50% (Edelson & Brygger, 1986; see also Browning & Dutton, 1986; Brush, 1990; and especially Dobash et al., 1998). Dobash, Dobash, Cavanaugh, and Lewis (1998) found a useful measure of the gender asymmetry in reporting—the women's narrative descriptions of the events of their experiences are far longer and more richly detailed, entering the narrative at a

much earlier point in the unfolding drama, and extending the narrative to include injuries and other consequences. If men underestimate their own violence and overestimate their victimization, while women overestimate their own violence and underestimate their victimization, this would have enormous consequences in a survey that asks only one partner to recall accurately how much they and their spouse used various "conflict-resolution" techniques.

The Causes and Consequences of Violence: Severity and Injury. A final substantive critique of the CTS is that it does not measure the consequences of physical assault (such as physical or emotional injury) or the causes of the assault (such as the desire to dominate). Straus (1997) responds that assessing causes and consequences may be interesting, but it is not a necessary part of the picture. He scolds his critics, saying that to fault his research on this question "is akin to thinking that a spelling test is inadequate because it does not measure why a child spells badly, or does not measure possible consequences of poor spelling, such as low self-esteem or low evaluations by employers" (p. 218).

Were Straus not a credible social scientist, one might suspect the reply to be disingenuous. As such, it is simply inadequate. It is more akin to a teacher who doesn't look at how far off the spelling mistakes are or whether there is a pattern in the mistakes that might point to a physiological problem like dyslexia or some other learning disability, as compared to academic laziness, and thus leaves the learning problems untouched and misdirects funds away from remediation toward punitive after-school programs for lazy students. And even that analogy is imperfect because, unlike spelling, domestic violence is not about what happens to the perpetrator (the poor speller) but to someone else. Can one imagine any other issue in which causes and consequences are thought to be irrelevant?

The consequences of violence raise perhaps the most telling criticism of the CTS—a criticism, not incidentally, that Straus and his more thoughtful collaborators share, as I will discuss further on. The CTS lumps together many different forms of violence, so that a single slap may be equated with a more intensive assault. In the National Violence Against Women Survey, for example, lifetime percentages of persons physically assaulted by an intimate partner found dramatic differences in some types of assault, but not others. For example, just under 1% of men and women (0.9% of women and 0.8% of men) said their attacker used a knife in the attack, but 3.5% of women and only 0.4% of men said their partner threatened to use a gun, and 0.7% of women and 0.1% of men said their spouse actually did use a gun. (It is interesting to note that these differences inside the home are actually slightly smaller than the differences outside the home, where men are overwhelmingly more likely to use weapons in an attack.)

Even more telling are the gender disparities in serious physical injuries without weapons. For example, in a British study that found equal rates of reporting victimization of violence, there were no injuries at all reported in the 59% of

incidents that involved pushing, shoving, and grabbing (these are the behaviors more typically reported being committed by women than by men). In the National Violence Against Women Survey (a crime victimization type study), half the number of men than women (4.4% of men and 8.1% of women) said their partner threw something at them, and three times as many women (18.1% of women and 5.4% of men) said their partner pushed, grabbed, or shoved them, or that their partner slapped or hit them (16.0% of women and 5.5% of men). But over ten times as many women (8.5% of women and .6% of men) reported that their partner "beat them up" (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998, p.7).

The consequences of violence range from minor to fatal, and these are significant in understanding domestic violence in general and its gendered patterns. Far more men than women kill their spouses (and, of course, "couples" in which one spouse killed the other could not participate in the CTS studies since both partners must be cohabiting at the time of the study). And rates of homicides of ex-spouses are even more gender asymmetrical. According to the FBI, female victims represent about 70% of all intimate homicide victims (see Bachman, 2000). About one-third of all female homicide victims in the United States were killed by an intimate compared with 4% of male homicide victims (see, for example, Kellerman & Mercy, 1992; Bachman & Saltzman, 1995). (What this suggests, of course, is that both women *and* men are more likely to be killed by a man; efforts to end all types of violence ought properly to focus on the association of masculinity and violence, the legitimacy of violence to men, and men's sense of entitlement to use violence.) In the United States, the number of men killed by intimates has dropped by 69% since 1976. The number of women killed by intimates was relatively stable until 1993, when it too began to drop, but only by about 15% (United States Department of Justice; Bureau of Justice Statistics, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm).

Gender symmetry tends to be clustered entirely at the lower end of violence (Dobash et al., 1998, p. 382). According to some data, women are six times more likely to require medical care for injuries sustained by family violence (Kaufman Kantor & Straus, 1987; Stets & Straus, 1990). Straus also reports that in family conflict studies the injury rate for assaults by men is about seven times greater than the injury rate for assaults by women (Stets & Straus, 1990). This dramatic difference in rates of injury, found in both types of studies, leads Straus (1997), the creator of the CTS and the researcher who is most often cited by those claiming gender symmetry, to write that:

> although women may assault their partners at approximately the same rate as men, because of the greater physical, financial, and emotional injury suffered by women, they are the predominant victims. Consequently, the first priority in services for victims and in prevention and control must continue to be directed toward assaults by husbands. (Straus, 1997, p. 219)

Straus (1997) also understands that "women, on average, suffer much more frequent and more severe injury (physical, economic, and psychological) than men" (Straus, 2000; see also Stets & Straus, 1990; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980).

These different rates of injury are so pronounced that when injury data has been obtained in studies using the CTS, the rate of violence drops to that predicted by the crime victimization studies, and the gender asymmetry of such studies is also revealed (see Straus, 1997). This leads another researcher to conclude that both husbands and wives may be said to be "aggressive" but many more husbands are "violent" (Frude, 1994, p. 153).

Age and Aggression. The CTS measures family conflict in intact partnerships, either cohabiting or married couples. However, as I've previously mentioned, more than one-third of the studies noted by Fiebert that found gender symmetry were surveys of college-age, dating couples who were not cohabiting. About one-half of Archer's samples (2000) in his meta-analytic review involved high school or college students. Therefore, it is important to examine the way age exerts an effect on domestic violence.

According to all available research, age—especially being under 30—is a strong predictor of partner violence (see Suitor, Pillemer, & Straus, 1990). O'Leary and his associates have consistently found that age is a significant variable in the distribution of partner violence. Rates of violence rise significantly between age 10 (less than 2% violent) and age 25, where levels peak at 35% of all couples. But after 25, rates begin to drop and keep dropping to return to about 5% by age 75. This suggests that younger couples are most likely to have the highest rates of violence (O'Leary, 1999). The National Survey of Adolescents in the United States found that of 22.3 million adolescents (age 12–17), 1.8 million had been the victim of what researchers label "serious sexual assault," and 3.9 million had been the victim of a serious physical assault. Females were four times more likely to have been sexually assaulted (13% compared to 3.4% of males), and young males were significantly more likely to have been physically assaulted (21.3% compared to 13.4% of young females) (Kilpatrick & Saunders, 1997, 2000). This is because violence means different things to younger dating couples than to married couples at midlife, when violence is usually associated with significant marital discord (O'Leary, 1999, 2000). The two populations—young, unmarried dating couples and older married couples at midlife—are so dissimilar that results from one population cannot be generalized to the other.

Younger people also report using only a few of the various forms of conflict—pushing and slapping. These are not typically associated with injury or with fear of the partner (O'Leary, 2000). Stets's work on the centrality of control in dating violence (Stets & Pirog-Good, 1990) also helps explain the relationship of age and gender on nonspousal violence. It is possible that men's rates of

violence drop after marriage because they establish their control over the relationship (financial, physical, emotional) and that therefore overt acts of violence are less necessary as long as the threat of violence is present (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988).

What the CTS Leaves Out. It is not only important to understand what the CTS measures, but also we should make explicit what it does not measure. First, the CTS does not include sexual assault in its definition of family conflict. This is crucial, because a significant number of spousal assaults are sexual assaults. The National Crime Victimization Survey (1994) found that 19% of all spousal assaults were rapes. Yet Straus and Gelles (1990) do not include rape as a category in the index. In addition, half of all women who report being raped are juveniles (under 18) and 16% were younger than 12. Of those under 12, 96% knew their attackers; 20% were victimized by their fathers (U.S. Department of Justice, June 1994).

Second, the CTS only includes violence by a current spouse or cohabiting partner. It does not include violence by an ex-spouse or partner. Crime victimization studies do include these. This is important because crimes by former spouses comprise a significant number of domestic assaults. It may be that when women exit a relationship, they have no "need" for violence, while men tend to continue, or even escalate, their use of violence when women leave. The NCVS found that rates of intimate-perpetrated violence for separated women are over eight times higher than rates for married women (Bachman & Salzman, 1995). It may be true that these might be somewhat overrepresented in crime victimization studies because people who are assaulted by a former spouse would be more likely to report that as a crime, since the former spouse clearly had no "right" to aggress against the victim, and so it would clearly be seen as a crime and more likely to be reported. But to ignore these data would so skew any study as to make it unreliable. For example, in one Australian study, only 1% of all violent victimization of men involved an ex-spouse or ex-partner, but it involved fully one-third of all female incidents (Ferrante et al., 1996). Failure to include ex-spouses may fail to capture up to one-third of all cases. Failure to include sexual assault and assaults by ex-spouses or ex-partners compounds the problem that the CTS does not adequately measure rates of serious injury from domestic violence.[2] The National Violence Against Women Survey (1998) found that 72.6% of rape victims and 66.6% of physical assault victims sustained injuries such as a scratch, bruise, or welt, and that 14.1% of rape victims and 12.2% of physical assault victims sustained a broken bone or dislocated joint. Rape victims were far more likely to sustain an internal injury (5.8%–0.8%), or a chipped or broken tooth (3.3%–1.8%). On the other hand, physical assault victims were more likely to sustain a laceration or knife wound (16.9%–6.2%) a head or spinal cord injury (10.1%–6.6%) and burns and bullet wounds (0.7% and 1.8% respectively; rape rates too low to estimate) (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998, p. 9).

Violence by ex-husbands also tends to be more serious. For example, the risk of spousal homicide goes up by about 50% for women who leave abusive

husbands. (This may also help explain the "rationality" in the decision by women to stay in abusive relationships.) Men may kill their ex-wives because their ex-wives left them; women may kill their ex-husbands because they believe that their ex-husband will otherwise kill them for leaving. In both cases, then, the larger context for both women's and men's violence is men's violence. One study of spousal homicide (Bernard et al., 1982) found that over half of all defendants were separated from their victims at the time they were accused of committing the murder. (For more on relationship status and violence, see DeKeseredy, ed., 1997.)

In sum, the gender symmetry found by CTS-based studies results from the omission of severity of injury, sexual assault, and assaults by former spouses. Some fail to adequately account for marital status and age. Including these would certainly make the gender *asymmetry* of domestic violence more clear.

How Can We Understand the Use of Aggression in Domestic Life?

These two different types of studies—crime victimization studies and family conflict studies—rely on two different theoretical perspectives and two different sources of data. They measure two different phenomena based on different conceptualizations of aggression in families. But they can be reconciled conceptually and methodologically.

If one is interested in the level of aggression in family conflict—that is, the likelihood of any type of aggression occurring when a couple has an argument—then the CTS scale may be somewhat useful. I say "somewhat" because, among other problems that I have outlined earlier, the utility of the CTS is limited by the fact that it fails to take into account sexual assault and also assault by an ex-spouse. But it does enable us to see the overall amount of a particular kind of violence in families, what we might call expressive violence—the way a person might express anger, frustration, or loss of control. If, however, one were interested in the ways in which one partner uses violence not expressively but *instrumentally*, to achieve some end of control, injury, or terror, then the CTS would be a poor measure. Then, crime victimization surveys will be more valuable because these measure serious injury and include sexual assault and assaults by ex-spouses in their purview. These surveys may capture those family conflicts where the level of violence escalates beyond a mere "conflict tactic" to something far more ominous and perhaps lethal.

Some violence by men against women is motivated not by the desire to express anger, frustration, or some other immediate emotion during a family conflict, but may be more instrumentally motivated by the desire to control. However, the use of violence may indicate not the experience of control but the experience of loss of control. "Violence is a part of a system of domination," writes R. W. Connell (1995), "but it is at the same time a measure of its imperfection" (p. 84).

In that sense, we might say that many men who assault their partners or ex-partners are using violence when they fear that their control is breaking down, that their ability to control their partner by the implicit threat of violence is compromised, and the men feel compelled to use explicit violence to "restore" their control. Thus men see their violence as restorative and retaliatory.[3] For example, in an earlier study, Dobash and Dobash (1979) found three antecedents of men's use of violence: his sexual jealousy, his perception that she failed to perform a household task such as cleaning or preparing a hot meal, and her challenging his authority on financial matters—all of these are indicators of a breakdown of his expected dominance and control.

This understanding of control-motivated instrumental violence is particularly important in our understanding of claims of gender symmetry. For one thing, men's control over women has clearly broken down when their spouses have left them; thus measures of physical assault that do not include assaults by ex-spouses will entirely miss these events. Second, breakdowns of men's control over women may be revealed not by physical assault, but by the woman's withholding or refusing of sexual intimacy. She may exert what limited power she may have by attempting to refuse his sexual advances. Thus, measures that do not include sexual assaults among acts of aggression will be equally inadequate to measure the problem.

Control-motivated instrumental violence is experienced by men not as an expression of their power but as an instance of its collapse. The men may feel entitled to experience that control over women, but at the moments when they become violent, they do not feel that control. Masculinity, in that sense, has already been compromised; violence is a method to restore one's manhood and domestic inequality at the same time (see, for example, Kimmel, 1994, 1996, 2000). Such control-motivated instrumental violence is more likely to escalate over time, less likely to be mutual, and more likely to involve serious injury. This difference between expressive and instrumental violence is not simply a difference in purpose, but also frequency, severity, and initiation. It addresses whether the violence is part of a systematic pattern of control and fear, or an isolated expression of frustration or anger. These two types of violence are so different that Johnson (1995; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000) has come to call instrumental violence "intimate terrorism" (IT) and the types of expressive violence measured by the CTS as "common couple violence" (CCV).

Social control-motivated abuse can be illustrated in another form of domestic violence: stalking. Control-motivated abuse refers to intentionally inflicted physically or psychologically painful or hurtful acts (or threats) by one partner as a means of compelling or constraining the conduct, dress, or demeanor of their partners (Ellis & Stuckless, 1996). Rates of stalking by an intimate, more prevalent than previously thought, can best be understood as an effort to restore control or dominance after the partner has left. Stalking exhibits dramatic gender asymmetry: Nearly 5% of American women and about

one-half of 1% (0.6%) of men report being stalked by a current or former intimate partner at some time in their life (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a).

Claims about the gender symmetry of "conflict-motivated" expressive violence must be complemented with claims about the dramatic gender *asymmetry* in "control-motivated" instrumental violence. When these two are factored together, it is clear that women and men may express their anger or frustration during an argument more equally than we earlier thought. This, however, is by no means fully symmetrical, because even the CTS leaves out two of the dominant forms of expressive "conflict-motivated" aggression—sexual assault and assault by an ex-spouse. And when "control-motivated" instrumental violence is added—the violence that more typically results in serious injury, is more systematic, and independent of specific "conflict" situations—the gender asymmetry is clear.

Why We Should Be Concerned about Women's Violence toward Men

Despite the evidence that gender symmetry is largely a myth, we should nonetheless be concerned about women's violence for a variety of reasons. For one thing, compassion with the victims of violence is not a zero-sum game—reasonable people would naturally want to extend compassion, support, and interventions to all victims of violence. (It is an indication of the political intentions of those who argue for gender symmetry that they never question the levels of violence against women, only that the level of violence against men is equivalent. Their solution, though, is not to provide *more* funding for domestic violence research and intervention, but to decrease the amount of funding that women receive—even though they never challenge the levels of violence against women.)

Second, acknowledging women's capacity for intimate violence will illuminate the gender symmetry in intimate violence among gay male and lesbian couples. According to the National Violence Against Women Survey, slightly more than 11% of women living with a same sex partner report being raped, physically assaulted, or stalked by a female cohabitant (compared with 30.4% of women with a live-in male partner). About 15% of men living with a male live-in partner report having experienced violence (compared with 7.7% of men with female live-in partners) (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b).

Third, perhaps ironically, examining women's violence can better illuminate the dynamics of men's aggression against women. Since women's violence is often retaliatory or committed in self-defense, it may help to expose some of the ways men use violence to control women, and women's perceived lack of options except "fighting back." Fourth, acknowledging assaults by women is important, Straus writes because they "put women in danger of much more severe retaliation by men" (1997, p. 210). In a recent interview, Straus elaborated that since women generally suffer greater fear and more injuries, "when she

slaps, she sets the stage for him to hit her. The safety of women alone demands we make a big deal of women hitting men" (Slobodian, 2000).

Finally, men actually benefit from efforts to reduce men's violence against women. It turns out that efforts to protect women in the United States have had the effect of reducing the homicide rate of men by their partners by almost 70% over the past 24 years. According to James Alan Fox, Professor of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University, homicides by women of their spouses, ex-spouses, or boyfriends have steadily declined from 1,357 in 1976 to 424 in 1999 (Elsner, 2001). Fox attributes this decline to the availability of alternatives for battered women. "We have given women alternatives, including hotlines, shelters, counseling and restraining orders. Because more battered women have escape routes, fewer wife batterers are being killed," Fox told reporters (Elsner, 2001). A 1999 study by the National Consortium on Violence Research found that the greater the availability of hotlines and other resources for battered women, the greater the decline in homicide of their male partners. (The study found that 80% of these male domestic homicide victims had abused their partners and that nearly two-thirds of female murder victims had been abused before they were killed.) It turns out that those very initiatives that have greatly benefited women—shelters, hotlines, and the like—save men's lives as well.

Toward an Inclusive Explanation of Domestic Violence

It is certainly possible and politically necessary to acknowledge that some women use violence as a tactic in family conflict while also understanding that men tend to use violence more instrumentally to control women's lives. Further, these two types of aggression must also be embedded within the larger framework of gender inequality. Women's violence toward male partners certainly does exist, but it tends to be very different from that of men toward their female partners: it is far less injurious and less likely to be motivated by attempts to dominate or terrorize the partner (see, for example, Kaufman Kantor & Jasinski, 1998).

The different types of data sources, family violence studies and crime victimization studies, each point to different problems and each is useful to develop intervention strategies. As Straus (1999) writes, "research using a broad definition [of violence] and emphasizing injury may be most useful for informing programs designed to treat offenders or help victims of repeated severe assault" (p. 40). On the other hand, "research focusing on the act of assault, most of which does not involve injury but does involve millions of couples, may be most useful in informing programs of 'primary prevention,' i.e., steps that will prevent physical assaults from ever happening." And he concludes:

> I believe humanity needs research inspired by the moral agenda and perspective of those who focus on the *oppression of women*, regardless of

> whether the oppression is physical, sexual, psychological, or economic; and also research inspired by the moral agenda of those who focus on *physical assault*, regardless of whether the assault is by a man, woman or child. (p. 40)

Coupled with studies of parental violence toward children—which routinely find that more than 90% of parents aggress against their children—family conflict studies are useful in pointing out the ubiquity and the casualness with which violence structures our daily lives. Coupled with data about intimate-partner homicide, rape, and other forms of sexual assault, crime victimization data are useful in pointing out the ways in which men's domination over women requires the implicit threat, and often the explicit instrumental use, of violence to maintain that power.

Claims of gender symmetry are often made by those who do not understand the data, either what the various studies measure or what they omit. Others make claims of gender symmetry based on disingenuous political motives, attempting to discredit women's suffering by offering abstract statistical equivalences that turn out to be chimerical. Straus and Gelles (1990) themselves understand the political misuses to which their work has been put and strongly disavow those political efforts. In a summary of their work, they write:

> Perhaps the most controversial finding from our 1975 National Family Violence Survey was the report that a substantial number of women hit and beat their husbands. Since 1975 at least ten additional investigations have confirmed the fact that women hit and beat their husbands. *Unfortunately the data on wife-to-husband violence has been misreported, misinterpreted, and misunderstood.* Research uniformly shows that about as many women hit men as men hit women. However, those who report that husband abuse is as common as wife abuse overlook two important facts. First, the greater average size and strength of men and their greater aggressiveness means that a man's punch will probably produce more pain, injury and harm than a punch by a woman. Second, nearly three-fourths of the violence committed by women is done in self-defense. While violence by women should not be dismissed, neither should it be overlooked or hidden. On occasion, legislators and spokespersons . . . have used the data on violence by wives to minimize the need for services for battered women. *Such arguments do a great injustice to the victimization of women.* (p. 424, italics added)

And Gelles underscores this disingenuous political use of their work with this clear and unequivocal statement that "it is categorically false to imply that there are the same number of 'battered' men as battered women" (Gelles, 2000). (Note how he even puts the word "battered" in quotations when describing men.) It is not surprising that credible researchers disavow the political ends to which their work is often put.

Despite the dramatic differences in frequency, severity, and purpose of the violence, we should be compassionate toward *all* victims of domestic violence. There are some men who are battered by their female partners, and these men are no less deserving of compassion, understanding, and intervention than are women who are battered. And male domestic violence victims deserve access to services and funding just as female domestic violence victims do. They do not need to be half of all victims in order to deserve either sympathy or services.

But just as surely, compassion and adequate intervention strategies must explore the full range of domestic violence—the different rates of injury, the different types of violence, including sexual assault, and the likelihood of violence by an ex-spouse. Such strategies must also understand the differences between violence that is an expression of family conflict and violence that is instrumental to the control of one partner over the other.

With all the caveats and modifications I have suggested to the family conflict model, and especially the CTS as the standard of measurement, I would therefore argue that violence as an expression of family conflict is somewhat less than symmetrical, but would include a significant percentage of women. I would hypothesize that, including assaults and homicides by ex-spouses, spousal homicide, and sexual assault, the gendered ratio of male-perpetrated violence to female-perpetrated violence would be closer to 4:1.[4] On the other hand, violence that is instrumental in the maintenance of control—the more systematic, persistent, and injurious type of violence—is overwhelmingly perpetuated by men, with rates captured best by crime victimizations studies. Over 90% of this violence is by men.

When sexual violence and violence by an ex-spouse are considered, the evidence is overwhelming that gender *asymmetry* in domestic violence remains in full effect. Men *are* more violent than women—both inside the home and in the public sphere. The home is not a refuge from violence, nor is it a site where gender differences in the public sphere are somehow magically reversed. As concerned citizens, we need to be concerned about all victims of violence. And we must also be aware that the perpetrators of that violence—both in public and in private, at home or on the street, and whether the victim is male or female—are overwhelmingly men.

13
An Unnatural History of Rape

> We must not treat the unknown as known and too readily accept it; and he who wishes to avoid this error [as all should do] will devote both time and attention to the weighing of evidence.
>
> —Cicero, *De Officiis*

> The ability of ideology to blind people to the utter implausibility of their positions is perhaps the greatest threat to accumulating the knowledge necessary to solve social problems.
>
> —Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer, *A Natural History of Rape*

I was tempted to ignore *A Natural History of Rape* and its modest moment of cultural excitement entirely as just another silly and unwarranted extension of evolutionary psychology's preposterously reductionist sociobiology written by two vainglorious and self-promoting researchers who have never done any research with actual human beings but feel perfectly comfortable making all sorts of cross-cultural generalizations about them anyway.[1] These claims were so preposterous, the authors so narcissistically self-aggrandizing in their public pronouncements, why, I asked myself, should I give it, or them, any more press? Who would believe this nonsense anyway?

It was while watching my 22-month-old son playing with our neighbor's daughter the other day that I was convinced to respond in some way to the view Thornhill and Palmer have of my little boy, and their view of his future—a future of unbridled sexual predation, of the evolutionary justification for using any means necessary, fraud or force, drugs or alcohol—to sexually conquer an unwilling female (or male, but Thornhill and Palmer think other males would be more compliant). And the life of our little neighbor is even more bleak: she will have to be constantly on her guard because boys will be boys—which is to say that boys will be violent little rapacious, predatory beasts. She will have to modify her behavior, watch what she wears, where she walks, and at what time because there's certainly no way we're going to be able to protect her from those little male monsters.

I see a different reality and I want a different future for my children than that which Thornhill and Palmer lay out for them. Fortunately, in the real world, in which I happen to live, Thornhill and Palmer's prognosis is merely political resignation with a pseudoscientific facade. My son will live in a different world, because he already does, because the real world he and I live in bears little resemblance to the world Thornhill and Palmer describe. And because works like Thornhill and Palmer's, however politically resigned they are, offer no real vision and no real hope.

And no real science either. I will argue that this "natural history" contains dreadfully poor understandings of nature, of history, and "natural history." The book tells us less about "the biological bases of sexual coercion" than the ideological fantasies of those who justify sexual coercion. It's bad science, bad history, and bad politics—or, more accurately, it's bad politics masquerading as science.

On top of that, it's also appallingly badly written. Let me put it this way: Compared to *A Natural History of Rape*, your typical NSF research report reads like Virginia Woolf. Bad science, bad writing, and bad politics—makes you wonder not only how such a work was vetted through a reputable university press, but also how it has received so much attention. I believe that as unconvincing an argument as it is, it is one that has a certain currency in the current political climate. "Bad" does not mean "useless"; indeed, this is a work that is enormously useful to some groups.

Bad Science

Evolutionary psychology is a social science, which is to say it is an oxymoron. It cannot conform to the canons of a science like physics, in which falsifiability is its chief goal, and replication its chief method. It does not account for variations in its universalizing pronouncements, nor does it offer the most parsimonious explanations. It is speculative theory, often provocative and interesting, but no more than that. It is like, gasp!, my own discipline of sociology. And, like sociology, there are some practitioners who will do virtually anything to be taken seriously as "scientists," despite the fact that individual human beings happily confound all predictions based on aggregate models of behavior.

Typically, to stake its claim for legitimacy, pseudoscience cloaks itself in vociferous denunciations of all other pseudosciences. In this case, Thornhill and Palmer set up straw man arguments, attribute them to a social science utterly in the thrall of feminist rape hysteria, and then claim to demolish them with pseudoscientific assertions based on selective evidence. No wonder one medical reviewer noted the irony "that a book purporting such devotion to science should have so little in it" and evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne calls the work "utterly lacking in sound scientific grounding," "an embarrassment to the field," and "useless and unscientific" (Hung, 2000; Coyne, 2000, pp. 28, 34).

The "argument" of the book is actually a tautology. Rape, they claim is "a natural, biological phenomenon that is a product of human evolutionary heritage" (2000, p. 30). Well, of course it is. As is *an*y behavior or trait found among human primates. If it exists in nature, it's natural. Some "natural" beverages contain artificial—"social"—additives that give them their color, their texture, their taste, their "meaning" or "significance." This is equally true of rape. Telling us that it is natural tells us nothing about it except that it is found in nature. Years ago, in our quest for scientific legitimacy we social scientists jettisoned "functionalist" explanations of social phenomena—if they exist they must be there for a reason (manifest), even if the reason is not entirely clear to us (latent). It's amusing to see evolutionary psychology, in its quest for credibility, dusting off the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons.

Proof of this argument is based first on Robert Trivers's reductionist evolutionary theory, which suggests that males and females have different reproductive strategies based on the size and number of their reproductive cells. From sperm and egg we get motivation, intention, perhaps even cognition. Male reproductive success comes from impregnating as many females as possible; females' success comes from enticing a male to provide and protect the vulnerable and dependent offspring. Thus males have a natural predisposition toward promiscuity, sex without love, and parental indifference; females have a natural propensity for monogamy, love as a precondition of sex, and parental involvement.

This arrangement gives women a lot of power. Since males are more eager for sex than females, this gives females the power to choose which males are going to be successful. Thornhill and Palmer offer rape as the evolutionary mating strategy of losers, males who cannot otherwise get a date. "But getting chosen is not the only way to gain sexual access to females," they write. "In rape, the male circumvents the females' choice" (p. 53).

Trivers's arguments have been effectively refuted by primatologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, who has used the same empirical observations to construct an equally plausible case for females' natural propensity toward promiscuity (to seduce many males into believing the offspring is their and thus ensure survival by increasing food and protection from those males) and males' natural propensity toward monogamy (to avoid being run ragged providing for offspring that may—or may not—be their own).

Some Bad Assumptions

Thornhill and Palmer's use of Trivers's speculations makes two assumptions about rape and sex. First, they assume that rape is only about sex. "Rapists are sexually motivated," they write (p. 134). Second, they assume that sex is only about reproduction. Neither of these is supported by the evidence.

To be sure, as Thornhill and Palmer note, rape can be about sex. Surely, three decades of feminist advocacy and social science research on date and

acquaintance rape indicates that some rapes are a product of a combination of sexual desire, contempt for women's bodily integrity, and sexual entitlement. (Ironically, Thornhill and Palmer's thesis works better for date and acquaintance rape than it does for stranger rape, which is their model. After all, there is at least some modicum of desire potentially present.) There are few, if any, feminists or social scientists who would, today, argue that rape is *never* about sex.

But if rape can sometimes also be partly about sex, it is not *only* about sex. Gang rape, prison rape, military rape of entire subject populations, rape prior to murder, rape after murder—these don't necessarily admit to rape-as-alternate-strategy-to-express-sexual-desire. Rape may also be about sexual repulsion, about rage and fear, about domination. Rape of women may be a homosocial event, by which one group of men expresses its domination over another group of men. Rape is a multidimensional phenomenon, offering a large amount of variation. Thornhill and Palmer's view of rape is monochromatic, and embraces only a small fraction of its remarkable variety.

Men use their penises as weapons for many motivations, and they aren't all necessarily reproductive. Sex can be about play, about pleasure, about cementing bonds between females and males, or even between males or between females. It may—or it may not—have anything to do with reproduction. (I would bet that neither Thornhill nor Palmer has more than three children each, and that both have made love more than three times. I would hope that their partners would tell a story of two men who know sex is not only about reproduction.) The clitoris, for example, seems to have evolved strictly because of its capacity for pleasure. Since it evolved, then, it means that pleasure has something to do with reproductive success in humans.

Selective Generalization

Thornhill and Palmer's use of evidence is so selective that it may well constitute scholarly fraud. Thornhill, himself, has actually done research only on scorpion flies, who are not exactly our closest genetic neighbors. "In some animal species," they write, "rape is commonplace" (2000, p. 33). How do they know this? By what logic do they label any mating behavior "rape"? Is this possibly a case of anthropomorphizing mating behavior that might instead be female preference for vigorous males? By legal canon, "rape" requires more than aggressive sexual contact—it involves the absence of consent and the threat or actual use of force. If we don't think that children or pets are legally capable of consent, why would we think scorpion flies are? What Thornhill and Palmer call "rape" is *their* term, but not by any means the only one that could adequately describe these species' sexual behavior.

And in many species there's nothing that even looks remotely like what they (mis)label rape. Actually, my two favorite sentences in the book (so cluttered with references that it becomes a 17-line paragraph) are these:

> In the ten years that followed Brownmiller's claim, studies of rape in non-human species grew too numerous to be ignored. Evolutionary experts of rape were put forth in regard to insects, birds, fishes, reptiles and amphibians, marine mammals, and non-human primates. (p. 144)

And the absence of rape behaviors has been equally found for varieties of each of those species as well. Oops.

And it may turn out that the cases in which rape does not take place—cases that Thornhill and Palmer are utterly unable to explain—are more instructive than those in which it does. Rape is virtually absent among primates in which females are seen as equally sexual—and equal in other ways—as males. Primatologist Meredith Small reminds us that among some monkeys and apes, the female approaches the male, pushing her genitals in his face, slapping him, initiating sexual advances, and clearly enjoying sexual games. Jane Goodall and Barbara Smuts showed that adult female chimpanzees mate successively with virtually every male in the group, while adult males are the ones who are sexually choosy. Or at least try to be. Female baboons too; Barbara Smuts comments that she has "seen them literally hop from one guy to the next. They'll mate with ten different males in the space of an hour (cited in Angier, 1999, p. 381). And Frans de Waal shows how among bonobos there's lots of female-female genito-genital rubbing, lots of masturbation, and lots of egalitarian sex, initiated largely by the females. Oh yeah, and there's no rape.

Unable to account for variation among animal species, Thornhill and Palmer are equally unable to account for human variation—the fact that in some cultures rape is quite rare and in others quite common. Indeed, they ignore any evidence of variation. In an article in *The Sciences* summarizing their book, they cite approvingly Donald Symons's ridiculous pronouncement that, as they write, "people everywhere understand sex as 'something females have that males want.'" (2000, p. 33). Symons's understanding of sex as a commodity is a particularly silly example of the assumptions of advanced consumer society being read back onto cultures for which sex might be any number of other things. But while Symons simply asserts that *sex* is this gendered commodity, Thornhill and Palmer add the words "people everywhere," rendering the merely ridiculous sublimely so.

In several cultures, we have evidence that sex is not a commodity, that women and men "have" equal amounts of it, and that it's not the basis of some putative feminine "power." We have evidence of the absence of rape, and evidence of the presence of female promiscuity designed to promote the likelihood of an offspring's survival. Among the Ache foragers in eastern Paraguay, each of the 66 children of the 17 women interviewed by two anthropologists was attributed to an average of 2.1 progenating men. In fact the Ache differentiate among three different categories of father: (1) the man to whom a woman is married when the child is born; (2) the man or men she had extramarital sex with just before or during

her pregnancy; (3) the man whom the woman believes is that actual father (Angier, 1999, pp. 382–83).

Bari women in Venezuela also engage in significant amounts of extramarital sex during pregnancy. When the child is born, the woman tells the midwife who her lovers were, and the midwife then goes to each man and says, "Congratulations. You have a child." The men are then expected to help care and provide for the child—much to the benefit of the child. These children have a much higher likelihood of survival than the offspring of rape, for whom the men would invest little or nothing.

That leads to another problem of evidence and assumption. Thornhill and Palmer claim that "selection favored males who mated frequently," and that "rape increased reproductive success" (2000, pp. 32, 34). But why should this be true? Might it not also be the case that being hardwired to be good lovers and devoted fathers enabled us to be reproductively successful? One might argue that selection favored males who mated well since successful mating is more than spreading of seed. After all, human males are the only primates for whom skillful lovemaking, enhancing women's pleasure, is normative, at least in many societies. (Don't go talking about "her pleasure" to gorillas and especially not to those pesky little scorpion flies!)

Being an involved father assured reproductive success far better than rape. After all, babies are so precious, so fragile, that they need extraordinary—and extraordinarily long!—care and devotion. Infants conceived during rape would have a far lower chance of survival, which is probably one reason why we invented love. Infants conceived in rape might well have been subject to infanticide—which was, historically, the most common form of birth control before the modern era. "The children of guys who raped-and-ran must have been a scrawny lot and doomed to end up on some leopard's lunch menu," as Barbara Ehrenreich (herself a PhD in biology) writes. It is quite unlikely that very many rape-conceived babies would have survived. Rape's persistence, and its enormous variation, have other origins than the hypothesis that our great-great-great-granddaddies to the fourteenth power did it.

Other evidence for their theory is explained equally well—perhaps better—by alternate hypotheses, which both weaken their theory and reveal their political agenda. For example, they argue that women in their peak childbearing years are far more likely to be raped, and that this is an evolutionary holdover. "Women in their teens and their early twenties are highly overrepresented among rape victims around the world" (p. 139; see also p. 72).

But is this not better explained by the simple fact that younger women, 16–24, are the least likely to be married and the most likely to be out on dates with men with whom they are not in permanent relationships? That is to say, they are women who are most likely to be raped because of "opportunity"—social exposure and marital status—not age and fecundity, which probably have little or nothing to do with it. (This is, of course, not to say that married women are not raped. They

are. Rape by intimates—lovers, partners, husbands, boyfriends, and yes, fathers, uncles, brothers, and stepfathers—is by far the most common form of rape, and one that Thornhill and Palmer's thesis is utterly unable to comprehend, because they suggest that rape is a function of thwarted sexual desire and limited sexual access.)

Simple demographics offer a far more parsimonious and convincing explanation of ages of vulnerability to rape. But let's look at this demographic argument a little more closely. By their logic, the likelihood of rape should correlate with the ratio of females to males in a society. In a society in which females outnumber males, the possibility of reproductive success would be significantly higher for males; that is, the guy would likely find a female who would be willing to have sex with him. In such societies, by their logic, women's power would be lower, because they would have to make compromises with their "natural" propensity for selectivity. Some men whom they might have rejected were their circumstances different will simply have to do. In such societies rape rates would be lower.

In societies in which males outnumber females, by contrast, Thornhill and Palmer's thesis would predict significantly higher rape rates because males would have less likelihood of reproductive success simply by being nice guys. Male dominance hierarchies would be more in evidence, and males would compete for the right to mate. Women's scarcity would increase their power, because they could be choosier about with whom they would mate. Rape rates would be high, then, because those males left out of the reproductive mix might use rape as an alternative mating strategy.

Actually, societies in which females outnumber males are likely to be warrior societies, in which women's relative power is lower and rape rates higher. Rape is a crime of entitlement not evolution, of opportunity not imperatives, of permission not passion.

Bad History

Thornhill and Palmer's bad science is complemented by equally bad history. It's hard to explain the persistence of rape in modern society, except as some unnecessary evolutionary residue like the appendix or tonsils. But they compound this by arguing against all their own evidence that rape is more prevalent today than ever before.

Rape rates in modern society are so high because "in such societies women rarely are chaperoned and often encounter social circumstances that make them vulnerable to rape" (p. 194). More: "The common practice of unsupervised dating in cars and private homes, which is often accompanied by the consumption of alcohol, has placed young women in environments that are conducive to rape to an extent that is probably unparalleled in history" (2000, p. 36).

I would hypothesize precisely the opposite, that rape rates are lower today than ever before. Rape was *far* more likely in medieval Europe, for example. It's

just that we called it something else. Ever hear of "right of first night"? (That's coerced sex without consent, i.e., rape.) In many societies, rape was a common and legitimate punishment for all sorts of perceived crimes against men. And it is *by far* safer to be a woman alone walking on the street at night today in a modern society than it has ever been. (This is decidedly *not* to say it is safe—just safer.)

I believe that rape rates are lower today because women have more power, including the power to redefine behavior that was once seen as normative sexual "etiquette" as date rape. In my high school locker room, I was counseled by older athletes that "it doesn't count unless you put it in." I was advised to "keep going, even if she says no, even if she screams, even if she pushes you away. Don't stop until she hits you," was the felicitous way they put it. (Incidentally, when I mentioned this to my students a few weeks ago, one of the men said, sardonically, "You stopped too soon, man. It's "don't stop until she *hurts* you.")

If we were honest about it, then, men of my generation (I'm in my late 40s) would have to confess that virtually all of us are "failed attempted date rapists." What we called "dating" is now against the law. (Yes, of course, some were successful. But my point is that the norms have changed, and that such behavior is increasingly problematized, thus making dating safer for women than ever.)

Comparatively, rape rates vary enormously among cultures. And the best variable that determines those rape rates is women's status. Those countries in which women's wages come closer to matching men's (so the men won't feel they are owed something after spending money on their date) have rape rates lower than ours. Those countries in which women hold more political offices, in which women equal men in the professions, in which there is adequate sex education—all have lower rape rates than we do.

Bad Politics

Lowering rape rates is a political discussion, a discussion about the effectiveness of specific policy proposals. And here Thornhill and Palmer's bad history leads inevitably to bad politics. They make two policy recommendations that they believe will reduce the scourge of rape. The first is transparently silly because it blames the victim. Women must be informed about men's biological predisposition to rape because it *does* matter how they dress and which parties they choose to go to. The best our authors can offer is that women should be warned about how predatory men are. After that, well, they're on their own. (It's a good idea to give them that warning when they get their driver's licenses, since they will need their cars to escape men's violent predations. But, of course, Thornhill and Palmer actually want to use driver's licenses to warn *men* of their own base proclivities.)

The press release that accompanied my copy of the book notes that the authors recommend that "young women consider the biological causes of rape when making decisions about dress, appearance, and social activities." "But where

is the evidence that women in mini-skirts are more likely to be raped than women in dirndls?" asks Barbara Ehrenreich (2000, p. 88). "Women were raped by the thousands in Bosnia for example, and few if any of them were wearing bikinis or bustiers." Many rapes—in war, in prison—have nothing to do with ensuring reproductive success and everything to do with domination and humiliation of other men. Rape may be far more of a homosocial act than a heterosexual one.

The second policy recommendation—about males—reveals Thornhill and Palmer's real political agenda—and it is not a pretty picture. You see, Thornhill and Palmer hate men.

Rarely, if ever, have I read a book that is so resolutely and relentlessly antimale. *A Natural History of Rape* is the best example I can find of male-bashing masquerading as academic pseudoscience. In their eyes, all men are violent, rapacious predators, seeking to spew their sperm far and wide, at whatever creature happens in their testosterone-crazed evolutionary path. Oh, sure, they try to sugar coat it:

> human males in all societies so far examined in the ethnographic record possess genes that can lead, by way of ontogeny, to raping behavior when the necessary environmental factors are present, and that the necessary environmental factors are sometimes present in all societies studied to date. (p. 142)

So all men have the genetic "motivation" to rape and all they need is a social permission.

Wait a minute? Isn't that what the feminists they are trying to discredit argued also? Is that not the justification for zero-tolerance for rape? Isn't that the justification for sensible arguments, like those of Peggy Reeves Sanday, to reduce the risk of rape by increasing women's status?

As a policy recommendation, Thornhill and Palmer propose that we institute "an evolutionarily informed education program for young men that focuses on increasing their ability to restrain their sexual behavior."

"Restrain"? Is it that bad? How about "express"—their equally evolution-based biological drive to experience pleasure, mutuality, and fun? Might we not be hardwired for that as well? Education for restraint is perhaps the second most politically bankrupt policy initiative around, and utterly ineffective. (The first is demanding that women "just say no.") If Thornhill and Palmer were right—and of course they are not—then the only sensible solution would be to lock all males up and release them for sporadic, reproductive mating after being chosen by females.

Thornhill and Palmer offer a far more "misandrous" account of rape than anything offered by their nemeses, radical feminists. In the process, they do an enormous disservice to serious analysis of rape, and, ironically, they end up reproducing the very canards about men that they project onto feminist women. Feminists, by contrast, believe that men are capable of doing better, of stopping rape

and expressing an equally evolutionarily ordained imperative toward pleasure, mutuality, and equality.

Conclusion

Bad science, bad history, and bad politics add up to a pretty dreadful book. What's missing, ultimately, from Thornhill and Palmer's facile reductionism is the distinctly human capacity for change, for choice. What's missing is human agency.

To them, men are driven by evolutionary imperatives to rape, pillage, destroy to make sure our seed gets planted. If women are not compliant, we men are hardwired to take what we want anyway. They have the power of choice, but when we're not chosen well, we get testy. "They made us do it because we can't get them any other way. And we simply *must* have them."

I've heard this before. From rapists! That's who will really find Thornhill and Palmer's arguments comforting. I can imagine that Thornhill's phone has been ringing off the hook with attorneys defending men accused of rape, asking him to be an expert witness for the defense. "You see, your honor, as I wrote, 'rape has evolutionary—and thus genetic—origins.'"

"Aha!" comments the defense lawyer. "So he was driven by his biological imperative to reproduce? How could he be held accountable for some behavior that he was compelled to do by his body? He simply had to have her!" Feminists believe we can do better than this politically; social scientists believe that we can do better than this book scientifically.

Nowhere is this better expressed than on a "splash guard" that a colleague devised for Rape Awareness Week at his university. (For those who don't know, a splash guard is the plastic grate that is placed in men's public urinals that prevents splatter.) He had thousands made up with a simple and hopeful slogan. It says simply: "You hold the power to stop rape in your hand."

14

Reducing Men's Violence

The Personal Meets the Political

I'd like to begin with two "texts" if you will, two very different images of men and their relationship to violence. First, I'd like you to close your eyes and picture the following scenes, scenes which will no doubt be familiar from newspapers or television news. What gender comes into your mind when I mention the sneering, arrogant guards at the border crossings in Bosnia, the caravans of jeeps and trucks following their warlords in Somalia, the cheering throngs that hear of yet another terrorist bombing or attack in the Basque country, the youths slinging their automatic weapons as they swagger down the streets of bombed-out Beirut?

Now, what gender comes to your mind when I invoke the following significant social problems that today haunt the United States, Europe, and other advanced metropolitan countries—teen violence, urban violence, gang violence, drug-related violence, violence in our schools?

Chances are you've imagined men. And not just any men, but younger men, men in their teens and twenties, and men of a specific social class—poor, working-class, or lower-middle-class.

Now think again about the ways in which we understand those social and political movements, those violent outbursts of ethnic nationalist hatred. Do the commentators ever even mention that these are phalanxes of young men? Now, imagine that these were all women—would that not be *the* story, the issue to be explained? Would not a gender analysis be the center of every single story? The fact that these are men seems so obvious as to raise no questions, generate no analysis.

We will return to that. But first, listen to the voice of another young man, this one a 23-year-old stockboy named Jay in a San Francisco corporation, who was asked by author Tim Beneke to think about under what circumstances he might commit rape. He has never committed rape, mind you. He's simply an average guy, considering the circumstances under which he would commit an act of violence against a woman. Here's what Jay says:

> Let's say I see a woman and she looks really pretty and really clean and sexy and she's giving off very feminine, sexy vibes. I think, wow I would love to

> make love to her, but I know she's not interested. It's a tease. A lot of times a woman knows that she's looking really good and she'll use that and flaunt it and it makes me feel like she's laughing at me and I feel degraded . . . If I were actually desperate enough to rape somebody it would be from wanting that person, but also it would be a very spiteful thing, just being able to say "I have power over you and I can do anything I want with you" because really I feel that they have power over me just by their presence. Just the fact that they can come up to me and just melt me makes me feel like a dummy, makes me want revenge. They have power over me so I want power over them.

Notice how the stockboy speaks not with the voice of someone in power, of someone in control over his life, but rather with the voice of powerlessness, of helplessness. For him, violence is a form of revenge, a form of retaliation, of getting even, a compensation for the power that he feels women have over him.

Let's stay with Jay for a moment. His words are the words of someone who does not see himself as powerful, but as powerless. And I think that perspective has been left out of our analyses of men's violence—both at the interpersonal, micro level of individual acts of men's violence against women—rape and battery, for example—and the aggregate, social and political analysis of violence expressed at the level of the nation state, the social movement, or the military institution.

How do we typically see men's violence? We see it as the expression of men's power, of men's drive for power, for domination, for control. Now this makes a certain sense, because most of the theorizing about men's violence has been done by feminist women. And feminist women have understood men's propensity for violence from the perspective of those against whom that violence has so often been directed. So men's violence—whether against women or against national enemies—has been theorized as an expression of men's drive for domination, a senseless need for power. Mass rape in Bosnia is theorized as an expression of men's desperate need to control; gang warfare an expression of men needing to dominate their territory.

So we understand masculinity as the drive for power, domination, and control. Many of us have accepted that definition and used it in our work. Some, like myself, have even taken it on the road, giving talks about how men have all the power and how we have to give up that power to make the world equal for women. What happens when we say that?

Well, if your experience is anything like mine, it looks like this. The women sit there and nod appreciatively, in agreement. The men raise their hands. "What are you talking about?" they ask. "I have no power at all! My wife bosses me around! My kids boss me around! My boss bosses me around! I'm completely powerless!"

In their eyes, the feminist definition of masculinity as a drive for power and domination is theorized *from women's perspective*. It's how women experience masculinity. And, in that sense, it's right. But it's not how men experience

their masculinity. Men do not feel as though we are in power. Individual men feel powerless.

I think that is the reason that some antifeminist groups have gained such popularity in the United States and elsewhere. Men's rights groups argue that those feelings of powerlessness are true, and that women, these days, have all the power. "Let's get it back!" they shout. And Robert Bly and his mythopoetic minions have the same perspective. If you feel like you have no power, you *do* have no power. Come with us, we'll get some. Here's the power stick, the power drum, the power chant. To me this is like American yuppies in the 1980s wearing power ties and eating power lunches. These are not the activities of the powerful, but of those who feel powerless. Only the powerless would think that power was consumable, or a fashion accessory.

I think the voices of the men tell us something important. Their sense that they are powerless is *real,* as in they experience it, but it may not be true, that is an accurate analysis of their situation.

What it also points to is the theoretical inadequacy of simply focusing on whether or not men have the power, and whether or not men feel powerful. Of course men are *in* power—both as a group over women, and some men, by virtue of class, race, sexuality, or any other dynamic of difference—over other men.

Masculinity is not, however, the experience of power; it is the experience of *entitlement* to power. Let me illustrate this with an anecdote from my life. I recently appeared on a television talk show opposite three "angry white males," three men who felt that they had been the victims of workplace discrimination. The show's title, no doubt to entice a large potential audience was "A Black Woman Took My Job." In my comments to these angry men, I invited them to consider what the word "my" meant in that title, that they felt that the jobs were originally "theirs," that they were entitled to them, and that when some "other" person—black, female—got the job, that person was really taking "their" job. But by what right is that his job? By convention, by a historical legacy of such profound levels of discrimination that we have needed decades of affirmative action to even begin to make slightly more level a playing field that has tilted so decidedly in one direction.

Or, consider the story of *Iron John,* now made so famous by Robert Bly. In the legend, there are four male characters—the little boy and three kings—the boy's father, the father of his chosen bride, and, of course, Iron John, himself, who turns out to be a great King as well. At every mythopoetic gathering, discussion group, retreat, or conference where the work was discussed, virtually all the middle-aged men present—most who are themselves fathers—identify with the young boy. And it's obvious that the author does as well, punctuating his narration with occasional recollections of his own father. No one identifies with the father, the king, but with the son, the little prince.

What are we to make of this? Well, who is the prince? He is the man who is entitled to be in power but who is not yet in power. He is entitled to power, but feels powerless.

It is from this place—shall we call it the "Inner Prince"—that I believe men speak, a place of gnawing anxiety, a place of entitlement unfulfilled. No wonder men are defensive when we present feminism to them—it feels like they will be forced to give up this sense of entitlement (as well, of course, as the rewards that are promised to follow directly upon its achievement). Feminism, to men, feels like loss—a loss of the possibility to claim their birthright of power. And violence may be more about getting the power to which you feel you're entitled than an expression of the power you already think you have.

This model of violence as the result of a breakdown of patriarchy, of entitlement thwarted, has become the bedrock of the therapeutic work with violent men. Again and again, what the research on rape, on domestic violence finds is that men initiate violence when they feel a loss of power to which they felt entitled. Thus he hits her when she fails to have the dinner ready, when she refuses to meet his sexual demands, that is, when his power over her has broken down—not when she has dinner ready or is willing to have sex, which are, after all, expressions of his power and its legitimacy.

And just as men become violent individually when they experience the breakdown of patriarchal power, when they feel the loss of their entitlement, so too do men become violent collectively, in social movements of men. In particular, they become violent in the atavistic expressions of ethnicity, racism, and nationalism that today tear the global community apart. If what I've been exploring is what we might call the social psychology of gendered violence, let me now try to raise the political economy and moral economy of men's violence expressed at a national or local political level. Let me try to establish the links between ethnic nationalist violence and urban gang violence on the one hand, and this social psychology of entitlement on the other.

Let's begin with the demographics. Who, exactly are these young men who form the columns of ethnic nationalist soldiers? They are not only young men, but they are young, fairly well-educated sons of the lower middle class. Their fathers are the artisans, small shopkeepers, craftsmen who populate the urban marketplaces, who set up shop as independent producers, the petite bourgeoisie. They experience domestic patriarchy at home and economic autonomy and fraternal community in their work. And what about their sons? The sons, who expected that the words "and son" would one day swing over the door of their father's shop. The sons, who expected to experience the same economic autonomy as independent producers as their fathers who felt *entitled* to it. And who felt *entitled* to be the kings of their own castle.

Perhaps the most significant result of economic globalization has been the worldwide squeezing of this lower middle class, its proletarianization. These young men face an uncertain economic future, a future in which, *if they are lucky* they will obtain jobs in their own home cities. But in factories, not in shops of their own. Ethnic nationalism gives voice to the inchoate economic fears of

lower-middle-class men as they face the proletarianization that accompanies incorporation into the global economy. The fathers are incapable of shielding their sons from this; fathers' control is weakened as they capitulate to the state. The disintegration of the material resources of domestic patriarchy leads to the rebellion of the sons. As Barrington Moore argued almost three decades ago, the real revolutionaries are not drawn from those social groups on the rise, but rather represent the cry of those over whom history is about to roll.

I am suggesting that ethnic nationalist violence is the expression of a gendered protest against proletarianization by lower-middle-class younger men. Thus it would follow empirically that ethnic nationalist violence is likely to erupt in regions where traditions of local and regional autonomy were abridged by centripetal political machines emanating from centralizing states, as well as where traditions of local craft autonomy have been subsumed within larger patterns of global economic development. Participants have been those economic actors who had enjoyed historical traditions of autonomy—the lower-middle classes of artisans, skilled workers, and tradesmen who dominate urban craft production, and the entrepreneurs and small shopkeepers who dominate local urban trade. In Iran, for example, the backbone of the revolutionary movement was the lower-middle-class shopkeepers, the *bazaaris*, as well as students. This is also the case among the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Basque movement included shopkeepers and small-scale businessmen and skilled workers. Members of the ETA were virtually all young men (mean age at induction was 24), educated (over 40% had some university training), who were the sons of artisans and lower-middle-class shopkeepers whose upward mobility was blocked by the region's economic dependence. In American cities, ethnic and racial violence is almost invariably the work of young men whose economic mobility is thwarted, and who often articulate a gendered political discourse of that projected downward mobility, even as the media continues to observe their behavior in racial terms. Everywhere nationalist movements set up shop it is these frustrated young men who are the shopkeepers.

In the Baltic states, as well, it was the skilled workers and small-scale merchants who composed the rank-and-file of their independence movements. And it is often younger men students, the young men preparing as apprentices to local craftsmen, the teenage sons who would have taken over their fathers' small shops—who compose the largest group of movement members. It is they who were raised to expect the same economic autonomy that characterized the world of their fathers, and it is they who face the uncertain and tenuous future as proletarians, at best, and itinerant migrant workers or unemployed (and thus emasculated) men at worst.

Couple this with the ways in which the history of the nation state in the West has been the progressive appropriation of the means of violence by the state, and the result is particularly explosive. This process has always left a cadre of young males resentful, especially when the traditional avenues of expressing their manhood—economic autonomy, control over their own labor, a sense of a secure place

in a local political and social community—were eroded by state centralization and proletarianization. This resentment can turn to rage against that centralizing state. "Once," they will say, "we were kings. But now they have made us pawns."

What better way to channel that energy than to cast state policies as authoritarian paternalism, its policies emasculating and "feminizing," and thus brandish weapons as a way to assert a claim to "righteous" manhood? (Contemporary Serbs say that Tito "was a woman"; his programs of national integration were emasculating.) Ethnic nationalism is the rebellion of the sons against the regime of the father, who is depicted as either emasculated by dependence on the superpowers, or as emasculating of his sons, who therefore carry the hope and future of the traditionally glorious and now-suppressed nation. In these deeply structural ways, then all nationalisms are gendered.

Such processes are exacerbated by patterns of immigration, particularly that of young male workers from developing countries to the advanced industrial nations of Western Europe and the United States. The in-migration of disproportionate numbers of younger male migrants, clustered in ethnic enclaves in major industrial cities, heightens political and economic tensions experienced by both the new migrants and older, more established lower-middle-class males, who see increased economic competition in an already tightening labor market.

Of course, you will point out, rightly, that these men receive significant support from women. But the gender composition of ethnic nationalist violence is only a small part of the story. (On the other hand, had these movements been composed entirely of women, gender would have been virtually the *only* story.) Far more significant is the gender *ideology,* the meanings of manhood that are being played out through ethnic violence. To ignore this would be to fail to listen to the voices of the participants themselves. They frequently use a gendered language that speaks about how "they" would not let "us" be men—to take care of our families, have the jobs we were raised to expect, experience the control, power, authority we wanted, and which we were assured was out destiny. How such a language is corrupted into the rapacious nihilism of warlordism or the systematic terror of ethnic cleansing is one of the more profound political and moral questions of our time.

There is another way to frame that question. Instead of focusing on what we are doing wrong, perhaps it also makes sense to discuss what other societies are doing right. Can it be otherwise? Why do some societies not experience this same violence of the entitled younger men? Thus far, I've used social psychology and political economy to sketch some of the dimensions of the problem. To think about alternatives, one turns first to anthropology.

Nearly 20 years ago, anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday proposed a continuum of propensity to commit rape upon which all societies could be plotted—from rape prone to rape free. (For the curious, by the way, the United States was ranked as a highly rape prone society, Norway as a highly rape free society.) Sanday found that the single best predictors of rape proneness were (1) whether the

woman continued to own property in her own name after marriage, a measure of women's autonomy; and (2) father's involvement in child rearing, a measure of how valued parenting is, and how valued women's work.

Some 10 years ago, Norwegian social anthropologist Signe Howell and Roy Willis posed the obverse question: What can we learn from peaceful societies? In their fascinating collection, *Societies at Peace* (1990), they suggested several fruitful themes. For one thing, they found that the definition of masculinity had a significant impact on the propensity toward violence. In those societies in which men were permitted to acknowledge fear, levels of violence were low. In those societies, however, where masculine bravado, the repression and denial of fear, was a defining feature of masculinity, violence was likely to be high. It turns out that those societies in which such bravado is prescribed for men are also those in which the definitions of masculinity and femininity are very highly differentiated.

Thus, for example, in one chapter, Joanna Overing tells us that in the Amazon jungle, the extremely violent Shavante define manhood as "sexual bellicosity," a state both superior and opposed to femininity, while the peaceful neighboring Piaroas define manhood and womanhood as the ability to cooperate tranquilly with others in daily life.

In sum, these are a few of the themes that anthropologists have isolated as leading toward both interpersonal violence and intersocietal violence:

1. The ideal for manhood is the fierce and handsome warrior;
2. public leadership is associated with male dominance, both of men over other men and of men over women;
3. women are prohibited from public and political participation;
4. most public interreaction is between men, not between men and women or among women;
5. boys and girls are systematically separated from an early age;
6. initiation of boys is focused on lengthy constraint of boys, during which time the boys are separated from women, taught male solidarity, bellicosity, and endurance, and trained to accept the dominance of older groups of men;
7. emotional displays of male virility, ferocity, and sexuality are highly elaborated;
8. the ritual celebration of fertility focuses on male generative ability, not female reproductive ability;
9. male economic activities and the products of male labor are prized over female.

Taken together, these works provide a series of possible policy-oriented goals toward which we might look if we are to reduce the amount of gendered violence in society. First, it seems clear that the less gender differentiation between women and men, the less likely will be gendered violence. This means the more

"like women" men can be seen—nurturing, caring, frightened—and the more "like men" women can be seen—capable, rational, competent in the public sphere—the more likely that aggression will take other routes besides gendered violence.

Men's violence toward women is the result of entitlement thwarted; men's violence toward other men often derives from the same thwarted sense of entitlement. I would propose a curvilinear relationship between male-to-male violence and male violence against women and the entitlement to patriarchal power. To find peaceful societies one should look for those cultures in which entitlement to power is either not thwarted or not present. Thus, societies with the least male-male gendered violence would be those in which patriarchy is either intact and unquestioned, or those in which it is hardly present at all and hasn't been for some time.

To diminish men's violence against women, and to reduce the violent confrontations that take place in the name of such mythic entities as nation, people, religion, or tribe, we must confront the separation of symbolic and structural spheres. Women's involvement in public life is equally important as men's involvement as parents. And the definition of masculinity must be able to acknowledge a far wider range of emotions, including fear, without having that identity as a man threatened. And we must develop mechanisms to dislodge men's sense of identity from that false sense of entitlement.

The value of anthropological comparisons is that it provides documentation that it need not be this way, that it can be otherwise. It gives empirical solidity to our hopes, a nonutopian concreteness to our vision. Making it otherwise, however, will require dramatic transformations, in the ideal definition of what it means to be a man, and the cultural prescriptions that govern the relationships among men and between women and men.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, the British moral philosopher David Hume wrote the following in his *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding:*

> Should a traveler, returning from a far country, bring us an account of men wholly different from any with whom we were ever acquainted; men who were entirely divested of vice, ambition, or revenge; who knew no pleasure but friendship, generosity, and public spirit; we should immediately, from these circumstances, detect the falsehood, and prove him a liar, with the same certainty as if he had stuffed his narration with stories of centaurs and dragons, miracles and prodigies.

Hume's remarks both remind us of the cynicism with which our ideas are likely to be met, and suggest the possibility that such a world remains within our grasp.

Notes

Chapter 1. Gendering Desire

1. Of course, there are also systematic gender biases in the reporting of sexual experiences: Men tend to overstate their experiences and women tend to understate theirs. So such wide discrepancies should be viewed with a skeptical eye.

2. For a sociological investigation of the gender organization of clone life, see Martin P. Levine, *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

3. On the impact of homophobia on heterosexual men's lives, see Richard Goldstein, "The Hate that Makes Men Straight" in *The Village Voice*, December 22, 1998.

4. Of course, the route taken by women to high-risk behaviors is also gendered. While men are often eager to demonstrate manhood by engaging in such high-risk behaviors, women typically become IV drug users in the context of a "romantic" relationship or as part of a sexual initiation. And some women are also exposed to risk from HIV by male sexual partners who lie to them about their HIV status. I am grateful to Rose Weitz for pointing this out to me.

Chapter 2. Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity

1. Of course, the phrase "American manhood" contains several simultaneous fictions. There is no single manhood that defines all American men; "America" is meant to refer to the United States proper, and there are significant ways in which this "American manhood" is the outcome of forces that transcend both gender and nation, that is, the global economic development of industrial capitalism. I use it, therefore, to describe the specific hegemonic version of masculinity in the United States, that normative constellation of attitudes, traits, and behaviors that became the standard against which all other masculinities are measured and against which individual men measure the success of their gender accomplishments.

2. Much of this work is elaborated in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1996).

3. Although I am here discussing only American masculinity, I am aware that others have located this chronic instability and efforts to prove manhood

in the particular cultural and economic arrangements of Western society. Calvin, after all, inveighed against the disgrace "for men to become effeminate," and countless other theorists have described the mechanics of manly proof. (See, for example, Seidler, 1994.)

4. I do not mean to argue that women do not have anxieties about whether they are feminine enough. Ask any woman how she feels about being called aggressive; it sends a chill into her heart because her femininity is suspect. (I believe that the reason for the enormous recent popularity of sexy lingerie among women is that it enables women to remember they are still feminine underneath their corporate business suit—a suit that apes masculine styles.) But I think the stakes are not as great for women and that women have greater latitude in defining their identities around these questions than men do. Such are the ironies of sexism: The powerful have a narrower range of options than the powerless, because the powerless can also imitate the powerful and get away with it. It may even enhance status, if done with charm and grace—that is, is not threatening. For the powerful, any hint of behaving like the powerless is a fall from grace.

5. Such observations also led journalist Heywood Broun to argue that most of the attacks against feminism came from men who were shorter than 5 ft. 7 in. "The man who, whatever his physical size, feels secure in his own masculinity and in his own relation to life is rarely resentful of the opposite sex" (cited in Symes, 1930, p. 139).

6. Some of Freud's followers, such as Anna Freud and Alfred Adler, did follow up on these suggestions. (See especially, Adler, 1980.) I am grateful to Terry Kupers for his help in thinking through Adler's ideas.

7. The image is from Warren Farrell, who spoke at a workshop I attended at the First International Men's Conference, Austin, Texas, October 1991.

8. For a critique of these mythopoetic retreats, see Kimmel and Kaufman (1995).

Chapter 5. Sexual Violence in Three Pornographic Media: Toward a Sociological Explanation

1. While the pornographic videos and magazines we sampled may be nationally distributed, we sampled only those available in this one area. However, the Usenet, by design, allows users in many different countries to access the same material, with only language restriction. Thus the generalizability of these findings for the Usenet may be far greater than the findings for the other media. On the other hand, little research has addressed the geographic variations in pornographic content, and there is some evidence that suggests a great variation (Dietz & Sears, 1988). Care should therefore be taken in generalizing these results to other geographic locales.

2. Thirty-six scenes (5.6% of all scenes) contained violence but not sex. Since the majority of the theoretical literature on the harm of violence in pornography has focused on sexual violence not violence per se, these scenes are not included in our subsequent analysis. Also included is the row's chi-square score. Chi-square tests the null hypothesis that there is no association between the presence of a particular form of violence and media. Thus, a significant chi-square indicates that there is an association between media and presence of violence.

3. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to know what proportion of usenet pornography is produced or consumed by women. We believe that the vast majority of producers and consumers are male. However we have no hard evidence to support this and, if incorrect, our explanation for differences in violent content would be weakened significantly.

Chapter 6. Does Censorship Make a Difference? An Aggregate Empirical Analysis of Pornography

1. Criteria included population (total SMSA population, and broken down by race and class variables), crime rates for a variety of crimes, and SES data. We chose these six because they were all regional metropolitan centers.

2. Rates (per 100,000 population) for aggravated assaults: 1970 (161), 1975 (227), 1980 (298), 1985 (303), and 1989 (383).

3. The numbers presented here are for total sales (single copy plus subscription). The decrease in sales is exclusively the result of a drop in single copy sales, while subscription rates have increased slightly during the period. Except for *Playboy* (which sells more magazines through subscription than single copy), none of the magazines in the sample have high subscription rates, and of total circulation through subscriptions, throughout the period, about 90% is to *Playboy*.

4. The much slighter decrease in Florida is explained by a sharper increase in subscription rates than in the other states. As in all states, about 90% of all subscriptions are to *Playboy*.

5. In Florida, the lag time correlation is $r = .81$, in Indiana $r = -.45$, in Kentucky $r = -.20$, in Ohio $r = -.64$, and in Texas $r = -.10$. For total U.S., the lag time correlation is $r = -.83$.

6. Although we did not include other types of magazines, as did Baron and Straus, we believe that our findings are consistent with theirs and therefore not indicative of a causal relationship between specific magazines and rape rates.

7. The increase in sales between 1982 and 1984 is almost exclusively a result of an increase in the sales of *Penthouse*.

8. Dallas is a good example of how tentative any conclusions about rape trends must be; had the two years been 1979 and 1989, we would have seen an

increase, just as if they had been 1980 and 1988, etc., (cf. Table 6.2). Since a "best fit" regression line would also have been dependent upon the years included, we decided against using it.

9. Because of the few and limited observations that were available to us, we thought it improper to create an inaccurate picture of "order" by fitting the information into a correlation analysis.

10. We should point out that to adherents of the feminist antipornography position, the term "feminist pornographer" is an oxymoron.

Chapter 8. Hard Issues and Soft Spots: Counseling Men about Sexuality

1. The names of the individual patients have been changed.

2. To assert a pathological element to what is culturally defined as "normal" is a contentious argument. But such an argument derives logically from assertions about the social construction of gender and sexuality. Perhaps an analogy would prove helpful. One might also argue that given the cultural definition of femininity in our culture, especially the normative prescriptions for how women are supposed to look to be most attractive, all women manifest a problematic relationship to food. Even the most "normal" woman, having been socialized in a culture stressing unnatural thinness, will experience some pathological symptoms around eating. This assertion will surely shed a very different light on the treatment of women presenting eating disorders, such as bulimia or anorexia nervosa. Instead of treating them in their *difference* from other women, by contextualizing their symptoms within the larger frame of the construction of femininity in American culture, they can be seen as exaggerating an already culturally prescribed problematic relationship to eating. This position has the additional benefit, as it would in the treatment of male sexual disorders, of resisting the temptation to "blame the victim" for her or his acting out an exaggerated version of a traditional script.

Chapter 9. Bisexuality: A Sociological Perspective

1. The widespread character of these practices is indicated by recent news reports of a man in Philadelphia who had paid very large numbers of young men for oral sex and articles of their clothing. The social networks through which young men in their mid-teens came to know of this man and engage in the "bisexual" practices were stable for nearly twenty years. Most of the boys attended a church-related high school in a working-class area of the city while the man lived in an exclusive residential district (Hinds, 1992).

2. A similar situation may develop among women who work in the sex industry as prostitutes. Since the nineteenth century, there has been evidence that some women prostitutes had extensive same-gender sexual experiences and desires (Thomson, 1991). Often these women are referred to as "lesbian prostitutes," but the order of events for the majority is likely to have been from prostitution to same-gender sexual experiences and sometimes preferences. Clearly these women had sex with both women and men, but the motivations for each practice were quite different. Were (are) such women bisexual?

3. We have not created the important category of men who have sex with women and men whose most important social anchor is in the gay community. Such men are quite different from the men discussed in this section. Most of these men have sex with women quite intermittently, though long-term relationships are not unknown. It is these men who have elicited the most concern in terms of HIV transmission.

Chapter 12. Gender Symmetry in Domestic Violence: A Substantive Methodological Research Review

1. In the best of these studies, O'Leary and his colleagues have found that about 31% of the men and 44% of the women indicated that they had engaged in some aggression to their partners in the year before they were married. A year after the marriage, rates had dropped for both groups and 27% of the men and 36% of the women indicated they had aggressed, and 30 months into the marriage the rates for the previous year were 25% of the men and 32% of the women (O'Leary et al., 1989, p. 264).

2. The CTS-2 does include a measure of sexual coercion, which seems to me a pretty cogent acknowledgment that it must be included in all understandings of gender symmetry.

3. It must be noted, of course, that the "retaliation" is more often for a perceived injury or slight than any real injury. (See, for example, Beneke, 1982.)

4. As this is a conjecture based on estimates, it remains an empirical question to coordinate the synthesis of these two approaches.

Chapter 13. An Unnatural History of Rape

1. I know that Thornhill has published some coauthored research on women's reactions to rape. These are based on secondary analysis of aggregate statistical samples. Neither he nor his collaborator has ever actually done any research on a human being.

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