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## MEN, MASCULINITIES, AND FEMINIST THEORY

JUDITH KEGAN GARDINER

“Is it true . . . that women in your society are treated exactly like men?” a doctor in Ursula LeGuin’s (1974) science fiction novel, *The Dispossessed*, asks a visiting anarchist. The anarchist replies with a laugh, “That would be a waste of good equipment” (p. 16). Then he explains that in his society, “a person chooses work according to interest, talent, strength—what has the sex to do with that?” (p. 17). Published in 1974, at the height of the 20th-century American movement for women’s liberation, LeGuin’s fantasy attempts to visualize gender equality as a society without differences based on one’s anatomical sex, but one, it turns out, that primarily takes the form of allowing women the occupational choices and sexual freedoms already common to men; men do a little child care and are otherwise unchanged. Feminist theories take a number of approaches to this slippery goal of gender equality that are intertwined with their varying perspectives on men and masculinity. They endorse some aspects of traditional masculinity, critique some, and ignore others, as they ask who will be equal to whom, in what respects, and with what results for male and female individuals and their societies.

The most important accomplishment of 20th-century feminist theory is the concept of

gender as a social construction; that is, the idea that masculinity and femininity are loosely defined, historically variable, and interrelated social ascriptions to persons with certain kinds of bodies—not the natural, necessary, or ideal characteristics of people with similar genitals. This concept has altered long-standing assumptions about the inherent characteristics of men and women and also about the very division of people into the categories of “men” and “women.” The traditional sexes are now seen as cultural groupings rather than as facts of nature based on a static division between two different kinds of people who have both opposed and complementary characteristics, desires, and interests. By seeking to understand the causes, means, and results of gendered inequality, feminist theories hope to develop effective ways to improve women’s conditions, sometimes by making women more similar to men as they are now, sometimes by making men more similar to women as they are now, sometimes by validating women’s traditional characteristics, sometimes by working toward the abolition or minimizing of the categories of gender altogether, but all simultaneously transforming ideologies and institutions, including the family, religion, corporations, and the state.

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Some women living prior to organized movements for women's rights claimed that they were equal to men, as men described themselves; that men were not fully equal to the ideal of masculinity they themselves put forward; and that men and masculinity placed women and femininity in a subordinate position. With the resurgence of a movement for women's rights in the second half of the 20th century, varied theories developed to explain the causes of male domination, to correct erroneous assumptions about both women and men, and to imagine new kinds of men and of women in new circumstances. These theories charged that cultural ideologies favored men, that social institutions reflected these ideologies, and that men as a group benefited from the subordination of women as a group, despite the great disparities that existed in the advantages accruing to individual men or subgroups of men in relation to other men and to women. Thus men and masculinity play a crucial role in feminist theory, the body of thought that seeks to understand women's social situation and to articulate justice from a woman-centered perspective. Furthermore, feminist thinking has been fundamental to the formation of contemporary men's and masculinity studies as intellectual endeavors, academic subjects, and social movements. This chapter briefly sketches how men and masculinity figure in several strands of feminist theory. It looks at what the treatment of men and masculinity reveals about the gaps and assumptions in these theories. Focusing chiefly on a few key figures, it also indicates some advantages and future directions that these theories pose for masculinity studies.

Misogyny created feminist theory, and feminist theory has helped create masculinity. That is, cultural condemnation leveled against women by religious writers, philosophers, and popular discourses across centuries and cultures produced rebuttals by women and men. The first feminist theories were primarily defensive, and as they questioned men's appropriation to themselves of essential humanity, they charged that men, too, were embodied as a specific gender defined according to cultural ideals for people with similar bodies, characterized by certain psychological dispositions, and shaping social institutions to serve their interests. As women sought to be included in the rights and privileges of citizens, they questioned the gendered

meanings of such ideals as liberty, fraternity, and equality and so initiated one continuing theme of feminist theorizing that has extended into masculinity studies as well.

Men's superiority to women is a tenet of the world's main monotheisms, although the major religions also include countervailing tendencies that value women's spiritual capacities and delimit male power and authority. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle portrayed women as naturally men's inferiors in terms of reason. In the long educational and philosophical tradition that venerated his authority, masculinity was thus rendered both invisible and normative: Masculinity was equated with the human rationality of men and women were marked by sexuality, emotion, and their bodies. Champions of women repeatedly asked if God and nature had made women so clearly inferior to men, why were such strong social inducements necessary to retain their subjugation?

In reaction to claims that women were irrational, weak, vicious, and sinful, the early defenders of women repeated a number of strategies. They claimed women were equal or superior to men, writing, for example, books about heroic, saintly, learned, and otherwise exemplary women. In another common strategy, they asserted equality less by raising the image of women than by lowering the image of men. They thereby launched an inquiry into the meaning of equality that continues to the present. Idealistic depictions of men as the embodiments of reason and humanity, they said, flew in the face of the evils men did: Men, too, were as embodied, irrational, and vicious as the misogynists claimed women were. Furthermore, men tyrannize over women rather than loving and protecting them as they claim to do. So the French medieval author Christine de Pisan (1405/1982) has her allegorical character Reason say "that these attacks on all women—when in fact there are so many excellent women—have never originated with me, Reason" but were occasioned rather by men's own vices, jealousies, and pride (p. 18). Margaret Cavendish (1985), a 17th-century English aristocrat, suggests that women rich enough not to depend on men financially "were mad to live with Men, who make the Female sex their slaves" (p. 89).

In the democratizing ferment of the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft (1985) cried

out for recognition of the common humanity of both sexes. Her “Vindication of the Rights of Woman” appealed to men to “generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience” (p. 431). When Abigail Adams (1994) wrote her husband John Adams, one of the founders of the American republic and later president of the United States, to “Remember the Ladies” in framing the new American state, she pleaded for gender equality under Enlightenment ideals of freedom: “Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could” (p. 876). The pioneering American feminists at the Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention of 1848 implicitly accepted the claims of men to both a rational and religious basis for citizenship when they attempted to add women to the language of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. . . .” However, their statement immediately accused men of failing to uphold their own ideals: “The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman” (Stanton, 1994, p. 1946). Furthermore, they said, “man” has withheld from women “rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners” (p. 1947), a strategic attempt to divide the category of “man” by showing some women superior to groups of men whom other men also held in disrespect. Thus feminist efforts to achieve political and educational equality with men argued that at least some women already possessed equality in the qualities necessary for these privileges—immortal souls and educable human reason—but repeatedly oscillated between imitating and critiquing men. At least a few men agreed and even furthered these arguments. The liberal English philosopher John Stuart Mill (Mill & Mill, 1970), who developed his ideas about women in dialogue with his wife Harriet Taylor, contended that an equal education for both sexes would disprove men’s claims to superior intelligence.

Despite increasing numbers of women intellectuals, men continued to think of humanity as made in their image, according to French

philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1968). Although they knew themselves as subjects capable of transcending their immediate experiences through reason and will, they treated Woman as their Other—mystery, complement, object of desire, creature of body and change. de Beauvoir’s path-breaking book *The Second Sex* defended women’s claims to full personhood and undercut men’s pretensions to fulfill their own ideals. “It is clear that in dreaming of himself as donor, liberator, redeemer, man still desires the subjection of women,” she writes (p. 172). She attacks the myths of masculine superiority and confirms masculine dualities that elevate mind over body by insisting that men, too, are creatures of bodily and sexual infirmity rather than disembodied minds: “Indeed no one is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or scornful, than the man who is anxious about his virility” (p. xxv). In a current version of this critique, Rosi Braidotti (2002) alleges that “the price men pay for representing the universal is disembodiment, or loss of gendered specificity into the abstraction of phallic masculinity,” and she suggests that men need “to get real” by recognizing their embodiment (p. 355). Exactly what this means and how both men and women, including those with physical and sensory disabilities, experience their embodiment is a fruitful topic in current feminist and masculinity studies (Hall, 2002).

Twentieth-century liberal feminism continued the tradition of seeking for women the privileges already enjoyed by men. Betty Friedan (1963) and the National Organization for Women (founded in 1966) believed that changing laws and educating people against erroneous prejudices would remedy gender discrimination, giving women equal opportunities with men to exercise individual choices in life. They sought gender equity through changes in law and childhood socialization. They lobbied for equal treatment of boys and girls in school and wrote children’s books featuring cooperative boys as well as resourceful girls. They welcomed men into their organizations and encouraged women to enter previously male-dominated occupations. In all these endeavors, their critics alleged, they merely sought women’s inclusion in current, male-dominated institutions, accepting a restrictively narrow model of equality without questioning the masculine

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norms that valorized abstract reason and law over the bodies and emotions they ruled. Current versions of liberal feminist theories, however, are more sophisticated in their analyses and offer to men's studies models for inquiries into the gendering of the law, the media, the state, and the professions; civil rights organizations open to male members with accessible goals for social reform; and ideals such as androgyny for combining traditionally masculine and feminine personality characteristics in individuals. There is still ample room for further studies in these areas; for example, concerning what fosters boys' and girls' best learning. Are girls still shortchanged by schools, especially in math and science, or are boys now suffering from a school system designed to keep good girls quiet and studious? The questions about which gender wins or loses by which kind of setting or practice are ripe for reframing while the idea of equality is still in contention in numerous societal and institutional settings.

Psychologist Eleanor Maccoby (1998) represents a recent version of this liberal view in encouraging individuality and freedom of choice for both sexes and allowing for a varied play of masculine and feminine difference across the life cycle. She sees youth "growing up apart" in groups segregated by sex and adults experiencing "convergence" in sex and work (p. 189). She describes greater divergence within each gender than between the two, notes contradictory components of both masculinity and femininity, and emphasizes that "sex-linked behavior turns out to be a pervasive function of the social context" more than of individual personality (p. 9). Other feminist theorists also seek to deflate gender dualism by viewing gender as developmental across the life course, so that, for example, masculinity might be defined by boys' development from childishness to maturity rather than by opposition to a denigrated femininity (Ehrenreich, 1983; Gardiner, 2002).

Another approach to disputing gender binaries and the equation of masculinity with human rationality lies through the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and his French follower Jacques Lacan. Freud and Lacan (Gardiner, 1992) contradictorily asserted that all people were governed by irrational unconscious desires, thus unseating male claims to superior reason, and that men but not women had a privileged

relationship to social power, which was visibly symbolized in the male anatomical part that men feared losing and women envied. Luce Irigaray (1985) reversed what she called the "phallogocentric" Freudian concept of women's "penis envy" as instead a defining characteristic of the masculine psyche: this alleged female envy "soothes the anguish man feels, Freud feels, about the coherence of his narcissistic construction and reassures him against what he calls castration anxiety" (p. 51). Thus Irigaray follows one feminist strategy in defining masculinity as a condition of lack, vulnerability, and weakness, in an ironic mirroring of Freudian versions of women's lacking genital equipment and defective moral development. American theorist Drucilla Cornell (1998) develops this Lacanian theory to argue that masculinity is not a transcendent human norm but is always imperiled by unconscious castration fears. The "bad news for the little boy" who identifies with the power of the idealized father, she says, is that "this fantasy leaves him in a constant state of anxiety and terror that what makes him a man can always be taken away from him" (p. 143). This insecurity then fuels men's fantasies of superiority to women but also provides them, she believes, with the motive for joining feminists in challenging the gender order and so freeing themselves from impossible standards of masculinity against which they will always fail. As with all uses of psychoanalytic theory, Cornell and Irigaray's feminist deployment leaves open the question of how much the Freudian or Lacanian framework distorts or prejudges issues of gender, sexuality, and sexual difference, both in individual human psychology and in cultural representations. Perhaps these very schema encourage the overestimation of the importance of sexual difference in psychic functioning, also minimizing the complexities of intrasexual relationships and of nonerotic bonds and antagonisms.

Rejecting psychoanalysis as the unscientific projection of male fantasies, contemporary feminist scientists join the feminist tradition of rationally disputing sexist claims that men are superior to women and different by nature as well as the claim that science itself is gender neutral (Collins, 1999; Fausto-Sterling, 1992). Susan Bordo (1999) describes the prevailing pervasiveness of androcentrism in science and in men's attitudes to nature: "The phallus stands,

not for the superior fitness of an individual male over other men, but for *generic* male superiority—not only over females but also over other species” (p. 89). Although some conservative adaptations of evolutionary theory reinforce traditional gender roles, for example in explaining male aggression and promiscuity as optimizing reproductive success and so as predicted strategies for human survival, Darwinian feminist theorists dispute such ahistorical mythologizing. Instead, they emphasize the social construction of scientific categories, the reliance on gendered metaphors in science texts, and the sexism within science (Fausto-Sterling, 1992). They draw attention to the vast variety of primate as well as human societies and manifestations of gender and to the importance in the animal world of social systems over genetic programming. For instance, Barbara Smuts (1992) shows that female solidarity among primates decreases the prevalence of aggression by males against females. Thus a wide variety of feminist theorists disputes all definitions of masculinity that claim the natural superiority of men over women and other creatures. Further work will be developing the philosophy and sociology of science with respect to the gendering of nature and of contemporary scientific practices.

If one strand of feminist theory critiques the supposed rationality of masculinity, another characterizes masculinity as in itself harmful to women and other men. These are the theories most frequently characterized as male bashing, because they focus on male violence against women and on men’s sexual objectification of women as the very definitions of masculinity. These theories seek gender equality by abolishing or dramatically transforming men and masculinity, although they may either extol or vilify the characteristics ascribed to traditional femininity.

Mocking male pretensions to power and authority, theologian Mary Daly (1987) rejected religions dependent on a Father God and sought to remake a new, nonpatriarchal language as a step toward defeating androcentricism. The puns and startling new word usages in her *Wickedary* associate masculinity not with power but with the follies and failures of men as individuals and of male-dominated institutions. Thus, for instance, she defines “male-function” as meaning “characteristically

unreliable performance of phallic equipment. *Example:* the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*” or as an “archetypically endless ceremony or gathering of maledom. *Examples:* diplomatic functions, church functions, White House functions” (p. 209).

Legal theorist Catharine MacKinnon is the best-known exponent of a radical feminist viewpoint. Her theory posits male oppression of women as the first and most pervasive of all oppressions, the model for racism and class injustice and the structuring principle of all established institutions. She begins one book, for example, with this grim invitation to a female reader:

Imagine that for hundreds of years your most formative traumas, your daily suffering and pain, the abuse you live through, the terror you live with, are unspeakable—not the basis of literature. You grow up with your father holding you down and covering your mouth so another man can make a horrible searing pain between your legs. When you are older, your husband ties you to the bed and drips hot wax on your nipples and brings in other men to watch and makes you smile through it. Your doctor will not give you drugs he has addicted you to unless you suck his penis. (MacKinnon, 1993, p. 3)

This passage constructs everywoman as eternally a victim, despite its invisible, authoritative female narrator. Its version of men and masculinity is horrifying, bizarre, and implicitly culture specific: Men are represented by a father who facilitates the rape of his daughter, a husband who flaunts his sexual sadism, and a dope-dealing doctor who forces fellatio on his patients.

MacKinnon (1987) makes gender dependent on sex and sex dependent on male force. Such social practices as pornography, rape, and prostitution institutionalize “the sexuality of male supremacy, which fuses the eroticization of dominance and submission with the social construction of male and female. Gender is sexual. Pornography constitutes the meaning of that sexuality” (p. 148). MacKinnon does not discuss the origin of this system, but her paradigm implies that men have always had the rapist mentality to desire forced heterosexual sex as well as the superior physical power to accomplish it. For her, masculinity defines men, rather than the reverse. “By men I mean the status of



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masculinity that is accorded to males," but not to those persons who are "defined as subordinated by force as women are" (p. 170). Men must work constantly to keep this masculine control and dominance in place, and the place of subordinated men, including gay men, is rendered ambiguous in this account.

Although male domination is universal, MacKinnon (1987) believes, it is also shaped by contemporary society: "women are the property that constitutes the personhood, the masculinity, of men under capitalism" (p. 159). Furthermore, in her view, the standards for all aspects of culture are masculine: "masculinity, the male standard for men" (p. 71), establishes patriarchal law and relegates women to the "private, moral, valued, subjective"; men, on the other hand, accrue to themselves the values of the "public, ethical, factual, objective" (p. 151). She claims that every quality that distinguishes men from women is affirmatively compensated by society:

Men's physiology defines most sports, their needs define auto and health insurance coverage, their socially designed biographies define workplace expectations and successful career paths, their perspectives and concerns define quality in scholarship, their experiences and obsessions define merit, their objectification of life defines art, their military service defines citizenship, their presence defines family, their inability to get along with each other . . . defines history, their image defines God, and their genitals define sex. (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 36)

It is not merely the case that men make their behavior the norm for all people but that these norms are themselves harmful. Pornography impels male bodies to act, creating a total mind-body split that apparently constitutes masculinity but not femininity. For MacKinnon, the masculine has always defined humanity, but the masculine is inhumane. The ultimate solution to this grim paradox is the abolition of both masculinity and femininity; that is, the abolition of gender, although feminist-inspired laws, like those she and Andrea Dworkin proposed to outlaw pornography and sexual harassment, might help to identify and ameliorate such negative consequences of eroticized masculine dominance (MacKinnon, 1987, pp. 200-201).

Not only sexual violence but national and ethnic violence, as manifest in torture and

war, provoke feminist theorizing about the relationship between masculinity and these predominantly male activities, with the goal of eliminating these horrors rather than of militarizing women. Sociologist Nancy Chodorow explores the links between masculinity, nationalism, and violence, attributing men's aggression more to cycles of humiliation and domination among older and younger men than, like MacKinnon, to men's sexual exploitation of women. She rejects the Freudian theory that all people are innately aggressive and instead sees aggression in both sexes as defending the self when it is endangered either by physical force or by humiliation and shame. However, she believes that men are more psychologically prone to respond to humiliation by violence against others than women are (Chodorow, 2002). Ecofeminist theorists also derive war from a "militarized 'cult of masculinity'" in which man conquers nature and defines national security as the protection of male privilege (Seager, 1999, p. 168). This "environmentally destructive ethos includes a cultivation of hypermasculinity, secrecy, fraternity, and an inflated sense of self-importance" (p. 169). At its most extreme, Joni Seager alleges, the "culture of nuclear destruction" is "a private men's club, within which masculinity is both an explicit sexualized expression and an implicitly taken-for-granted context" (p. 172). Thus, for ecofeminists and for many global feminists, a masculinity that validates competition among men and domination over women also imperils the planet. For some of these theorists, masculine attempts to dominate nature contrast with more feminist attitudes of attunement with nature. This masculine arrogance, they believe, leads to the extinction of species, the depletion of natural resources, war, and the destruction of ecosystems necessary for human survival.

These radical feminist theories attack masculinity rather than simply defending against sexist charges about women's inferiority. Their vision of masculinity can be violent and negative, void of any of the positive characteristics traditionally assigned to masculinity. Moreover, the superior force of disembodied reason sometimes seems appropriated in them to that of the female spokesperson for the voiceless and oppressed category of other women. Nevertheless, some male theorists agree with

these radical feminist and ecofeminist positions. For John Stoltenberg (1989), the only ethical position for persons with penises is antimasculine feminism. Thus he encourages other male humans to join him in *Refusing to Be a Man*. Exaggerated as the claims of radical feminism may sometimes seem, it succeeded in breaking long-standing commonsense assumptions about the naturalness of heterosexual predation and the triviality of female complaints against male treatment of women in streets and offices. With its focus on the harms women experience, it articulated sexual harassment as a crime and sexual objectification as a pervasive component of gender inequality. Once stated, these perspectives made sense to some men as well, both with regard to relations with women and to relations among men. Men around the world work now with other men to reduce gendered violence through profeminist organizations such as the Global Network of Men and Mentors on Violence Prevention, as well as in environmental and peace organizations (Freedman, 2002, p. 287). Some men's studies already address men's bullying and harassment of other men in workplaces and schools. A question that is still open is the usefulness to men's theorizing of the model of harm developed by radical feminists. Aída Hurtado (1999), among others, critiques masculinist men's studies on the grounds that although they trumpet men's "wounds" from childhood, they leave white upper class male privilege intact and unexamined. "The Western male intellectual tradition cannot theorize from a position of privilege," she claims, but, rather, only one of a "victimhood" that "leaves the status quo untouched" (p. 126). However, accurate assessments of men's self-perceptions and perceptions of others that avoid both justification and blaming may well be necessary to those designing psychological incentives for social change.

In contrast to radical feminist theories, many cultural feminist theories do not see male aggression and other traditionally gendered attributes as innate but rather as developed within individual psychologies by mother-dominated child rearing and other widespread social practices. Whereas sharply binary "dominance" theories such as MacKinnon's seem in danger of positing a masculinity that obliterates femininity, these "difference," "cultural feminist," or woman-centered theories validate

women's traditional characteristics. Such theories tend to portray masculinity and femininity as complementary, with both containing good as well as bad traits. Psychologist Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976) argues that the universal female control of early child rearing explains both male dominance and misogyny, because all infants fear their mothers' life-giving or withholding powers and transfer these unconscious associations to other women. Chodorow (1978) also explains men's and women's disparate personality structures through psychological dispositions linked to female-dominated child rearing. Because boys, unlike girls, form their masculine gender identity not through direct imitation of the same-sex parent but through separation and contrast from their mothers, she hypothesizes, they develop a sense of self that is independent, autonomous, and individuated; conversely, girls' selves are more interdependent, nurturant, and empathic.

Rather than accepting male dominance as necessary to human society, Chodorow's popular theory of 1978 explains it through forms of child rearing that have been universal in the past but that modern technologies and social arrangements can now alter. Furthermore, she describes masculinity as so limiting for men's lives, rather than so enjoyably privileged, that men should also have incentives for change. If fathers take equal responsibility with mothers for early child care, she argues, gender inequality would disappear, women would be relieved of the unfair burdens of caregiving, and men would gain a satisfying intimacy with their children, women, and each other. Chodorow (1978) thinks "equal parenting" could bring all people "the positive capacities" now restricted to each sex separately, and both sexes would also be more flexible in their choice of sexual objects (p. 218). This optimistic theory about gender transformation requires dramatic changes in men's lifestyles as they assume heavy child-care responsibilities to produce more egalitarian personality structures in the future; women, on the other hand, will continue their current multitasking of work and family obligations. Current empirical studies in parenting show some changes in fathers' and mothers' tasks and commitments of time and emotion to their children. The effects on the parents, the children, and society at large await future investigation.



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Unlike MacKinnon's and other radical feminist theories that simply posit a dominating masculinity as the origin of gender inequality, Chodorow's (1978) psychoanalytic theory explains masculinity as a defensive and compensatory formation in individual men's development. Identifying with their individual mothers, women become mothers in turn, but men become masculine by identifying with the male roles in society. "Masculine identification," she says, "is predominantly a gender role identification. By contrast, feminine identification is predominantly *parental*," based on a girl becoming like her mother, whereas being a father has been a minor part of most modern men's identity (p. 176). Thus gender is defined by men's difference from women in these theories but asymmetrically rather than in a relation of either simple opposition or negation. According to Chodorow, this leaves contemporary men confused about how to be masculine. She asserts that it is "crucial for everyone . . . to have a stable sexual identity. But until masculine identity does not depend on men's proving themselves, their *doing* will be a reaction to insecurity rather than a creative exercise of their humanity" (p. 44).

In her early discussions of masculine identity formation based on feminist object-relations psychology, Chodorow (1978) claims that masculinity based on negation of the mother is a defensive construction likely to be rigid, formed on unrealistic stereotypes and narrow cultural norms, and disadvantageous to both the individual and the culture. However, her more recent defenses of heterosexuality as potentially as varied and exciting as the homosexualities lead her to embrace the view that all formations of unconscious desire have defensive, possibly even perverse components (Chodorow, 1994, 1999). Thus, if defensive personality structures can be as flexible, complex, and exciting as nondefensive ones, there is no longer a theoretical reason to polarize masculinity as formed negatively and defensively in contrast to a more positive femininity. Similarly, although feminist assessments of moral reasoning and "women's ways of knowing" initially appeared to polarize a rigid abstract masculinity against interdependent and interpersonal female styles, current theorists see these gendered styles as dependent on variable social contexts rather

than as stable characteristics of individual personality (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Maccoby, 1998, pp. 198-199). This is a rich field for future research, especially in social contexts outside the college survey laboratory or therapist's consulting room.

Theories of gender complementarity based on the psychological asymmetries of child rearing are subject to the criticisms that they underestimate the effects of social dominance, historical and cultural differences, and differences among members of the same sex. However, their emphasis on the importance of fathering has found widespread acceptance among both masculinist and profeminist masculinity theorists (Gardiner, 2002). Profeminist scholars Michael Kimmel and Michael Kaufman (1995), for example, argue that manhood is dangerous when formed in flight from femininity. They cite Chodorow and Dinnerstein, among others, to claim that "men need to heal the mother wound, to close the gap between the mother who cared for us and the mother we have tried to leave behind" (p. 28). They contrast themselves with the masculinist men's movement of Robert Bly (1990), which urges men to "cut our psychic umbilical cord" with women rather than sharing with them in the labors of bringing up the next generation (p. 27).

If radical feminist theories sharply divide masculine power from feminine powerlessness and cultural feminist theories focus especially on psychological differences between men and women, other theories are more attentive to the myriad differences that divide men from other men and women from other women, as well as to the commonalities between the sexes and the relationships among the various categories of social inequality (Lorber, 1994; Maccoby, 1998). Feminists of color and many feminists influenced by Marxism emphasize the interconnectedness of gender with other social hierarchies, including nationality, ethnicity, social class, racialized identities, and sexualities. African American feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins (1999) explains that the "construct of intersectionality references two types of relationships: the interconnectedness of ideas and the social structures in which they occur, and the intersecting hierarchies" of social power; "viewing gender within a logic of intersectionality redefines it as a constellation of ideas and social

practices that are historically situated within and that mutually construct multiple systems of oppression” (p. 263) The categories these theorists describe are not additive but transformative, so that, for example, Chicano masculinities are not simply Anglo masculinities with a salsa beat or a dose of machismo but complex responses to Hispanic cultures, Catholic religion, dominant American middle-class white masculine assumptions, and the internal dynamics of Latino families (Gonzalez, 1996). These multidimensional feminist theories allow for more theoretical nuance as well, as seen in Hurtado’s (1999) “blasphemies,” addressed to white feminism and positing, for example, white men’s differential treatments of white women, who are needed to reproduce white children, and of women of color, who become used rather as sexual and economic objects.

Black feminists have repeatedly sought to balance understanding of the particular oppressions experienced by women of color with sympathy toward the vicissitudes of men in their communities. They critically examine the difficulties that men of color face in achieving mainstream versions of masculinity and critique those forms of masculinity that depend on sexism and male supremacy. In addition, they join male black intellectuals in indicting the projections of endemic social problems such as male violence against women or substance abuse exclusively onto blacks. Both male and female theorists situate African American gender characteristics within the common history of U.S. racism and the legacy of slavery. In particular, they speak of the dispersal of families and cultures; the imposition of alien ideologies, physical hardship, and degrading servitude; and the denial of education, opportunity, sexual choice, and occupational mobility. Chattel slavery was literally dehumanizing, in that it did not recognize the human status of slaves in law or practice (Williams, 1991, pp. 216-236); infantilizing, in that it did not recognize the adult status of slaves but kept them as wards and dependents judged incapable of citizenship; and sometimes also emasculating, castration figuring prominently in the terrorist postbellum tortures of lynching (Ross, 2002). These discussions affirm the strength necessary to survive such conditions and the resulting cross-sex unity of African American communal experience, and at times they invoke

the West African origins of many African American people or the small-town American black South as models for more ideal and harmonious societies than those of the contemporary capitalist West.

In response to some second-wave white feminists who drew analogies between the disadvantaged positions of women and African Americans, African American feminists published the pioneering text *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us are Brave: Black Women’s Studies* (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982). African American feminist theorists repeatedly sought to balance sympathy and critique for African American men. Michelle Wallace (1990) began her book *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (originally published in 1978) with the premise that African American men felt deprived of manhood by white supremacy, so that it was a revolutionary claim for human dignity, not a tautology, when striking male garbage workers mobilized by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., wore signs saying, “I am a man” (p. 1). According to Wallace, African American men in the decade of the black power movement (1966-1977) came to believe that “manhood was essential to revolution” and that authority over women was a primary agenda for liberation (p. 17). Thus African American feminist discussions of masculinity were also discussion of the relationships between men and women within African American communities and of the relationships between these communities and the dominant white culture.

One prominent African American feminist theorist who has returned to these issues repeatedly over the decades is bell hooks. Writing in collaboration with minister and public intellectual Cornel West (1991), she bases her discussion and models her goal of an African American “beloved community” on “a vision of transformative redemptive love between Black women and men” (see the dedication). Portraying the ideal bonding between African American men and women not through sexual metaphors but as political friendship, hooks (1984) sees men as “comrades in struggle” (p. 67). She argues that the poor or working class man has been hurt—and sometimes hurts others—by being unable to live up to dominant definitions of masculinity

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because he does not have the privilege or power society has taught him “real men” should possess. Alienated, frustrated, pissed off, he may attack, abuse, and oppress an individual woman or women, but he is not reaping positive benefits from his support and perpetuation of sexist ideology [and so is] not exercising privilege. (hooks, 1984, p. 73)

Looking back to her childhood, hooks (1992) describes a harmonious African American community where “there was no monolithic standard of black masculinity” and many men, despite their difficulties in attaining breadwinner economic status, were “caring and giving” (p. 88). In recent years, however, she believes that media distortions confuse men and women, white people and people of color, with their “stereotypical, fantastical representations of black masculinity,” and some African American male celebrities augment these distortions with swaggering, self-centered “dick thing” masculinity (p. 105). Although she thinks African American men “receive respect and admiration” from white as well as other African American men for flaunting their ostensible sexual prowess and domination of women, she sees these new ideals as spurious and harmful (p. 93). African American manhood should once again connote providing and protecting, she believes, rather than its current emphasis on men’s “capacity to coerce, control, dominate” that has ruined relationships between sexes in the black community (p. 66). In contrast, hooks models a kind of feminism built on cooperation between men and women. “Revolutionary feminism is not anti-male,” she claims, but rather seeks the full development of all individuals (p. 63). She thinks feminism can help both men and women attain the “capacity to be wholistic. . . . Rather than defining manhood in relation to sexuality, we would acknowledge it in relation to biology: boys become men, girls women, with the understanding that both categories are synonymous with selfhood” (p. 69). African American male theorists are responding to such feminist calls. Philip Brian Harper’s (1996) book *Are We Not Men? Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity*, for example, addresses the varieties of African American male experience and the relationships between African American men and women. This is a

tense area in contemporary discourse but an essential one if there is to be research rather than mere rhetoric in the future.

Thus the theories of feminists of color expand the categories of gender analysis beyond a masculine-feminine binary, often looking to larger structures of oppression and social representations to explain tensions between African American men and women and inviting African American men to join in both theorizing and community building. However, the disparity of explanatory schemes among these various feminist theories may help indicate some of the gaps in each. If some white men who have not experienced racist oppression are sexist or violent toward women, this explanation is unlikely to be the whole story for African American men either. Conversely, if external economic and social pressures rather than innate aggression or gendered psychological identifications influence the expressions of masculinity in African American men, such causation is likely to be operative for other men as well. Currently, many studies are segregated less by gender than by academic discipline, whereas more interdisciplinary analyses of the effects of racism and sexism on the lives of all people are warranted.

Other U.S. theorists of color and global feminists currently join African American feminists in analyzing ways in which masculinity is constructed in specific historical and cultural contexts. For example, Anna Maria Alonso (1992) describes a Mexican construction of masculinity in which the independent peasant is fully masculine, in opposition to the wage worker, who is “both like a child and like a woman because he relies on others for his sustenance” (p. 414). Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (1991) show British imperial rule in India operating through “the ideological construction and consolidation of white masculinity as normative and the corresponding racialization and sexualization of colonized peoples” (p. 15). Chilla Bulbeck (1998), who describes global feminisms often overlooked by Anglo feminists, reports on changing categories of same-sex behavior and “third genders” around the world (p. 154). Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1999) traces the problematic effects of equating masculinity with independence in “the racialized gender construction of American citizenship” (p. 22), and Valentine Moghadam (1999)

investigates the interconnections among huge military expenditures, deindustrialization, civil conflict, the rise of fundamentalist movements, and the consequent “reinstitutionalization of patriarchal gender relations” in the developing world (p. 132). Typical of this postmillennial perspective is Cherríe L. Moraga’s (2002) inclusive definition of the concerns of women of color in terms affecting both men and women throughout the restructuring globe: She includes “immigrant rights, indigenous peoples’ water and land rights, the prison industrial system, militarism, [and] reproductive rights” (p. xxvii).

Because these global and multicultural feminists all seek to make an impact on mixed-gender communities defined in opposition to the dominant white Western culture, they tend to adopt the position of collaborators in struggle with male colleagues from their constituencies, adding their methodological tools of intersectional analysis to antiracist and antiglobal organizing strategies. Their visions of equality look to a more inclusive and fairer future for both sexes throughout the world. As hooks (2000) wrote,

The only genuine hope of feminist liberation lies with a vision of social change that takes into consideration the ways interlocking systems of classism, racism, and sexism work to keep women exploited and oppressed [in relation to] a global white supremacist patriarchy [that] enslaves and/or subordinates masses of Third World women. (p. 109)

The gendered work of global systems and of various human ecologies will be important to future research agendas, as will such areas as the differential gendering and sexualization of new technologies.

As we have seen, many strands of feminist theory seek to make masculinity visible as a gender, rather than allowing it to retain the prestige of being equated with human rationality or the invisibility of being equated with economic or scientific law. Some of the feminist theories discussed here divide masculinity sharply from either a devalued traditional femininity of passivity and sexual objectification or from a revalued femininity of nurturance and empathy. Intersectional and multicultural feminist theories retain gender as a crucial element in the complex, changing, and interrelated social hierarchies they describe throughout the globe.

In contrast, some poststructuralist feminist theories, especially those claiming the rubric “queer,” interrogate the very concept of gender as tied to specific kinds of human bodies. That is, they question the foundational categories of *men* and *women* altogether and may wish to eliminate or proliferate gender beyond the current male-female dichotomy.

Poststructuralist feminists tend to see gender as fluid, negotiable, and created through repeated performances rather than as fixed or innate. They believe their view is more liberating than the ideas of either traditionalists or other feminists. Although they do not claim that androgyny or gender convergence has already been achieved, their theories forecast a multiplicity of gendered possibilities for people rather than only two opposed conditions. In her highly influential book *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990), philosopher Judith Butler calls gender “a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real” (p. x). Her goal is not to make it more genuine but to convince others of its artificiality. “As a strategy to denaturalize and resignify bodily categories” in a less polarized manner, she proposes “a set of parodic practices based in a performative theory of gender acts that disrupt the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame” of masculinity and femininity (p. xii). She often repeats her belief that to “denaturalize” is to rename in a way that is liberating and progressive. Part of moving “beyond the binary frame,” in Butler’s work, is her deemphasis on masculinity and femininity in favor of “gender,” understood as potentially multiple and variable. Neither “masculinity” nor “femininity” appears in the index to *Gender Trouble*, although “bisexuality,” “feminism,” “phallogocentrism,” and “sex/gender distinction” are all represented. Butler’s work thus continues the feminist strategy of seeking liberation from traditional constraints by disputing the naturalness of gender altogether, but its distinctive contribution lies in the argument that institutionalized heterosexuality creates gender (Butler, 1997, p. 135). If it were not socially useful for there to be two sexes to marry one another and divide work and kinship, she claims, people would not need to be divided into the categories of men and women at all.



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Butler's performative theory of gender has been enormously productive for the development of queer theory as a field and for the advancement of an antihomophobic political agenda in alliance with the movement for gay, lesbian, bigender, and transsexual rights (d'Emilio & Freedman, 1997). Many male queer theorists have analyzed abject and alternative masculinities among men in relation to hegemonic masculinities (Bersani, 1988; Thomas, 1996). Some women queer theorists, too, have focused specifically on alternative masculinities, especially as they are represented in the media. For example, film theorist Kaja Silverman (1992) argues for the progressive potential of nonphallic masculinities that avoid dominant masculinity's disavowal of powerlessness and instead "embrace castration, alterity, and specularly" (p. 3). Even more radically, other queer theorists embrace masculinity when its signs are manifest in female rather than male bodies. For example, sociologist Gayle Rubin (1992) argues that the lesbian categories of butch and femme comprise an alternative gender system, not a simple imitation of the two conventional genders of male masculinity and female femininity. Although she admits that butch and femme are created within the environment of heterosexist society, she claims they refigure traditional gender in ways that may be either reactionary or liberating for the individuals involved and for society as a whole. She says that "like lesbianism itself, butch and femme are structured within dominant gender systems" and may either resist or uphold those systems but never completely escape them (p. 479). Thus butch is specifically lesbian masculinity, configured differently but always in relation to heterosexual men's masculinity, which is itself a complicated, changing, and sometimes self-contradictory social constellation. For some women, she says, feeling they had traits often ascribed to men, such as athleticism or aggression, seems to have impelled their butch identities; for others, sexual desire for other women implied to them their own masculinity. For yet other women, the primary impulse toward a butch identity seems to have been the feeling that they were inwardly or essentially a man. Ways of achieving congruence with that feeling include adopting men's masculine signifiers, such as a necktie or moustache, or, these days, a surgically transformed body.

Queer theorist Judith Halberstam (1998) catalogues varieties of masculinity in female bodies, what she calls "masculinity without men," including the androgyne, the tribade, the female husband, the stone butch, and the drag king. She concludes that "we are all transsexuals" and that "there are no transsexuals": Contemporary possibilities for surgical transformation of the body "threaten the binarism of homo/heterosexuality by performing and fictionalizing gender" (Halberstam, 1994, pp. 225-226). That is, with the categories of men and women unstable, people cannot be categorized by habitual sexual desire directed toward one or the other of two categories. Halberstam (1994) seeks an end to "compulsory gender binarism" and its replacement by more flexible, depathologized forms of "gender preference" (p. 277). Nor are masculine women the only ones with a vested interest in masculinities, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1995) notes. "As a woman, I am a consumer of masculinities, but I am not more so than men are; and, like men, I as a woman am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them" (p. 13). Furthermore, Sedgwick claims that masculinity and femininity are not opposite ends of the same continuum but rather "orthogonal to each other"; that is, independent variables in "perpendicular dimensions" so that a person could be high or low in both scales at once (p. 15). This arena looks particularly fruitful for psychological studies in masculinity and queer theory as well as in feminist scholarship.

Although some contemporary feminists want to claim masculinity for women or multiply genders, other feminists strive to minimize gender polarization or to eliminate gender altogether. Psychologist Sandra Lipsitz Bem (1993) explains that she found the concepts of androgyny and of sexual orientation too limiting to fit her own needs and so came to think that "gender polarization, androcentrism, and biological essentialism" all reinforced male power and so distorted the possibilities for gender equality (p. viii). Sociologist Judith Lorber (1994) stresses the multiplicity of "gendered sexual statuses" that might be categorized by genitalia, object choice, appearance, gender display, kinds of relationship, relevant group affiliation, sexual practices, and self-identifications (pp. 58-59). Her fundamental



goal is the abolition of gender by structuring equality so thoroughly into society that many forms of sexuality are recognized as equally valid and gender no longer organizes social life at all. This view takes the abolition of gender as the only way of eliminating gender inequality and as a positive goal in itself: "When the information about genitalia is as irrelevant as the color of the child's eyes . . . then and only then will women and men be socially interchangeable and really equal" (p. 302). Until then, of course, research that documents actual change in attitudes, behaviors, and institutions will be of special value.

Poststructuralist feminist and queer theories encourage the flexibility and variability of both identity and desire and the decoupling of gender identity and sexual preference. Although female theorists seem especially interested in female-embodied masculinities and sometimes warn their male colleagues about exclusive attention to male practices, queer theories generally are accommodating to male practitioners and disruptive of the heteronormativity that many feminists feel upholds male dominance. On the other hand, queer theorists pay little attention to some of the central concerns of other kinds of feminist theorizing: to parenting, for example, or citizenship, or the gendered politics of work, although both male and female queer theorists are now more frequently incorporating antiracist, global, and other multifaceted perspectives into their analyses.

The movement for women's equality has been one of the most successful social movements of the past century, despite the varying oppressions still suffered by women around the globe. Feminist theories have been shaped by women's changing place in contemporary societies, and these theories have sometimes proved effective in changing both men's and women's consciousness and conditions. The widespread establishment of women's studies programs in colleges and universities, especially in the United States, has created a pool of practitioners of feminist theory and inspired the establishment of men's and masculinity studies as well (Boxer, 1998). Although masculinist men's movements sometimes decry feminism, generally men's studies treat feminism and feminist theory as scholarly big sisters, perhaps dull, dowdy, outmoded, or too restrictive, but nevertheless models to be followed and

bettered. Feminists ridicule masculinist men's studies and welcome profeminist efforts by men. American feminist journalist Gloria Steinem (1992) announces that "women want a men's movement" if that means men will "become more nurturing toward children, more able to talk about emotions," and less violent and controlling (p. v). English psychologist Lynn Segal (1990) regrets the "slow motion" of men toward gender equality and muses that the literature of masculinity "uncannily mirrors" its feminist forebears: it "focuses upon men's own experiences, generates evidence of men's gender-specific suffering and has given birth to a new field of enquiry, 'Men's Studies'" (2000, p. 160). At present, feminist theorists are citing masculinity scholars more frequently than previously, and vice versa. Feminist thinkers are benefiting from the theoretical insights and empirical findings of masculinity studies that concern the complex asymmetries, changing histories, local conditions, and institutional variances of gender in a wide variety of specific settings.

Current textbooks in women's and masculinity studies agree in their basic feminist premises, all describing hierarchies of dominance, relationally defined gender, and multiple and interactive axes of social oppression (Gardiner, 2003). In a rapidly changing world marked by contradictory forces of war, violence, disrupted ecologies and economies, fundamentalist backlash, enhanced opportunities for women, the feminization of poverty, the casualization of labor, the decline of traditional male wages, the objectification of male bodies, the recognition of more diverse sexualities, the reconfiguration of nationalities and ethnicities, the rise of liberating social movements, and what Donna Haraway (1989) calls the "the paradoxical intensification and erosion of gender itself" (p. 191), feminist theories continue to develop in conversation with men's and masculinity studies and other movements for social justice. They continue to seek an equality for men and women and for people around the globe at the highest level of human imagination and aspiration rather than the lowest common denominator. As Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) comments, "in this millennium we are called to renew and birth a more inclusive feminism, one committed to basic human rights, equality, respect for all people and creatures, and for the earth" (p. xxxix).

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