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The Rhetorical Shaping of Gender: Men's Movements in America

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

In this country men historically have been less involved than women in gender movements. In part this is because men—at least, White men—already had the rights and privileges that have been and continue to be the goal of women's movements. During the first wave of women's movements, most men opposed women's efforts to gain rights, although a few, like Frederick Douglass, actively supported women's struggle to be recognized as equal. During the second wave of U.S. women's movements, a number of men supported liberal feminism; many joined NOW (National Organization for Women) and other groups to work with women for equality.

During the second wave of women's movements in America, a number of men began to explore their own gender. They worked to identify and challenge the ways that masculinity has been constructed in America. Since the 1970s men have formed groups that articulate distinct agendas and explore issues in men's lives. Some men's groups want to reinvigorate traditional images of masculinity, while others aim to remake the meaning of masculinity in America.

Like the women's movement, the men's movement is really a collection of different movements with different views of men and diverse, sometimes deeply conflicting, political and personal goals and rhetorical strategies. Also like women's movements, men's movements are evolving, with new ones constantly arising. In the 1990s, for instance, both the Promise Keepers and the Million Man March emerged as distinct movements about and for men.

Interest in masculinity and men's issues has led to research and to the establishment of new journals. The most prominent two are *The Journal of Men's Studies*

and *Men and Masculinities*. The growing body of research on men and masculinities provides a basis for education; colleges and universities across the United States now offer men's studies courses, which are increasingly popular on many campuses.

The men's movement is not independent of the women's movement. As we will see in this chapter, men's movements tend to form in reaction to particular branches of women's movements and particular issues pursued by women's movements. Some branches of the men's movement ally themselves with feminist groups; others fiercely reject feminism and feminists. We will discuss three broad types of men's movements: profeminist, masculinist, and antifeminist (Hagan, 1998).

PROFEMINIST MEN'S MOVEMENTS

Although only one sector of men's movements shares the liberal or egalitarian ideology of liberal feminism, it is the most enduring branch and one with which many men identify. Referred to as **male feminists** or profeminist or progressive men, this branch of men's movements emerged from the upheaval of the 1960s. Although many men in student activist organizations like SNCC and SDS ridiculed women who accused them of sexism, not all New Left men responded negatively. A number of them recognized the truth of the women's charges, and they were ashamed when confronted with the hypocrisy of their political efforts to end discrimination while discriminating against women.

These men worked to bring their attitudes and behavior in line with the egalitarian ideology they espoused. Later generations of male feminists, including many men in their twenties today, attribute their feminism to parents and teachers who modeled egalitarian, nonsexist attitudes and practices. One of the most recent anthologies of third-wave feminism (Hernández & Rheman, 2002) includes essays by male feminists, who believe that women and men should enjoy the same privileges, opportunities, rights, roles, and status in society. For the most part these men have linked themselves and their rhetoric to mainstream liberal feminism. Out of this perspective, two distinct concerns emerge, one focused on women and the other on men.

Bill

I can't remember when I wasn't a feminist. It's as much a part of me as being a man or a Christian. My parents both work. Mom as a lawyer and Dad as an accountant. I grew up seeing my mother as strong and achieving and loving, just as Dad was. I grew up seeing my mother express her ideas articulately and seeing my father respect what she said and did. She listened when he talked; he listened when she did. When I was a kid, sometimes Mom worked late and Dad was in charge of fixing dinner for me and my brother. Other times Dad worked late and Mom was in charge. Both of them knew how to take care of us. Both of them were successful outside of the home. I grew up seeing that women and men are equal. How could I not be a feminist?

Because they believe in the equality of the sexes, male feminists support women's battles for equitable treatment in society (Doyle, 1997), and participated in efforts to increase women's rights during the second wave of U.S. feminism. During the 1972 campaign to ratify the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment), many men gave time, effort, and financial resources to the battle for legal recognition of women's equality. They joined women on public platforms to advocate for women's equality and rights. Today most male feminists endorse efforts to gain equal pay for equal work, to end discrimination against qualified women in academic and professional contexts, and to increase parental leaves and affordable child care.

One rhetorical strategy used by some profeminist men is performing a **traitorous identity**, in which a member of a group criticizes particular attitudes and actions that are common and accepted among members of that group. For example, a Christian man of my acquaintance often speaks out at Christian conferences to criticize the ways in which many Christians discriminate against gays. Another example comes from Larry May, author of *Masculinity and Morality* (1998a). May notes that at meetings he attends male speakers sometimes make sexist jokes or comments. The humor in sexist (and racist) jokes and statements depends on the preexistence of sexist and racist attitudes in listeners (Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998). May points out that, if a woman objects to the sexist comments, many men roll their eyes or dismiss her as being overly sensitive or "unable to take a joke." However, May says that when he or other men criticize the sexism, both the speaker and other men in the audience look ashamed. According to May, men find it easy to dismiss women's criticism of sexism but difficult to dismiss the same criticism when it comes from "one of us."

Another kind of communication employed by male feminists is personal persuasion to convince friends and co-workers to alter discriminatory attitudes and practices. For instance, one of my friends who considers himself a feminist talked with several of his colleagues about his disapproval of his firm's policy of paying women less than it paid men in equivalent positions. He thought the action was wrong, and he used his voice and his credibility to persuade other people. Another man, Scott Straus (2004), used his voice on campus to criticize fraternities. Later he wrote an article in which he criticized men in the fraternity to which he had belonged for practices such as bragging about who had sex with whom and rating female students' attractiveness.

Another interest of male feminists is their personal growth beyond restrictions imposed by society's prescriptions for masculinity. Because they believe that men and women are alike in most ways, male feminists want to develop the emotional capacities that society approves in women but discourages in men. Specifically, many male feminists claim that social expectations of masculinity force men to repress their feelings, and this diminishes men's humanity and makes their lives less satisfying than they could be (Avery, 1999; Hudson & Jacot, 1992).

The pat on the butt after a touchdown is nice, but sometimes I need a little more intimacy to feel truly appreciated.

Don Piraro
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Agreeing with liberal feminist women, men in this movement regard cultural prescriptions for gender as toxic to both sexes. Whereas for women social codes have restricted professional development and civic rights, for men they often seal off feelings (Brod, 1987; Hearn, 1987). Male feminists think that, in constricting men's ability to understand and experience many emotions, society has robbed them of an important aspect of what it means to be human. A major goal of male feminists is changing this. They encourage men to get in touch with their feelings and to be more sensitive, caring, open, and able to engage in meaningful, close relationships.

The male feminist movement includes both organized political efforts and informal, interpersonal communication. Formal, public action in this movement dates to 1975, when the first Men and Masculinity Conference was held in Tennessee. The conference has met annually since then to discuss the meaning of masculinity, to establish a network of support for men, and to identify and talk about problems and frustrations inherent in our culture's definition of masculinity and the roles and activities appropriate for men (Doyle, 1997; Messner, 2001). We will look more closely at two particular profeminist organizations.

■ NOMAS

One of the most prominent male feminist organization is NOMAS, the National Organization for Men Against Sexism. This association sponsors workshops with speakers and group discussions to expand men's awareness of ways in which their emotional development has been hindered by restrictive social views of masculinity. In addition, the workshops attempt to help men change this state of affairs by offering guidance in becoming more feeling and sensitive. Often these groups serve as safe testing grounds in which men can experiment with expressing their feelings, needs, and problems.

Although members of NOMAS believe that some qualities traditionally associated with masculinity, such as courage and ambition, are valuable in women as well as in men, it condemns other conventionally masculine qualities such as aggression, violence, and emotional insensitivity. One of the major achievements of NOMAS is its Fathering Task Group. This group issues a newsletter called *Fatherlove*, which promotes nurturance of children and involvement of fathers (Doyle, 1989).

For 30 years NOMAS has held an annual conference on men and masculinity. Three issues consistently arise as priorities for discussion and action at these conferences. One is ending violence against women by analyzing the relationship between cultural codes for masculinity and men's violence against women. A second high-priority issue is working to end men's homophobic attitudes and the cruel, sometimes deadly, attacks on gays that stem from these attitudes. The third recurrent issue at NOMAS conferences is continuing to develop and enrich men's studies at colleges and universities throughout the United States. NOMAS's annual conferences allow members to work on social change through political and educational activism.

About NOMAS

The National Organization for Men Against Sexism defines itself as an activist organization that promotes positive changes in men. NOMAS is pro-men, pro-women, and pro-gay in its philosophy. Through formal and informal efforts NOMAS attempts to bring about personal, political, and social changes that foster equality of men and women and gay and straight people.

Information on the organization's goals, activities, and membership procedures may be obtained by contacting the national organization.

NOMAS 798 Pennsylvania Avenue, Box 5, Pittsburgh, PA 15221



Visit NOMAS' Web site at <http://www.nomas.org>.

Members of NOMAS engage in a variety of rhetorical strategies. One is informal group discussions where men meet to explore the joys, frustrations, privileges, and problems of being men and of prevailing views of masculinity. Modeled on the consciousness-raising groups popular with many second-wave feminists, these groups encourage men to talk about what our society expects of men and the problems these expectations create. Through discussion, men pursue their goal of getting in touch with their emotions. They try to learn how to talk openly with other men about feelings, fears, concerns, and frustrations. Men are socialized to avoid topics like these because such subjects increase vulnerability and reflect a need for others, which violates social expectations of independence. Through these informal discussions, men explore with one another what they feel and how they might change attitudes and behaviors they find unworthy in themselves as individual men and in society overall.

Members of NOMAS also speak publicly in support of women's rights and men's personal development. In addition, NOMAS members are often involved in educational outreach programs that raise awareness of issues such as men's violence and that seek to persuade other men to become involved with changing destructive views of masculinity. Finally, members of NOMAS often enact traitorous identities to challenge everyday incidents of sexism and devaluation of women.

■ Men's Antiviolence Groups

Many profeminist men are particularly committed to ending men's violence against women. Like Kevin, whose commentary appears on this page, they believe that violence against women is not just a "woman's issue." These men reason that, since the majority of violence against women (as well as men) is enacted by men, it is an issue for men. Two specific men's antiviolence programs deserve our attention.

The White Ribbon Campaign. Perhaps you've noticed that some men wear white ribbons between November 25 and December 6. Those who do are stating that they identify with the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC), an international group of men who are working to end men's violence against women (www.whiteribbon.com, accessed May 20, 2003). Formed in 1991, the WRC is the largest men's antiviolence group in the world.

Kevin

If someone had told me five years ago I would say I'm a feminist, I wouldn't have believed it. Four years ago my little sister was raped. I was enraged and I felt totally powerless to help her, which was hard for me to deal with. I thought I was supposed to solve the problem, make things right, get the guy who did it. But I couldn't. I went with my sister to the rape crisis center and began to learn how bad the problem is. I began to see that the problem wasn't just the guy who raped her. It's the way that most men are socialized, including me—my wanting to be in control and get the guy who raped her. Gradually I got more involved with others who want to end violence against women. Ending it has to start with men, not women. Men have to take responsibility for looking at how masculinity is viewed in society, and we have to take responsibility for changing that.

The WRC began when a group of Canadian men felt they had to respond to an appalling incident of violence against women. On December 6, 1991, 14 women were massacred in what came to be called the Montreal Massacre. They were students in the Engineering School at the Université de Montreal. The murderer felt that engineering was a man's field in which women had no rightful place, so he removed them from the school—and from life. At first only a handful of men composed the group, which believed that men had a responsibility to speak out against men's violence against women. Designating a white ribbon as the symbol of men's opposition to men's violence against women, after only six weeks of planning this small group convinced more than 100,000 Canadian men to wear white ribbons. According to the white ribbon Web site, "wearing a white ribbon is a symbol of a personal pledge never to commit, condone, nor remain silent about violence against women" (www.whiteribbon.com, 2003). Since the WRC was founded in Canada in 1991, it has spread to many other countries. Local chapters in some countries select Father's Day and Valentine's Day for WRC events that emphasize men's caring and investment in positive, loving relationships.

But wearing a white ribbon for one or two weeks a year is not the only rhetorical strategy used by the WRC. Members also develop and present antiviolence workshops in schools, communities, and places of employment. In the workshops, WRC members demonstrate that violence is overwhelmingly committed by men, and they then encourage men in attendance to take responsibility for stopping it. Men are encouraged to become part of the solution to men's violence by speaking out against men's violence and by talking with other men about the issue. The workshops focus not only on physical violence such as battering and rape, but also on emotional violence, sexual harassment, sexist humor, and other practices that devalue and harm women.

A third rhetorical strategy of the WRC is to emphasize that they are not "male bashers." On their Web site (<http://www.whiteribbon.com>), they state:

We are not male bashers, because we're men, working with men, who care about what happens in the lives of men. The majority of men are not violent. At the same time, we do think that many men have learned to express their anger or insecurity through violence. Many men have come to believe that violence against a woman, child, or another man is an acceptable way to control another person.

A final strategy of the WRC is to be vocal and active in supporting women's groups. Members of the WRC acknowledge that women, particularly feminists, have a long-standing involvement in ending violence against women and have greater expertise than members of the WRC. The WRC campaign works closely and supportively with a variety of women's groups that focus on violence against women. Yet the WRC does not invite women to join. They see the organization as a campaign of men and aimed at men. It aims to emphasize that *men* specifically oppose violence against women.

The WRC has been widely praised by both women and men. Many women's groups are pleased that some men are taking a firm and vocal stance against men's violence (Lansberg, 2000). Yet one criticism has been voiced, particularly by some men involved in efforts to end violence against women. The problem, they say, is that the WRC doesn't go far enough. It implies that most men are nonviolent and that only the few violent men need to be changed. In an analysis of the WRC, Cutler Andrews (2003) concludes that "violence is not just a way in which some men express their masculinity. Violence is an essential component of normative masculinity" (p. 52). In other words, he believes that the WRC errs in assuming that violence is a problem only for a few men. Andrews argues violence is inherent in social norms for masculinity.

Mentors in Violence Prevention. Andrews' reservations about the WRC are shared by Jackson Katz, who has developed a distinct approach to ending male violence against women. Katz is one of the principal workers in the male movement to end male violence against women. He gives workshops and speeches all over the world, and he trains men in mentoring other men to reject men's violence. **Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)** aims to educate men about socialization that links masculinity to violence and aggression and to motivate men to reject violence in themselves and other men (Katz, 2000).

The MVP program has two key foci. First, it aims to teach men that aggression and violence are closely linked to cultural views of masculinity and thus are part of routine masculine socialization. In other words, the MVP program focuses on normative masculinity—on the ways in which violence is seen as a normal part of manhood in our society (Katz & Jhally, 1999, 2000). From sports to the military, masculine socialization teaches boys that violence is an appropriate means of gaining and maintaining control over others and of winning—whether it's winning on the football field or the battlefield.

The second focus of the MVP program is calling attention to the role of bystanders in preventing violence. Jackson and other MVP trainers reject the idea that only those who actually commit violence are blameworthy. In many cases, for violence to be committed, there must be bystanders who approve, encourage, condone, or just remain silent, claims Katz (2000). You understand Katz's point if you have seen the film *The Accused*, which dramatizes the true story of a gang rape in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The men who committed the gang rape egged each other on and cheered each other's assaults on the victim (played by Jodie Foster in the film). Further, there were other men who did not participate in the rape but stood by, doing nothing to stop it. This is what Katz means by *bystander behavior*. He wants men to take responsibility not only for refraining from violence but also for refusing to allow or condone other men's violence.

Profeminist men's groups, including NOMAS, WRC, and MVP, share the belief that current views of masculinity in Western culture are toxic for all of us, men and

women alike. They also share a commitment to challenging and changing how the culture and individuals in it define and enact masculinity. In stark contrast to profeminist groups are those in the masculinist branch of men's movements. We turn now to those.

MASCULINIST MEN'S MOVEMENTS

A number of men's groups fit within the second camp of men's movements. These groups, labeled masculinist (Fiebert, 1987), believe that men suffer from gender discrimination. Masculinists also believe that men should have "men-only" spaces such as the Boy Scouts and fraternities where men are free of women and feminization (Hagan, 1998). Masculinist men generally consider profeminist men soft. Masculinists accuse them of being male-bashers who fuel negative stereotypes of men. A primary rhetorical strategy of masculinists is verbally attacking men who define themselves as male feminists.

Masculinists and profeminist men also differ in their attitudes toward homophobia and gay men. The masculinist camp does not focus on homophobia, which profeminist men see as underlying all men's—gay and straight alike—inability to form close relationships with other men. The issue of gay rights is not a primary concern for most masculinist men, who tend to either ignore or denounce gay men. Profeminist men, in contrast, are committed to supporting gay concerns, challenging men's homophobic attitudes, and eliminating discrimination against gay men (Lingard & Douglas, 1999).

■ Free Men

One of the most conservative groups subscribing to masculinist ideology is the Free Men. It includes specific organizations such as MR, Inc. (Men's Rights, Incorporated); the National Coalition for Free Men; and NOM (National Organization of Men). Free Men aim to restore men's pride in being "real men." By "real men,"

Contacting Free Men

The National Coalition of Free Men welcomes inquiries and comments about its work. You can visit its Web site to learn more about its activities and to consider joining the group.



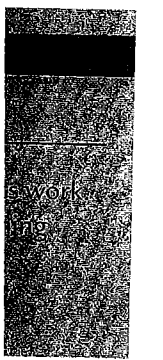
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Have American Men Been Betrayed?

In 1991 prize-winning journalist Susan Faludi published *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, in which she documented cultural practices that demean women and thwart their progress. Eight years later, she published *Stuffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (1999), in which she argues that a significant number of men today feel that America has betrayed them.

Based on interviews, observations, and other research, Faludi concludes that many men feel that society has broken its contract with them. No longer can they count on loyalty from a company that they commit to. No longer do many men engage in work that has immediate meaning and satisfaction for them. No longer is being a breadwinner enough to be considered a good man; now they must also be involved fathers and husbands. Faludi argues that the traditional rules for being a man no longer hold, yet a new set of rules has emerged. The result, she claims, is confusion, frustration, and a profound sense of powerlessness.

this group means men who fit the traditional macho image—tough, rugged, invulnerable, and self-reliant. Free Men see male feminists as soft and unmanly and denigrate them with epithets such as “the men’s auxiliary to the women’s movement” (D. Gross, 1990, p. 12). In fact, Free Men say that profeminist men are not part of the men’s movement at all. Interestingly, when some Free Men took the name NOM for one of their organizations, the feminist men who had originally called *their* organization NOM changed their group’s name to NOMAS to emphasize that they were in favor of *changing* traditional men’s roles, not reinforcing them.

Free Men think that discrimination against men is far greater and more worthy of attention and correction than is discrimination against women. These men say that “it is actually *women* who have the power and *men* who are most oppressed by the current gender arrangements” (Messner, 1997, p. 41). The oppression that Free Men claim men suffer includes the military draft, shorter life spans, more health problems, and child custody laws that favor women (Whitaker, 2001).

According to Free Men, the primary burden of masculinity is the provider role, which makes men little more than meal tickets whose worth is measured by the size of their paychecks and their professional titles. Warren Farrell (1991), for instance, claims that men are relentlessly oppressed by the “24-hour-a-day psychological responsibility for the family’s financial well-being” (p. 83). Farrell claims that “almost all men see bringing home a healthy salary as an obligation, not an option.” Many men believe a woman will not love them if they are not successful and good providers. The pressure to be a good provider—and the difficulty of fulfilling that role—is exacerbated in times of economic downturn (Faludi, 1999).

Sam

I know it's not politically correct these days to say it, but I agree with a lot of what masculinist men believe. I think families were stronger when the man was the head and the woman knew to follow. Families can't work if both spouses want to lead. There can be only one leader. I think the country was a lot stronger too before women started getting into business and government. I think women and men have different abilities. They're equal, but they're different. As far as gays go, I'm not homophobic or anything, but I don't see protecting their rights as a priority.

Specific issues such as the provider burden, however, are subordinate to Free Men's overriding concern that American men are being robbed of their masculinity. Targeting feminism as the primary source of men's loss of their masculinity, masculinists claim that "men have been wimpified. They've been emasculated" (D. Gross, 1990, p. 13). Given this perspective, it's not surprising that Free Men oppose affirmative action, forced collection of alimony and child support, and a single-sex military (Kimmel, 1996).

Longing for the return of traditional roles and men's unquestioned supremacy in society and the home, Free Men want women to accept subordinate roles and to be deferential to men. With this, they believe, men will regain their rightful places as heads of families and unquestioned authorities. At the same time, they think their superiority to

women should not be tied to the breadwinner role as a particular facet of traditional manhood. To advance their agenda, Free Men engage in rhetoric ranging from lobbying for reform of laws they claim discriminate against men to condemning feminist men and women in public and private communication.

■ Mythopoetic Men

Another branch of the men's movements that has garnered much publicity is the **mythopoetic movement**, founded by poet Robert Bly. In the 1960s Bly was a peace activist. During the 1970s he was a public advocate for a feminine, peace-loving way of being, and he held Great Mother conferences (Oakley, 2002). A decade later Bly championed quite a different set of ideas that blended neoconservative politics with some of the ideology of the Free Men. The mythopoetic movement is less interested in social change than in men's personal growth, wholeness, and bonding in all-male gatherings (Silverstein, Auerbach, Grieco, & Dunkel, 1999). Mythopoetics want men to rediscover the deep, mythic roots of masculine thinking and feeling, which they believe will restore men to their primordial spiritual, emotional, and intellectual wholeness (Keen, 1991).

Mythopoetics agree with feminist women and men that the current male role is toxic, yet they don't agree with feminists about the nature of the toxicity. Mythopoetics argue that the traditional masculine ideal was not only not toxic but positive. They claim that ideal manhood existed during ancient times and the Middle Ages, when men were self-confident, strong, and emotionally alive and sensitive. As exemplars of ideal manhood, mythopoetics cite King Arthur and the

Facts About the Mythopoetic Movement

Mythopoetics have a strong following (Adler, Doignan-Cabrera, & Gordon, 1991; Bonnett, 1996; Messner, 1997b).

- More than 50,000 men have participated in nature retreats at a cost of more than \$200 per participant.
- *MAN!*, the national quarterly devoted to the movement, has more than 3,500 subscribers.
- *Wingspan*, another national quarterly of the movement, has a (free) circulation of more than 125,000 readers.
- In the Northeast alone, over 163 mythopoetic groups have been formed.
- Robert Bly's book *Iron John* enjoyed over 30 weeks on the best-seller list.
- Mythopoetics are largely White and middle class.



To read a short biography of Robert Bly, go to <http://www.robertbly.com/biography.html>.

Knights of the Round Table, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Johnny Appleseed (D. Gross, 1990).

Mythopoetics think men's formerly profound connections to the earth and to comradeship with other men were ripped asunder by modernization, the Industrial Revolution, and feminism. Men were taken away from their land and, with that, from ongoing contact with life itself and their roles as stewards of the land (Kimbrell, 1991). At the same time that men were isolated from their earthy, natural masculinity (D. Gross, 1990), industrialization separated men from their families. When men began working outside of the home, young boys lost fathers who could initiate them into manhood and teach them how to relate spiritually and emotionally to other men.

Although mythopoetics believe that men have been separated from their feelings, their views depart dramatically from those of profeminist men (Keen, 1991; Mechling & Mechling, 1994). Like Free Men, Bly and his followers lay much of the blame for men's emotional deficits on feminism. Bly says that in male feminists "there's not much energy" (Wagenheim, 1990, p. 42). Stating this view more strongly, some mythopoetics charge that "the American man wants his manhood back. Period. . . . [F]eminists have been busy castrating American males. They poured this country's testosterone out the window in the 1960s" (Allis, 1990, p. 80). So one rhetorical strategy of mythopoetics is to ridicule male (as well as

Father Loss

Do social prescriptions for masculinity undermine men's ability to mourn the loss of their fathers? Neil Chethik (2001) thinks there may be a connection between socialization that teaches men to be strong and avoid close ties with other men and men's difficulty in grieving when their fathers die. Chethik surveyed more than 300 men and conducted in-depth interviews with 70 men to learn how they dealt with their fathers' deaths. He found that, no matter how many years have passed since the father died, sons continue to yearn deeply for connections with their fathers. Chethik found that many men try to follow social prescriptions for masculinity: They don't talk about their grief, don't cry, and don't show how much they hurt. Instead, they buck up and carry on, keeping their grief silent. Chethik reports that many men grieve and heal by reflecting quietly or by taking up hobbies that give them a sense of connection with their fathers.

female) feminists and to provide a counterstatement to male feminists' public arguments about masculinity.

What do mythopoetics advocate for masculinity? They insist men need to recover the *distinctly male mode of feeling*, which is fundamentally different from the female feelings endorsed by profeminist men. Men need to reclaim courage, aggression, and virility as masculine birthrights and as qualities that can be put to the service of bold and worthy goals as they were when knights and soldiers fought for grand causes.

Chuck

Bly's ideas sound pretty strange to me. I can't identify with chanting in the woods with a bunch of other guys to find my manhood. Heck, I didn't know I'd lost it! But if I were to be serious about this stuff, I guess I'd say there might be something to it. I mean, I do like to get together with brothers in my fraternity, and being with a group of just men does have a different kind of feeling than being with women or women and men. Like we're more uninhibited, more rough, and more loud than when girls are around. I guess I do feel more manly or something in those groups.

(continued)

Central to modern man's emotional emptiness, argues Bly, is *father hunger*, a grief born of yearning to be close both to actual fathers and to other men and to build deep, spiritual bonds between men. To remedy this, Bly and other leaders of the movement urge men to get in touch with their grief and, from there, to begin to rediscover their deep masculine feelings and spiritual energies. An especially influential form of persuasion by mythopoetics is Robert Bly's book *Iron John*, which is the major rhetorical text of this movement. This book, which explains mythopoetic views and recounts ancient myths of manhood, was a national best-seller for over 30 weeks, indicating that it appealed to a wide audience.

To facilitate this process, workshops and retreats allow men to "come together in nature alone, in the absence of women and civilization" (D. Gross,

1990, p. 14). In the natural world, men can recover the sense of brotherhood and distinctively male feelings repressed by industrialization and feminism. At nature retreats, men gather in the woods to beat drums, chant, and listen to poetry and mythic stories, all designed to help them get in touch with their father hunger and move beyond to positive masculine feeling. As this suggests, favored mythopoetic forms of communication are storytelling, chanting, and affirming the deep roots of distinctively masculine feelings.

The mythopoetic movement is not without critics. Michael Schwalbe's book *Unlocking the Cage* (1996) offers an inside look at the mythopoetic movement. For three years Schwalbe belonged to a men's support group, attended another men's group devoted to drumming, and participated in week-long men's retreats. Schwalbe discovered that many of these men had been harmed by distance and sometimes abuse from fathers. He concludes that these men were drawn to the mythopoetic movement because it offered primitive rites of masculinity that their fathers had not provided. Schwalbe criticizes mythopoetics for being unwilling to confront issues of gender inequality and for their participation in sustaining that inequality (Avery, 1999).

■ Promise Keepers

In 1990 Bill McCartney, who was then head football coach at the University of Colorado, and his friend Dave Wardell were on a three-hour car trip to a meeting of Christian athletes in Pueblo, Colorado. On that trip, the two men conceived the idea of filling a stadium with Christian men. Later that year, McCartney and Wardell motivated 72 men to pray and fast about the idea of men coming together in Christian fellowship. The first *Promise Keepers* event in 1991 drew 4,200 men. Two years later McCartney achieved his goal of filling the 50,000-seat Folsom Field. In 1994, the *Promise Keepers* were ready to spread out. They had seven sites at which more than 278,000 men came together to pray and commit themselves to being *Promise Keepers*. *Promise Keeper* events such as "Stand in the Gap," "Storm the Gates," and "The Challenge" draw thousands of men each year (Shimron, 1997, 2002; Wagenheim, 1996).

According to Bill McCartney, many men have fallen away from their responsibilities as men. He says, "Men have been irresponsible. They have abandoned the home. They've chased careers. Their word wasn't good anymore. They've been unfaithful" ("*Promise Keepers*," 1997, p. 14A). Whereas mythopoetics see

(Chuck continued)

Another thing that interests me about what Bly says is the stuff about absent fathers. I'm not sure I'd go so far as to say I have the father hunger he talks about or that I have deep grief, but I do feel my father and I should have been closer. I never saw much of him when I was growing up. He worked all day and wanted to relax at night, not spend time with us kids. I wish I'd known him better. In fact, I still do wish it. I think a lot of guys feel that way.

Kathy

I really don't know what to think of the Promise Keepers. I like what they say about men committing to family values and strong spirituality. I'm Christian, so I agree with a lot of what they stand for. But I don't like the idea that men have to be *the* leader in relationships. I won't be led by a man, and I don't want to lead a man either. I want a relationship where we're equal in all respects. This makes me identify with only parts of what the Promise Keepers stand for.

reconnecting with nature as the way for men to regain their wholeness, Promise Keepers see reconnection to God's commandments as the path. Based on evangelical Christianity, the movement urges men to be the leaders of their families because it reflects the "God-given division of labor between women and men" (Messner, 1997b, p. 30). Following the Christian path requires men to be good husbands, fathers, and members of communities. Each Promise Keeper makes seven promises (Shimron, 1997):

1. To honor Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God's word through the power of the Holy Spirit
2. To pursue vital relationships with other men, understanding that they need brothers to help them keep their promises
3. To practice spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity
4. To build strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values
5. To support the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor and by actively giving his time and resources
6. To reach beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity
7. To influence his world for good, being obedient to the Great Commandment (see Mark 12:30–31) and the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19–20)

Supporters of Promise Keepers believe that the movement is good for men and families. They say it champions values that build strong families and strong communities. In their opinion, Promise Keepers is a call for male responsibility (Whitehead, 1997). Furthermore, a number of women who are married to Promise Keepers say their marriages have improved since their husbands joined the movement (Cose, 1997; Griffith, 1997; Whitehead, 1997; Shimron, 2002).

Yet others voice reservations about the Promise Keepers. They ask why women can't attend Promise Keepers meetings. The Promise Keepers' answer is to quote Proverbs: 27:17: "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." This reflects Promise Keepers' belief that men should lean on each other, not on women, in their quest to be good men—men can hold each other accountable in ways women can't (Shimron, 2002). Another question asked by people who have

Getting to Know Promise Keepers

The Promise Keepers maintains an active Web site on which leaders of the organization offer their views of who they are, what they stand for, and how men can participate in the organization. The Web site also offers texts of key documents, including its mission statement, speeches, and members' comments. To find out more, go to the Web site at



<http://www.promisekeepers.org>

You can also find information critical of the Promise Keepers on the Web. One thoughtful assessment of what's right and not so right about the Promise Keepers is offered in a speech by Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., "Watch as Well as Pray." In this speech, Jackson says, "Coach McCartney has been politically active in antigay and antichoice campaigns. . . . This is really the third wave of the religiously based conservative political movement. First there was Rev. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. Then there was Rev. Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed's Christian Coalition. Now there is Coach Bill McCartney's Promise Keepers." To read the full text of Jackson's speech, go to



<http://www.now.org/issues/right/promise/jackson.html>

reservations about the Promise Keepers is, Why can't husbands and wives be equals (Ingraham, 1997)? McCartney responds, "When there is a final decision that needs to be made and they can't arrive at one, the man needs to take responsibility" ("Promise Keepers," 1997, p. 14A). Critics charge that "taking responsibility" is a code term for denying women's equality, voices, and rights.

Another reservation about Promise Keepers is that the group may be elitist. The great majority of Promise Keepers are White and middle or upper class economically. (Admission to a Promise Keeper event was \$69 in 2002 (Shimron, 2002).) Gay men and those who support gays are uncomfortable with the Promise Keepers' view that homosexuality is a sin and that gays therefore are leading immoral lives. Finally, some critics regard Promise Keepers as more a conservative political movement than a social and spiritual movement (Cose, 1997; Whitaker, 2001). In response to criticism, Promise Keepers has made efforts to broaden

Cassie

Last summer my church had a Promise Keeper rally. I belong to the Praise Team, which is a church chorus, and we were asked to sing at the beginning of the rally. After we sang, I and two other women on the Praise Team were told we had to leave. We were led to a room where the wives and girlfriends of the men at the rally were waiting. We were told that the rally was just for men and we had to stay in that room and pray for the men until the rally was over and someone came to tell us we could come out.

I was very confused. I wanted to hear the rally too. Why weren't women allowed to hear it? Why were the organizers so extreme about excluding women? Why were we told to pray *for* the men but not allowed to pray *with* them?

its membership to include men of different races and to soften its rhetoric about husbands leading wives.

■ The Million Man March

Just as many African American women feel that feminism doesn't speak to or for them, many African American men feel that mainstream men's movements don't fit their histories and lives (Hammer, 2001). In the fall of 1995, Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, and the Reverend Benjamin Chavis, Jr., organized the first Million Man March. Their goal was for Black men of all religions and classes to fill the Mall of the nation's capital. The goals of the 1995 meeting were for Black men to atone for sins and reconcile with one another. Spike Lee's film *Get on the Bus* (1997) offers a dramatic documentation of this first march.

At the march, organizers encouraged men to pledge themselves to spiritual transformation and political action. Specifically, organizers called for the men to register to vote, fight drugs in their lives and communities, and stand against unemployment and violence. Men were asked to recommit themselves to their wives and families and to active involvement in their churches and communities.

The Million Man March was not a one-time event. Additional marches were held in years following; each time, the crowd stretched from the steps of the Capitol nearly to the Washington Monument. Those who attended found something they could identify with in this movement—something that could guide their lives and give them meaning. The Million Man March has been widely praised as a positive, uplifting movement for Black men. Yet there have been criticisms. One is that women are excluded from Million Man Marches. Some women think there is irony in asking men to leave home and be with other men in order to commit to their wives and families. Another criticism was advanced by Glenn Loury (1996), who is African American and a professor of economics. He is concerned that this movement encourages Black men to base their rage on the racial identity of those who

suffer rather than to rage against suffering and inequity no matter who is the victim. Finally, some people criticize the Million Man March for being antifeminist and antigay and for holding overly conservative views of families and women (Messer, 1997b).

The inaugural Million Man March in 1995 seemed to strike a chord with other groups. Since that march, America has seen a Million Woman March in Philadelphia, a Million Youth March in Harlem, a Million Mom March in Washington, and most recently, in 2000, a Million Family March ("Million Family March," 2000).

Michael

I attended the Million Man March a couple of years ago, and it was the most important event of my life. It was wonderful to see so many Black men in one place—all there to unite with one another and to change our world. The whole mood was one of total brotherhood. It strengthened my pride in being a Black man and my feeling that I can build a life around strong spiritual values.

ANTIFEMINISM: THE BACKLASH

Feminist movements have brought about substantial changes in women's lives. Women's economic opportunities and rewards are better, although still not equal to men's; laws now prohibit discrimination in educational and work contexts; and many women's self-esteem has grown with the positive image of women and femininity promoted by women's movements. In fact, the very successes of feminism have led to an intense antifeminist movement, also called the **backlash** against feminism.

Antifeminism is a movement that opposes any measures that advance women's equality, status, rights, or opportunities. Antifeminist attitudes exist much of the time. Antifeminist movements, however, have taken formal shape in only two periods, which coincide with the first and second waves of women's movements in the United States (Blee, 1998).

Rather than in formal groups, antifeminism usually surfaces in individual and group practices that attempt to demean feminism and obstruct efforts to achieve equality between the sexes. Reflecting antifeminist values are media misrepresentations of women's successes and problems, judicial rulings that reduce women's freedoms, covert business practices that restrict women's opportunities, governmental actions that make it difficult for women to gain economic security without abandoning parental responsibilities, and popular book writers who scapegoat feminism as the source of problems ranging from loneliness to delinquent children.

In 1994, *Backlash* magazine debuted with the announced goal of returning women and men to their traditional roles. Two years later, in 1996, David Gelernter wrote an article for a mainstream magazine, entitled "Why Mothers Should Stay Home." In this article, Gelernter argues that mothers who work outside the home are selfish and irresponsible, and he claims that many problems in families are the direct result of women's employment outside the home. Gelernter and others who engage in antifeminist rhetoric believe that homemaking and raising children are exclusively the responsibilities of mothers and that feminism has enticed women to abandon these womanly responsibilities.

In addition to dispersed antifeminist practices, there have been three more formal antifeminist movements.

■ The Antisuffrage Movement

The first formal example of antifeminism was the **antisuffrage movement**, which aimed to prevent women from gaining the right to vote in the United States. Immediately following the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, vocal opposition to women's suffrage surfaced. Both men and women claimed that allowing women to

vote as well as to pursue higher education and own property would be in contradiction to women's natural roles as wives and mothers. By the 1870s opposition to women's suffrage was formalized in public organizations that were often led by the wives of socially prominent men (Blee, 1998). The best known antisuffrage organization was the National Association Opposed to Women's Suffrage, which claimed to have 350,000 members (Blee, 1998).

The antisuffrage movement reached its apex between 1911 and 1916. During those years, antisuffragists associated their cause with preserving the home and protecting the nation against socialism. Although the reasoning was never clear, antisuffragists argued that giving women the vote would increase the number of voters who were inclined toward socialism (Blee, 1998). The movement disbanded after women won the right to vote in 1920.

■ Fascinating, Total, Surrendered Women

A second antifeminist movement emerged in the 1970s when Marabel Morgan launched the Total Woman movement and Helen Andelin founded the Fascinating Womanhood movement, both of which advocated women's return to traditional attitudes, values, and roles. The Total Woman movement (Morgan, 1973) stressed the conventional social view of women as sexual objects and urged women to devote their energies to making themselves sexually irresistible to men. One example of advice given to women was to surprise their husbands by meeting them at the door dressed only in Saran Wrap. Fascinating Womanhood (Andelin, 1975) was grounded in conservative interpretations of biblical teachings, and it emphasized women's duty to embody moral purity and submit to their husbands.

Although many people saw Fascinating Womanhood and Total Woman movements as laughable and regressive, some women (and men) found them appealing. Over 400,000 women paid to take courses that taught them to be more sexually attractive and submissive to their husbands (O'Kelly & Carney, 1986). Primary support for these courses and the ideologies behind them came from women who were economically dependent on husbands and who embraced conservative values.

Movements that urge women to return to traditional roles were not restricted to the 1970s. The same ideas resurfaced in the 2001 book, *The Surrendered Wife: A Practical Guide for Finding Intimacy, Passion, and Peace with Your Man* (L. Doyle). This book, like the earlier two that it echoes, counsels women to abandon the myth of equality if they want happy marriages (Clinton, 2001). Women are advised to let their husbands lead the family and to accommodate their husbands.

■ The STOP ERA Campaign

Another instance of backlash was the STOP ERA movement, which also emerged in the 1970s. Taking to the public platform, the most prominent spokesperson

The Text of the Equal Rights Amendment

Equality of the rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

for Stop ERA, Phyllis Schlafly, traveled around the nation to persuade people that feminism was destroying femininity by turning women into men. She told women to return to their roles as helpmates and homemakers and affirmed men's traditional roles as heads of families. Ironically, although Schlafly argued that women should be deferential and that their place was in the home, her own activities belied this advice. In speaking forcefully in public, she violated her own advice on feminine style. Further, her speaking schedule kept her on the road or writing much of the time, so she was unable to devote much time to being a homemaker or mother.

The STOP ERA movement carried out its work not only through Schlafly's public speaking but also through lobbying of legislators and courting the media. STOP ERA members warned legislators and the public that passing ERA would undercut men's willingness to support children, allow women to be drafted, threaten the family, and permit sex-integrated restrooms (Mansbridge, 1986). Like the antisuffrage movement in the 1800s and early 1900s, the STOP ERA movement was supported by men and women who believed in traditional families. Also like the previous antifeminist movement, STOP ERA was funded largely by corporate leaders and other people in the upper economic class who did not see the ERA as consistent with their economic and political interests (Blee, 1998; Klatch, 1998).

■ The Contradictory Claims of Antifeminism

In her 1991 book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Susan Faludi identifies two arguments that characterize the antifeminist or backlash movement. Faludi also notes that they are internally contradictory. On one hand, a good deal of antifeminist rhetoric defines feminism as the source of women's problems, including broken homes, tension between spouses, and delinquent children. According to this claim, in encouraging women to become more independent, feminism has turned women into fast-track achievers who have nothing to come home to but microwave dinners. Antifeminists argue that, rather than helping women, feminism has created more problems for

them and made their lives miserable. They conclude that the solution to these problems is to renounce feminism.

A second antifeminist claim directly contradicts the first one by arguing that women have never had it so good. The media proclaim that women have won their battles for equality, they have made it, all doors are open to them, and they can have it all. Pointing to the gains in status and opportunities won by feminists, antifeminists assert that all inequities have disappeared and that there is no longer any need for feminism. This line of rhetoric has been persuasive with some people, particularly women who have benefited from feminism. Yet, if women have full equality, why is one woman in four the victim of assault by a man? If women have full equality, why does the average woman make 86 cents for doing the same job the average man is paid a dollar for doing? If women have full equality, why do women still perform most of the child-care and housekeeping tasks in two-earner families?

SUMMARY

Men's movements, like those focused on women's issues, are diverse and even contradictory. Some men consider themselves feminists, work with women for gender equality in society, and attempt to become more sensitive. Other men see feminism as a primary source of men's problems, and they feel threatened by women's progress toward equal status. Men's movements range from efforts to advance women's rights and status to active attacks on women's resistance to traditional, subservient roles. Members of men's movements engage in public and private forms of communication that contribute to the cultural conversation about gender—its meaning and its affect on the individual men and women who live under its edicts.

In this and the preceding chapter we've discussed a wide range of women's and men's movements, as well as the antifeminist movement. Through communication in private and public settings, these movements delineate multiple versions of femininity and masculinity and seek to persuade us to adopt certain points of view. As the conversation evolves, new voices will join existing rhetorical efforts to define the meaning of masculinity and femininity and the rights, roles, and opportunities available to women, minorities, men, lesbians, and gay men. It's up to you to define your role in the cultural conversation about gender. Some people will be passive listeners. Others will be critical listeners who reflect carefully on the points of view advanced by these rhetorical movements. And still others will claim a voice in the conversation and will be part of active rhetorical efforts to define gender. What role will you choose?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Before you read this chapter, did you know that there were so many men's movements with such diverse goals? What does limited knowledge of men's movements imply about biases in media and education?
2. Use your InfoTrac College Edition to read Michael Messner's 1998 article "The limits of 'the male sex role': An analysis of men's liberation and men's rights movements" in the June 1998 issue of *Gender and Society*. Are Messner's analyses of newsletters and magazines distributed by men's liberation (male feminist) and men's rights (masculinist) groups consistent with what you read in this chapter?
3. Which of the men's movements do you find most consistent with your own values? Do you think men should work to restore traditional male prerogatives and social power, become more sensitive themselves, or change society?
4. Follow up on the discussion of men's movements presented in this chapter by visiting the Web sites of one branch of the men's movement. Addresses for the sites appear in the FYI boxes in various sections of the chapter.
5. Speculate about the future of men's movements in the next decade. What cultural trends might influence them?

