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Dedicated to all our WS 223 "Introduction to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies" students with thanks for all they have taught us.

CHAPTER 3

LEARNING GENDER

Our typical in-class exercise while teaching a unit on the social construction of gender is to ask how many students identified as "tomboys" when they were growing up. A sea of hands usually results as many remember resisting traditional notions of femininity. When students are asked whether they identified as "sissies," usually the whole group laughs as one lone student sheepishly raises a hand and remarks about always being a sissy. Why is it so easy to say you were a tomboy and so difficult to admit to being a sissy? This has a lot to do with the meanings associated with masculinity and femininity and the ways these are ranked in society. In this chapter we focus specifically on gender and sexism, keeping in mind two important points: first, how gender is constructed through intersection with other differences such as race, ethnicity, and class, and second, how sexism as a system of oppression is related to other systems of inequality and privilege.

GENDER, CULTURE, AND BIOLOGY

In Chapter 1 we explained gender as the way society creates, patterns, and rewards our understandings of femininity and masculinity, or the process by which certain behaviors and performances are ascribed to "women" and "men." Society constructs and interprets perceived differences among humans and gives us "feminine" and "masculine" people. These words are intentionally placed in quotation marks to emphasize that notions of femininity and masculinity are fluid and socially constructed—created by social processes that reflect the various workings of power in society. Therefore gender is culturally and historically changeable. There is nothing essential, intrinsic, or static about femininity or masculinity; rather, they are social categories that might mean different things in different societies and in different historical periods. The reading "Trans*forming College Masculinities" by T. J. Jourian recognizes ways trans*masculine students are constructing gender and challenging hegemonic masculinities.

It is important to emphasize that gender is embedded in culture and various forms of knowledge are associated with any given community. What it might mean to be "feminine"

or "masculine" may differ from culture to culture. This implies that people growing up in different societies in different parts of the world at different historical moments perform different gender expressions. As the boxed insert later in this chapter called "Rites of Passage" suggests, gender performances vary around the world.

In addition, contemporary life in the twenty-first century, which involves global systems of production, consumption, and communication, means that patterns of gender in the United States are exported worldwide and are increasingly linked to patterns of global economic restructuring. This encourages us to consider the ways the social and economic dynamics of globalization (including economic and political expansion, militarism and colonial conquest and settlement, disruption/appropriation of indigenous peoples and resources, and the exportation of ideas through media and world markets, etc.) have shaped global gender arrangements and transformed gender relations. Whatever our global location, it is important to consider the ways we interact with globalized cultures and particularly the ways in which products of world media feature in our lives and shape our ideas about femininity and masculinity.

Femininities and masculinities are performed by bodies in a series of repetitive acts that we usually take for granted and tend to see as "natural." As we "do" gender, these practices (such as walking, speaking, or sitting in a certain way) are always shaped by discourses or regimes of truth that give these actions meaning. However, it is important not to reduce this "performativity" associated with gender to a voluntary act or understand it as something over which we have perfect control. In this sense it is not merely a theatrical performance. Rather, performativity is constrained by social norms. What this means is that gender is not only what we "do"; it is a process by which we "are" or "become."

In addition, the relationship between biology and culture is more complicated than the assertion that sex is a biological fact and gender is the societal interpretation of that fact. First, there is greater gender diversity in nature than once thought. Many species are not just female or male, but can be both female and male at the same time, or be one or the other at different times. As will be discussed later, this ambiguity relates to humans too. Some children are born without distinct sex characteristics and are assigned a sex at birth. Anne Fausto-Sterling's classic reading "The Five Sexes, Revisited" critiques the traditional binaries we call female and male. Second, while biology may imply some basic physiological "facts," culture gives meaning to these in such a way that we must question whether biology can exist except within the society that gives it meaning in the first place. This implies that sex, in terms of raw male or female, is already gendered by the culture within which these physiological facts of biology exist. In other words, although many people make a distinction between biological sex (female/male) and learned gender (feminine/masculine), it is really impossible to speak of a fixed biological sex category outside of the sense that a culture makes of that category.

We know this is a complicated idea, but basically it is saying that we must no longer understand biological femaleness and maleness as the fixed foundation upon which gender is imposed. The body is given meaning by preexisting beliefs about gender, including those of medical and scientific authorities. Science is a human (and necessarily gendered) product. This is what it means to say that "sex," as in "male/female," has actually been gender all along.

An example that highlights how biology is connected to culture concerns the processes by which ambiguous sex characteristics in children are handled. When "intersex" children (those with reproductive or sexual anatomies that do not seem to fit the typical binary definitions of "female" or "male") are born, families and health professionals often make an immediate sex determination. Hormone therapy and surgeries may follow to make such a child fit normative constructed binary categories, and gender is taught in accordance with this decision. In other words, physicians and others use gendered norms to construct the sexed bodies of ambiguously sexed infants. This is an example of the way a breakdown in taken-for-granted tight connections between natural biology and learned gender is interpreted as a medical and social emergency. As already mentioned, Anne Fausto-Sterling's reading "The Five Sexes, Revisited" questions this tidy organization of human sex into the two categories female and male, emphasizing that sex is not as easy as genetics and genitalia and arguing for theories that allow for human variation.

Another illustration of the variable relationships between gender, biology, and culture is exemplified by indigenous "Two Spirit" status, whereby people with multiple or integrated genders held/hold places of honor in native communities. The Navajo, for instance, have believed that to maintain harmony, there must be a balanced interrelationship between the feminine and the masculine within the individual, in families, in the culture, and in the natural world. Two Spirit reveals how these beliefs are expressed in a broad range of gender diversity that is accepted as normative within certain communities. The reading "Native American Men-Women, Lesbians, Two-Spirits" by Sabine Lang examines female gender variability within native cultures.

A focus on gender assignment, identity, and expression involves three ways to understand the forces shaping gender and how we experience and express gender as individuals. Gender assignment is usually given to us at birth and determined by our physical body type to be male or female. This assignment, decided by doctors and parents, is the first classification an individual receives. Corresponding gender performances (behavior, dress, activities that one may participate in, etc.) are usually enforced based on the individual's gender assignment at birth. Gender identity concerns how one feels internally about one's own gender. This is a gendered sense of self that comes from within and may or may not match one's assigned gender at birth. The ways we present ourselves to the world are our expression of gender. Our gender expression is how we perform and express gender to those around us. In this way, gender is a pervasive theme in our world, shaping social life and informing attitudes, behavior, and an individual's sense of self. Basically, it is one of the foundational ways that societies are organized.

Gender is always experienced, however, in intersection with other identities. As emphasized in Chapter 2, a person's sense of self is multifaceted and shaped by multiple (and sometimes conflicting) social patterns and practices. In other words, experiences of gender differ by race, class, age, and other factors. For example, due to historical and cultural reasons, many African American women have not internalized the association of femininity with passivity and dependency characteristic of white femininities.

The pervasiveness of gender is a focus of Judith Lorber's article "The Social Construction of Gender." She explains gender as a process that involves multiple patterns of interaction

point that because gender is so central in shaping our lives, much of what is gendered we do not even recognize; it's made normal and ordinary and occurs on a subconscious level. In other words, the differences between "femininity" (passive, dependent, intuitive, emotional) and "masculinity" (strong, independent, in control, out of touch emotionally) are made to seem natural and inevitable despite the fact that gender is a social script that individuals learn. Cordelia Fine also addresses this "naturalizing" of gender in her book *The Delusions of Gender*, which focuses on research in gendered brain chemistry. She disputes the belief that gendered traits are "hardwired" into the brain and critiques the "biology is destiny" argument that claims innate psychological differences between the minds of women and men.

In reality, gender is a practice in which all people engage; it is something we perform over and over in our daily lives. As already mentioned, gender is something we "do" rather than "have." Through a process of gender acquisition, we practice the performative aspects of gender and learn the "appropriate" thinking and behaviors associated with our gender assignments. Sometimes there are harsh responses to children who do not follow these patterns, especially, as mentioned earlier, to boys who embrace "girly" things such as nail polish or pink clothes. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the association of color options with gender is a relatively recent phenomenon. Traditionally, pink had been associated with males as a diminutive of the reds favored in men's clothing. It was not until the 1940s that manufacturers dictated specific color options for boys and girls.

Our gender expression is not always the same as our gender identity and may or may not match our assigned gender at birth. As discussed in Chapter 2, transgender people,

LEARNING ACTIVITY

MORE GENDERS

Across history, many cultures have recognized more than two genders. For example, in Albania, the *burrnesha* are "sworn virgins." These people are born with typical female bodies, but they take a vow of chastity and, in exchange, can live as men. Until very recently, women's roles in Albania were severely limited. Becoming burrnesha allowed women to escape their restraints and gain freedom and power. By taking the oath of virginity, burrnesha became patriarchs of their families. They wear men's clothing, carry weapons, own property, and move about society freely. As women have gained status in recent years, the tradition of burrnesha has diminished, leaving only a small number of them in Albania. In Samoa, *fa'afafine* are people born with typical male bodies raised as girls by their families. Historically, parents chose to raise a child as a fa'afafine when the family had many boys in it and few or no girls. In recent years, parents may have recognized more traditionally feminine behaviors in a young boy and acknowledged him as fa'afafine. Other boys may choose to become fa'afafine and then may begin to adopt more traditionally feminine behaviors, dressing as women and learning the traditional duties of Samoan women. The Bugis in Indonesia recognize five genders: male and female; *Calabi*, people born with typical male bodies who express typically feminine behaviors and gender roles; *Calalai*, people born with typical female bodies who express typically male behaviors and gender roles; and *Bissu*, people who embody aspects of all genders. In the indigenous Zapotec culture in Oaxaca in Mexico, *muxes* are a third gender, people born in typically male bodies who identify as women or mixed gender.

What do these additional genders suggest about our dominant notion of only two genders? Why is the dominant culture so invested in maintaining the illusion of only two genders? How does the dominance of the ideology of only two genders intersect with the history and legacy of colonialism? What are the implications for liberation of all people in the recognition of many genders?

in the words of Evin Taylor, are individuals "who change, cross, or live beyond gender." Transgender individuals who claim a gender identity or expression different from the one assigned at their birth by their family and community resist the social construction of gender in two distinct binary categories, masculinity and femininity, and subvert these taken-for-granted categories that in most cultures are set in opposition to each other. Genderqueer and gender nonconforming people push at the boundaries of gender and help reveal its constructed nature by refusing to identify in any distinct category. In comparison to transgender, cisgender identity is one where gender identity and expression match the gender assignment given at birth. Cisgender individuals can be said to experience conformity between gender assignment, identity, and expression.

GENDERED VOCABULARY

LZZ JOHNK

The language of gender, sex, and sexuality is highly context-dependent and constantly shifts over time. Even the distinction between "sex" (the "biological") and "gender" (the "social") as we understand and deploy it today is relatively recent, dating from the 1940s. Words that were once commonly accepted within in-groups might be considered inappropriate or derogatory today (e.g., the increasing use of "transgender" and the decreasing use of "transsexual"); words that were once derogatory might now be claimed as terms of pride and collective identification (e.g., "queer"). Words used by people who identify with a given term (e.g., "queer") frequently should not be used by people outside of the communities for whom a term carries negative historical weight. Therefore, we should discuss gendered vocabulary with a heightened consciousness around the ways words and their meanings shift in different spaces and times.

The temptation to define particular identities connected to gender, sex, and sexuality is great, especially when many cis-hetero people feel the need to clarify "who is what." However, many definitions are generated on an individual level and thus reflect only that individual's understanding of a given identity or gendered term—and very often that individual is also a member of a dominant group (e.g., white/Eurowestern, Christian, able-body-minded, middle-class, educated, citizen-status). Moreover, the tendency of "gender glossaries" to utilize "umbrella terms" often results in the reiteration of a colonial worldview. For instance, "genderqueer" is an umbrella term often used by white Eurowestern people (including genderqueers) to describe *all* "third gender," nonbinary, and other genders that fall outside of "the gender binary," but doing so recenters and reinforces the hegemonic power of colonial binary gender (man/woman; male/female). Many Two-Spirit and queer indigenous/people of color, such as b. binaohan, are opposed to the use of and disidentify with Eurowestern umbrella terms (e.g., "nonbinary") (binaohan 2014).

Taking a cue from gender/queer communities, an increasingly common practice within women, gender, sexuality, and queer studies spaces is including one's pronouns during introductions. Though some transgender and genderqueer people have expressed concerns that this practice leads to "outing" in certain cases, such practice highlights the ways that normative cissexist assumptions tend to map colonial binary cisgender pronouns and identities onto everyone, frequently resulting in the erasure of anyone not recognizable to that binary. Pronouns are one aspect of everyday gendered language that is taken for granted, often at the expense of multiply marginalized embodiments and positionalities. Asking for a person's pronouns may be growing more common, but we should continue to exercise sensitivity to the contexts in which we are asking about pronouns, as it is sometimes unsafe for transgender and genderqueer people to assert their pronouns.

When it comes to respecting someone's sex, gender, and/or sexuality, a few simple guidelines can help: Never make assumptions and, if contextually appropriate, respectfully ask the person, keeping in mind that they are not obligated to educate you.

Read More:

http://www.transstudent.org/definitions/
https://srlp.org/resources/trans-101/

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Although the term "transgender" illustrates the ways a person's gender identity might not match the gender assignment given at birth based on physical or genetic sex characteristics, it is often used interchangeably with the term "transsexual" (and simply labeled trans). Transsexual is an older term, however, still used by some people who have transitioned genders with hormone therapy and surgery. Transgender is an umbrella term that encompasses gender identities that do not fit within the binary categories of male and female assigned at birth. While many transgender people do take hormones and have surgeries to align their bodies with their gender identities, many do not. Some people transition fully from the gender assigned at birth (male-to-female, or MtF, or transwoman; or female-to-male, or FtM, or transman), while others identify as genderqueer, gender nonbinary, gender nonconforming, gender fluid, or any of another number of gender identity descriptors. Not all gender nonconforming people identify as trans, and not all trans people identify as gender nonconforming. The most important thing is to acknowledge that each of us has the right to name our gender identity and be recognized as that identity. The best way to do this is simply to ask people how they would like to be referenced. Gender pronouns are a significant way to support gender identity. Always use people's chosen names and pronouns. Using the pronoun "they" as singular has become an increasingly popular way to recognize the variety of people's gender identities.

As a category, transgender also overlaps with cross-dressing, the practice of wearing the clothes of a sex different from that to which a person was assigned in childhood. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression that is most typically done by heterosexual men and is not done for entertainment. Drag performances that involve makeup and clothing worn on special occasions for theatrical or comedic purposes are not necessarily transgender behavior, although within the genre of drag there are drag performers who also identify as transgender. In most although not all cases, drag queens are men doing female impersonation, and drag kings are women doing male impersonation.

As a concept, transgender is different from androgyny, although in practice, one performance of a transgender identity might be androgyny. Androgyny can be defined as a lack of gender differentiation or a balanced mixture of recognizable feminine and masculine traits. It is an example of transgender behavior because it attempts to break down the binary categories of femininity and masculinity. It is interesting to note that contemporary ideas about androgyny tend to privilege the "andro" (masculine) more than the "gyny" (feminine), with the presentation of androgyny looking a lot more like masculinity than femininity. The trappings of femininity seem to be the first things that are shed when a body is constructed as androgynous. This is related to androcentrism and the ways masculinity more closely approximates our understanding of (nongendered) "human."

It is also interesting to consider the ways the Internet and other virtual technologies have facilitated transgender identities through a disruption of the expected relationship between self and body ("feminine" identity/"female" body). These technologies remove physical, bodily cues and potentially allow "gender swapping," or the creation of identities that attempt to avoid the binaries of "femininity" and "masculinity." This supports the postmodern view of gender as performative and identity as multiple and fluid.

Transgender does not imply any specific form of sexual identity: Transgender people may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or asexual. It is important not to confuse gender and sexuality here. Transgender identities are about gender performance and might involve any sexual identity. It can be confusing, however, because on many campuses there are LGBTQ (lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans/queer) alliances or centers where resources for transgender students are incorporated into a coalition about sexual rights. In addition, transgender theory has been heavily influenced by queer theory and its insistence on fluid identities (discussed in Chapter 1). Both trans and queer theory emphasize that "woman" and "man" are changeable, evolving, and contested categories that must not be seen as fixed, static, normalized, and taken for granted. Both are interested in the ways diverse notions of personhood are mapped onto the physical body.

Another potential confusion that encourages the merging of gender and sexuality is the term "genderqueer," which combines alternative gender identities and sexualities, although you might see it used to imply someone who is transgender without concern for sexual identity. Generally, "genderqueer" describes a person who is a nonconformist in challenging existing constructions and identities. You might also see it used to describe a social movement resisting the traditional categories of gender. In other words, although genderqueer focuses on the integration of gender and sexual identities and therefore is a useful concept in terms of individual empowerment, social commentary, and political change, again, it is important to understand that, conceptually, these identities (gender and sexuality) are distinct from each other even though they are lived simultaneously. Gender performances are associated with meanings about femininity and masculinity (discussed in this chapter), whereas sexuality concerns sexual desire, feelings, and practices (discussed more fully in Chapter 6). A person could potentially combine any combination of gendered performances with sexual identities.

We actively learn the skills and practices of gender, accepting, rejecting, and negotiating them until most of us become very accomplished in our various performances. For example, throwing a ball is a learned act and one that anybody can perform. However, because girls are less likely to be taught this skill, even today, the way they do throw is often the object of derision. Throwing "like a boy" is learned, then performed again and again until it becomes a skill valued in organized sports. Men are not necessarily better athletes than women; rather, sports as an institution has developed to reflect the particular athletic competencies of men, even though upper-body strength is only one aspect of athleticism. For example, if long-distance swimming or balance beam (activities where women generally outperform men) were popular national sports, then we might think differently about the athletic capabilities of women and men. Sporting activities where upper-body strength is a plus and where women perform less well than men are most valued in the United States.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

SPEAKING OF WOMEN AND MEN AND GENDER

Think about the adjectives we typically use to describe women and men, and list these words in the following columns. A couple of examples are provided to get you started. What do you notice about the words we use to describe women and men? How does our language reinforce stereotypical notions about women and men?

WOMEN	MEN
Passive	Active
Nurturing	Strong

Think about the words we use to designate women and men, and list these names in the following columns. Also, try to find parallel names for women and men. Think about the profanities we use as well. Again, a couple of examples are provided. What do you notice about the terms we use to name women and men? What is the significance of the words for which you could not identify parallels? How do you think language plays a role in shaping the ways we think about and "do" gender?

WOMEN	MEN
Slut	Stud
Chick	

What words does the dominant culture use to describe transgender, genderqueer, gender nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people? How can transgender, genderqueer, gender nonbinary, and gender nonconforming thinking and experiences disrupt essentialist language about gender?

In addition to sports, there are many other major U.S. institutions that support gendered practices. You need only go to a toy store and cruise the very different girls' and boys' aisles to witness the social construction of gender in contemporary U.S. society. What does it mean to get a child-size ironing board instead of a toy gun, and what kinds of behaviors and future roles do these toys help create and justify? Increasingly, and at earlier ages, children are preoccupied with video and cell phone games and computerized activities that also teach lessons about gender.

HISTORICAL MOMENT

GENDER TESTING IN THE OLYMPICS

Rebecca Lambert

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) instituted gender testing in the 1960s. These tests were administered to women athletes who were accused of being men. Initially conducted as visual exams of athletes' naked bodies, the IOC moved to testing chromosomes (XX for female and XY for male). These tests typically reproduce binaries around ideas of femininity and masculinity and reinforce the idea that biology determines gender.

In 1967 Polish sprinter Ewa Klobukowska failed the sex test and was banned from competition. Later, doctors found that she had a condition that, once identified, would have allowed her to compete.

In 1985 Spanish hurdler Maria Patino expected to compete in the World University Games in Kobe, Japan. Patino had lived her entire life as a woman, and her body type and sex characteristics were typically female. Unfortunately for Patino, however, her sex test revealed that she did not have two X chromosomes. She was barred from the competition. A few months later, she competed in Spain and won her event. Following her win, however, she was kicked off the Spanish national team, stripped of her titles, and banned from all future competition. Her fight to be reinstated by the International Amateur Athletics Federation took two years.

South African runner Caster Semenya was subjected to gender testing in 2009 after she won the women's 800-meter race and questions arose around her gender and appearance. Based on the results, she was withdrawn from subsequent competitions. After a year of psychological, gynecological, and endocrine tests, her eligibility to compete was reinstated.

While our society generally operates under the assumption that people are either female or male, variations from this typical biological pattern are common. Some forms of intersexuality may occur in as many as 1 in 100 births. Generally, 1 in 400 female athletes will fail the sex identification test. For many years, women athletes engaged in activism to stop the sex test. The test was suspended for the 2000 Olympics, although the Olympic Committee reserved the right to reinstate the test at any point in the future.

Recently, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), which governs the sport of track and field, announced that in November, new rules will go into effect that will again target female athletes with naturally higher levels of testosterone. These rules stipulate that female athletes with elevated testosterone levels will have to take certain measures to lower testosterone in order to compete. These measures range from hormone therapy to changing the distance they run to pulling out of the competition altogether.

These tests have been conducted only on female athletes, often focusing on women of color. Why do you suppose this is true? What role do race and gender play in this practice? How does the existence of people who do not fit neatly into one or the other of the biological categories of female and male disrupt the notion of fixed sexes and fixed genders?

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This discussion of gender identities and practices does not imply that all men in contemporary North American society are ambitious and independent and all women domestic and emotional. Far from it! However, this discussion clarifies the social norms or shared values associated with the two kinds of human beings our society has created. Regimes of truth about gender and other identities provide the standards or parameters through which thoughts and behaviors are molded.

MASCULINITY

In mainstream contemporary U.S. society, the "regimes of truth" associated with masculinity are constructed from the classical traits of intelligence, courage, and honesty, with the addition of two other key dimensions. One of these dimensions revolves around potent sexuality and an affinity for violence: the machismo element. Machismo involves breaking rules, sexual potency contextualized in the blending of sex and violence, and contempt for women and femininity (misogyny). To be a man is to not be a woman. Weakness, softness, and vulnerability are to be avoided at all costs. Boys are often socialized into contemporary masculinity through shaming practices that ridicule expressions of femininity. As Michael Kimmel explained in a 2013 HuffPost "Let's Talk" feature, boys are relentlessly policing each other, "pressured to conform to a narrow definition of masculinity by the constant spectre of being called a fag or gay." Kimmel's solution to the academic disengagement of boys (as evidenced by the fact that girls do better in school) is "to empower boys' resilience in the face of this gender policing." He emphasizes that there are actually more differences among boys than between boys and girls, emphasizing that the stereotype of the rough-and-tumble, boys-will-be-boys type of boy flattens the differences among boys and crushes those who do not conform to the stereotype.

It is no coincidence that the symbol of male ♂ represents Mars, the Roman god of war. A second dimension of masculinity is the provider role, composed of ambition, confidence, competence, and strength. Early research by Deborah David and Robert Brannon characterized four dictates of masculinity that encompass these key dimensions: (1) "no sissy stuff," the rejection of femininity; (2) the "big wheel," ambition and the pursuit of success, fame, and wealth; (3) the "sturdy oak," confidence, competence, stoicism, and toughness; and (4) "give 'em hell," the machismo element.[1] Although these scripts dictate masculinity in a broad sense, there are societal demands that construct masculinity differently for different kinds of men. Of course, masculinity is also experienced through intersections with other identities. Middle-class masculinities, for example, put emphasis on the big-wheel dimension; the dictates of white masculinity often involve the sturdy oak; and men of color often become associated with the machismo element (with the exception of Asian American men, who are sometimes feminized, when they are not being portrayed as karate warriors).

The last decades have seen changes in the social construction of contemporary masculinity. Although the machismo element is still acted out by countless teenage boys and men, it is also avoided by many men who genuinely do not want to be constrained by its demands. Often these men have realized that moving away from machismo does not necessarily imply a loss of power. In fact, it seems contemporary women may prefer men who are a little more sensitive and vulnerable. In part, these changes have come about as a result of the focus on gender provided by the women's movement and the work of such organizations as the National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS). As feminist writer and activist Gloria Steinem once said, gender is a prison for both women and men. The difference, she explained, is that for men it's a prison with wall-to-wall carpeting and someone to bring you coffee. Understanding the limitations associated with masculine social scripts has encouraged some men to transform these scripts into more productive ways of living. Many pro-feminist men and men's organizations have been at the forefront of this work.

1 Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon, eds., *The Forty-Nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1976), 13–35.

RITES OF PASSAGE

In almost every culture, adolescents participate in some rite of passage to mark entry into adulthood. Quite often, these rites reinforce gender distinctions. Most rites of passage share four basic elements: (1) separation from society, (2) preparation or instruction from an elder, (3) transition, and (4) welcoming back into society with acknowledgment of changed status.* Notice in the following examples how gender is reinforced through rites of passage:

- Among the Okrika of Africa, girls participate in the Iria, a rite that begins in the "fatting rooms" where the girls are fed rich foods to cause the body to "come out." The girls learn traditional songs from the elderly women, and these songs are used to free the girls from their romantic attachments to water spirits so they can become marriageable and receive mortal suitors. On the final day of their initiation, the water spirits are expected to try to seize the girls, but the Osokolo (a male) strikes the girls with sticks and drives them back to the village, ensuring their safety and future fertility.*
- The Tukuna of the Amazon initiate girls into womanhood at the onset of menstruation through the Festa das Mocas Novas. For several weeks, the girl lives in seclusion in a chamber in her family's home. The Tukuna believe that during this time, the girl is in the underworld and in increasing danger from demons, the Noo. Near the end of the initiation period, the girl is painted with black genipapo dye for two days to protect her from the Noo, while guests arrive, some wearing masks to become incarnations of the Noo. On the third day, she leaves the chamber to dance with her family until dawn. The shaman gives her a firebrand to throw at the Noo to break the Noo's power and allow her to enter into womanhood.*
- In Ohafia in Nigeria, a father provides his son with a bow and arrows around age seven or eight. The boy practices shooting at targets until he develops the skill to kill a small bird. When this task is accomplished, the boy ties the dead bird to the end of his bow and marches through his village singing that his peers who have not yet killed their first bird are cowards. His father then dresses him in finery and takes him to visit, often for the first time, his maternal family. His new social role distinguishes him from the "cowards" and marks his entrance into manhood.

What are some rites of passage in the United States? How do these rites reinforce gender? How might rites of passage be developed that acknowledge entrance into adulthood without reinforcing gender distinctions?

*Cassandra Halle Delaney, "Rites of Passage in Adolescence," *Adolescence* 30 (1995): 891–987.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

PERFORMING GENDER IN THE MOVIES

Many movies offer gender-bending performances. Choose one or more of the following movies to watch. During the movie, record your observations about how the various characters learn and perform gender. Also note the ways race intersects with gender in these performances. How is sexual identity expressed in the performance of gender? Are these performances of gender disruptive of gender norms? Or are they problematic in their reinforcement of the gender binary and gender stereotypes?

- *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*
- *Albert Nobbs*
- *The Associate*

(continued)

- *Big Momma's House*
- *The Birdcage*
- *Boys Don't Cry*
- *Connie and Carla*
- *The Danish Girl*
- *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*
- *M. Butterfly*
- *Ma Vie en Rose*
- *Mrs. Doubtfire*
- *Mulan*
- *Nutty Professor*
- *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps*
- *Orlando*
- *Shakespeare in Love*
- *Sorority Boys*
- *Switch*
- *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*
- *Tomboy*
- *Tootsie*
- *Transamerica*
- *Victor/Victoria*
- *White Chicks*
- *Yentl*

Some men have responded to the limitations of masculinity and the advances of women brought about by feminism by focusing on themselves as victims, as demonstrated by the mytho-poetic men's movement, which encourages men to bond and reclaim their power. While this may empower individual men, private solutions to social problems do little to transform patriarchal social structures. Other men more overtly express their desire to take back the power they believe they have lost as a result of changes in contemporary notions of femininity and the gains of the women's movement. These include the Promise Keepers, a group of Christian-affiliated men who want to return men to their rightful place in the family and community through a strong reassertion of traditional gender roles. They believe that men are to rule and women are to serve within the traditional family system. The reading "The Connection Between White Men, Aggrievement, and Mass Shootings" by Arvind Dilawar demonstrates how gendered and racialized expectations intersect in white masculinity to produce mass violence.

ACTIVIST PROFILE

QWO-LI DRISKILL

Qwo-Li Driskill is a queer Two-Spirit noncitizen Cherokee poet, performer, and activist and our colleague at Oregon State University, where they are an associate professor of queer studies in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program. Raised in Colorado, they earned a BA from the University of Northern Colorado; an MA from Antioch University, Seattle; and a PhD from Michigan State University.

Qwo-Li explains, "My activism is committed to radical social transformation and intersectional politics. It is deeply rooted in and informed by Native decolonization movements, Queer/Trans/GLBT communities of color, feminisms, poor/working-class politics, and (dis)ability movements. My work as a poet, performer, scholar, and educator (both inside and outside of the university) is entwined with struggles for social justice and healing."

Their first book of poetry, *Walking with Ghosts: Poems* (2005), confronts the forced removal of the Cherokee from their native lands, as well as the ongoing attacks on the LGBTQ community. As reviewer Janice Gould commented, "Qwo-Li Driskill's poetry, part lament and part manifesto, is haunted by ghost dancers. It is a record of those we've lost to the irrational hatred and fear of racism and homophobia. The voice within these poems chants, croons, sasses, and sings, for this is poetry meant to be spoken into being. In the tradition of other queer, socially-conscious poets, like Chrystos, Pat Parker, and Audre Lorde, the question of whether justice exists for all—especially for the poorest and most despised among us—burns at the center of this fine first collection." The book was named Book of the Month by *Sable: The LitMag for New Writing* and was nominated for the Griffin Poetry Prize. More of Qwo-Li's poems have appeared in a variety of journals and anthologies. They also published co-edited volumes including *Scars Tell Stories: A Queer and Trans (Dis)ability Zine* (2007) and *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* (2011), a collection of essays that critique the intersections of colonialism and heteropatriarchy. They are the author of *Asegi Stories: Cherokee Queer and Two-Spirit Memory* (2016).

FOR MARSHA P. (PAY IT NO MIND!) JOHNSON

by Qwo-Li Driskill

> found floating in the Hudson River shortly after NYC Pride, 1992 "You are the one whose spirit is present in the dappled stars."
> —Joy Harjo, from "For Anna Mae Pictou Aquash . . ."

Each act of war
is whispered from Queen to Queen
held like a lost child
then released into the water below.
Names float into rivers
gentle blooms of African Violets.
I will be the one that dangles
from the side but
does not let go.
The police insisted you leapt
into the Hudson
driftwood body
in sequin lace
rhinestone beads
that pull us to the bottom.
No serious investigation—just
another
dead Queen.
I am the one who sings Billie Holiday
as a prayer song to you, Marsha P.
We all choke on splintered bones,
dismembered screams,
the knowledge that each
death is our own.
I pour libations of dove's blood,
leave offerings of yam and corn
to call back all of our lost spirits.
Marsha P, your face glitters with
Ashanti gold
as you sashay across the moonscape
in a ruby chariot ablaze.
Sister, you drag
us behind you.
We are gathered on the bridge between
survival and despair.
I will be the one wearing gardenias
in my hair,
thinking about
how we all go back to water.
Thinking about
the night
you did not jump.
I will make voodoo dolls
of the police and other thugs,
walk to the edge,
watch the river rise to meet them.
I will be the one
with the rattlesnake that binds
my left arm and
in my right hand I will carry
a wooden hatchet to
cut away at the
silence of your murder.
Each of us go on,
pretend to pay it no mind,
bite down hard on the steel of
despair.
We will be the ones that gnaw off our own
legs rather than let them win.
We will be the ones mourning
the death of yet another Queen.
Girl, I will put your photo
on my ancestral altar
to remember all of us
who never jumped.
Miss Johnson, your meanings
sparkle like stars dappled
across the piers of the
Hudson River.
Gathered on the bridge
we resist the water.

(Published in *Lodestar Quarterly*, Fall 2004)

FEMININITY

Adjectives associated with traditional notions of femininity in contemporary mainstream North American society include soft, passive, domestic, nurturing, emotional, dependent, sensitive, delicate, intuitive, fastidious, needy, fearful, and so forth. These are the qualities that have kept women in positions of subordination and encouraged them to do the

GENDER ON THE WEB

JANET LOCKHART

As with many other phenomena, the ways people are portrayed on the Internet can either reinforce stereotypical ideas about gender or challenge them. Stereotypical/idealized views of women as passive, emotional, supportive, and secondary; and men as active, intelligent, aggressive, and primary are propagated in advertising, entertainment—and news. Of course, many women do embody some of the stereotypical traits described (as many men embody some of the opposite), but the overwhelming depiction of this narrow range ignores the enormous variety of traits, interests, skills, and abilities women have: In short, it limits them.

In groups or individually, do the following:

Examine a mainstream website (choose a major provider or have your instructor assign one) and start with a simple tally: *How many* women are pictured or mentioned in text, compared to how many men; how many transgender or gender nonbinary people are found in news articles, entertainment, advertisements, and so on? How many women are shown or mentioned on the opening screen, home page, or "above the fold"? Then go further: What *types* of women are shown or mentioned: What is their race, size, appearance, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, religion, and so on? What types of women are not shown? Are there any women of color, women with disabilities, transwomen, bisexual women, women with large bodies, Muslim women, and so on? Why do you think this is?

Finally, *how* are the women depicted? Are they central or secondary to the story? Are they shown posing or actively doing something? Are they named, or are they described in terms of their relationship to a man (girlfriend or "GF," wife, ex-wife, Mrs. Smith, etc.)? Are they shown for traditional reasons such as getting married or wearing high fashion? Or are they shown doing their jobs skillfully, making a discovery, giving their opinion on something, or taking a political action? Are any women shown doing physically arduous tasks, leading groups of people, engaging in scientific work, and the like?

What do you think are the reasons for the limited variety of women's depictions online? How do the depictions of females and males influence (overtly or subtly) the way you think about the people shown? What are some ways these depictions could be expanded?

Dig Deeper

Find an activist news agency, feminist organization's website, or blog and do the same kind of analysis as just outlined. Were there any surprises? What patterns did you see? Did this exercise give you anything to think about? Will you do anything differently as a result of this exercise? How will you use your web surfing time?

Variation: Do some in-depth research and identify how women and men are present in owning, developing, controlling, and profiting from online content.

domestic and emotional work of society. Again, it is no surprise that the symbol of female ♀ represents Venus, the goddess of love. "Doing gender" in terms of femininity involves speaking, walking, looking, and acting in certain ways: in feminine ways. The performative quality involved in being a drag queen (someone who is acting out normative femininity) highlights and reveals the taken-for-granted (at least by cisgender women) affectations of femininity. Yet femininity, like masculinity, varies across cultures and intersects with other identities. As already discussed, African American women may not identify with some aspects of femininity more readily associated with white femininity, such as passivity. Asian American women, on the other hand, often have to deal with societal stereotypes that construct femininity very much in terms of passivity and dependence: the "exotic gardenia" or "oriental chick" described in Nellie Wong's poem "When I Was Growing Up."

A key aspect of femininity is its bifurcation or channeling into two opposite aspects. These aspects involve the chaste, domestic, caring mother or madonna and the sexy, seducing, fun-loving playmate or whore (sometimes known in popular mythology as women

LEARNING ACTIVITY

WALK LIKE A MAN, SIT LIKE A LADY

One of the ways we perform gender is by the way we use our bodies. Very early on, children learn to act their gender in the ways they sit, walk, and talk.

Try this observation research:

- Observe a group of schoolchildren playing. Make notes about what you observe concerning children's gendered behaviors, particularly how they use their bodies in their play and communication.
- Find a place where you can watch people—any age—sitting or walking. A public park or mall may offer an excellent vantage point. Record your observations about the gendered ways people walk and sit.

Also try this experiment: Ask a friend who identifies with another gender to participate in an experiment with you. Take turns teaching each other to sit and to walk like the other gender. After practicing your newfound gender behaviors, write down your reflections about the experience.

you marry and women with whom you have sex). These polar opposites cause tension as women navigate the implications of these aspects of femininity in their everyday lives. A woman may discover that neither sexual activity nor sexual inactivity is quite right. If she is too sexually active, she will be censured for being too loose, the whore; if she refrains from sexual activity, she might similarly be censured for being a prude or frigid. Notice there are many slang words for both kinds of women: those who have too much sex and those who do not have enough. This is the double bind: You're damned if you do and potentially damned if you don't. These contradictions and mixed messages serve to keep women in line.

Unlike contemporary masculinity, which is exhibiting very small steps into the realms of the feminine, femininity has boldly moved into areas that were traditionally off-limits. Today's ideal woman (perhaps from a woman's point of view) is definitely more androgynous than the ideal woman of the past. The contemporary ideal woman might be someone who is smart, competent, and independent; beautiful, thin, athletic, and sexy; yet also loving, sensitive, competent domestically, and emotionally healthy. Note how this

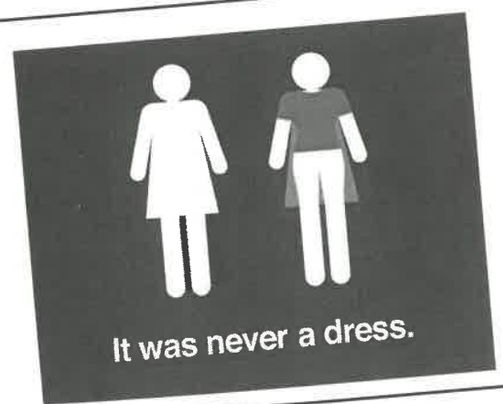

image has integrated characteristics of traditional masculinity with feminine qualities at the same time that it has retained much of the feminine social script. The contemporary ideal woman is strong, assertive, active, and independent rather than passive, delicate, and dependent. The assumption is that she is out in the public world rather than confined to the home. She has not completely shed her domestic, nurturing, and caring dimension, however, or her intuitive, emotional, and sensitive aspects. These attributes are important in her success as a loving and capable partner to a man, as indeed are her physical attributes concerning looks and body size.

To be a modern woman today (we might even say a "liberated woman") is to be able to do everything: to be a superwoman. It is important to ask who is benefiting from this new social script. Women work in the public world (often in jobs that pay less, thus helping employers and the economic system) and yet still are expected to do the domestic and emotional work of home and family as well as stay fit and "beautiful." In many ways, contemporary femininity tends to serve both the capitalist economic system and individual men better than the traditional, dependent, domestic model.

GENDER FLUIDITY

Masculinity and femininity are socially constructed categories that have little to do with biology and much to do with social hierarchies. While many people are comfortable performing in cisgender ways, a number of people do not fit either category of femininity or masculinity and may label themselves gender fluid, gender nonconforming, gender nonbinary, genderqueer, or any of a number of terms that reflect more complicated ways of experiencing and expressing gender. Because of the dominance of the gender binary, however, societal norms and enforcements often discourage gender nonconformity and reinforce conformity with assigned gender. People who do not conform to the expected binaries may express themselves as a combination of traditional masculine and feminine characteristics, or they may move along a continuum, some days expressing themselves as more masculine, some days as more feminine. These expressions blur binary gender lines and disrupt hegemonic femininity and masculinity. In fact, a recent poll found that half of millennials believe gender is a spectrum, and a GLAAD survey found that 12 percent of millennials identify as transgender or gender nonconforming. In practice, this has meant that more babies are being given names not associated with one gender or another; parents are dressing their children in both pink and blue; people are taking on once-gendered roles in ways that have nothing to do with gender. And, not surprisingly, corporations are paying attention, eager to capitalize on the growing awareness of gender fluidity and nonconformity. The fashion industry is starting to create clothes that aren't gendered, as are the cosmetic and fragrance industries. Many brands are starting to focus on personality attributes and passions rather than gender in developing and marketing products. Of course, none of this means that discrimination and violence against people who do not conform to traditional gender roles are no longer problems. The rejection of the gender binary is often met with bullying, insults, discrimination, rejection, and violence. At least 25 transgender or gender nonconforming people were killed in 2017, 84 percent of whom were people of color and 80 percent of whom were transwomen. Being harassed at work is a nearly universal experience for trans and gender nonconforming people, another survey found. Three-quarters of trans and gender nonconforming students feel unsafe at school, and nearly 60 percent have been denied use of the bathroom that most closely corresponds with their gender identity. So even as some acceptance increases and corporations work to turn a profit from gender nonconformity, the realities of marginalization and discrimination remain, demonstrating the power of systems of gender to police, enforce, and punish non-adherence to the gender binary.

GENDER RANKING

Gender encompasses not only the socially constructed, intersecting differences prescribed for different kinds of human beings but also the values associated with these differences. Recall the sissy/tomboy exercise at the beginning of this chapter. Those traits assigned as feminine are less valued than those considered masculine, illustrating why men tend to have more problems emulating femininity and trans people moving into femininity are viewed with somewhat more hostility than those transitioning toward masculine identities. It is okay to emulate the masculine and act like a boy, but it may not be okay to emulate the feminine. This is gender ranking (the valuing of one gender over another). "When genders are ranked," writes Judith Lorber in "The Social Construction of Gender," the "devalued genders have less power, prestige, and economic rewards than the valued genders." Just as white is valued above brown or black, young (though not too young) above old, and heterosexual above homosexual, masculinity tends to be ranked higher than femininity. To be masculine is to have privileges vis-à-vis gender systems; to be feminine means to identify with members of a target group. As already discussed, the social system here that discriminates and privileges on the basis of gender is sexism, although any one person experiencing entitlements or obstacles associated with sexism may also experience entitlements and/or obstacles associated with other intersecting differences or identities. Sexism works by viewing the differences between women and men as important for determining access to social, economic, and political resources. As defined in Chapter 2, sexism is the system that discriminates and privileges on the basis of gender and that results in gender stratification. Given the ranking of gender in our society, sexism works to privilege men and limit women. In other words, men receive entitlements and privilege in a society that ranks masculinity over femininity even while they may be limited by virtue of other intersecting identities such as race or social class.

This discussion, however, must be nuanced by an understanding that masculine privilege tends to be granted first and foremost to cisgender masculinity. Transgender individuals often face transphobia as well as hate crimes as a result of their gender expressions. It can be especially difficult for male-bodied individuals to identify as girls since their gender performances are ranked as a result of both breaking gender norms and identification with a target group. This encourages us to pay attention to the varied forms of regulation and violence associated with gender ambiguity and transgender identification. Gender expressions that do not adhere to traditional female/male binaries are often subject to discipline in a society that expects and enforces "opposite" genders.

Although women are limited by sexism as a system of power that privileges men over women, the social category "woman," as you will recall from Chapter 2, is hardly homogeneous and constantly in flux. Location in different systems of inequality and privilege shapes women's lives in different ways; they are not affected by gender in the same ways. Other systems based on class, race, sexual identity, and so forth interact with gender to produce different experiences for individual women. This means that the effects of gender and understandings of both femininity and masculinity are mediated by other systems of power. This is another way that ranking occurs. Forms of gender-based oppression and exploitation depend in part on other social characteristics in people's lives, and gender practices often enforce other types of inequalities. This reflects the confluence that occurs as gender categories are informed/constructed through social relations of power associated with other identities and accompanying systems of inequality and privilege (such as racial identities and racism, sexual identities and heterosexism, and so forth). These identities cannot be separated, and certainly they are lived and performed through a tangle of multiple (and often shifting) identities. In this way, ranking occurs both across gender categories (masculinity is valued over femininity) and within gender categories (economically privileged women are represented differently than poor women and receive economic and social entitlements, abled women live different lives than disabled women, and so forth).

Examples of this latter type of gender ranking also include the ways African American women may be characterized as promiscuous or matriarchal and African American men are described as hyperathletic and sexually potent. Jewish women are painted as materialistic and overbearing, whereas Jewish men are supposedly very ambitious, thrifty, good at business, yet still tied to their mothers' apron strings. Latinas and Chicanas are stereotyped as sexy and fun loving, and, likewise, Latinos and Chicanos are seen as oversexed, romantic, and passionate. Native American women are portrayed as silent and overworked or exotic and romantic, whereas Native American men are stereotyped as aloof mystics, close to nature, or else as "savages" and drunks. Asian Americans generally are portrayed as smart and good at science and math, with Asian American women further typed as exotic, passive, and delicate. Such stereotypes are part of regimes of truth that keep power systems intact. Remember that you will always find examples of people who may fit a certain stereotype to some extent; but stereotypes are used to shape meaning about, and often denigrate, a whole category of humans without respect to accurate information about them.

Finally, other examples of this gender ranking include the ways certain women (the poor and women of color) were historically regarded as carrying out appropriate womanhood when they fulfilled the domestic labor needs of strangers. Upper-class femininity meant that there were certain jobs these privileged women could not perform. This demonstrates the interaction of gender with class and race systems. Old women endure a certain brand of femininity that tends to be devoid of the playmate role and is heavy on the mother aspect. Sexually active old women are violating the norms of femininity set up for them: This shows the influence of ageism in shaping gender norms. Other stereotypes that reveal the interaction of gender with societal systems of privilege and inequality include disabled women's supposedly relatively low sexual appetite or lesbians' lack of femininity (they are presumed to want to be like men at the same time they are said to hate them).

All of these problematic constructions are created against the norm of whiteness and work to maintain the privileges of the mythical norm. This concept is illustrated in Nellie Wong's poem. She longed to be white, something she saw as synonymous with being a desirable woman. Note there are ethnic and regional stereotypes for white women (such as the dizzy blonde, Southern belle, sexually liberated Scandinavian, or hot-tempered Irish), even though whites are encouraged not to see white as a racial category. Whiteness is just as racialized as any other racial group. The fact that being white can be claimed as the mythical norm strips whiteness from the historical and political roots of its construction as a racial category. As discussed in Chapter 2, this ability for nontarget groups to remain relatively invisible is a key to maintaining their dominance in society.

IDEAS FOR ACTIVISM

- Be a gender traitor for a day. Act/dress in ways that are not generally considered to be appropriate for your gender.
- Develop and perform on campus a street theater piece about gender performance.
- Plan, create, publish, and distribute a zine challenging traditional gender roles.
- Examine how masculinity is valued above femininity on your campus. Write a letter about your findings to your campus newspaper.

THE BLOG

ACADEMIA'S WAR ON MEN—THAT ISN'T

Susan M. Shaw with Bradley Boovy (2017)

The University of Wisconsin has launched a war on men. At least, that's what Republican state senator Steve Nass says. According to Nass, the university's undergraduate program on masculinity is an assault on men that is part of higher education's "politically correct agenda."

Apparently, Nass has no clue what a men and masculinities program is, nor the benefits such a program provides both men and women.

The academic study of gender has its roots in the second wave of the women's movement, with the first women's studies courses offered in the early 1970s. These initial courses brought women's contributions in history, literature, art, theology, and other disciplines to the fore and for the first time centered gender as a significant topic for study.

Because gender generally and women specifically had essentially been omitted from academic study until this point, women's studies began as a way to claim a place for women in the curriculum and to make women's issues central. The accepted premise was that men's lives and experiences were well represented in the rest of the curriculum, and so the study of women was a necessary additive.

Quickly, early feminist scholars realized that simply adding women to existing course content or offering courses about women was not enough. Rather, gender needed to become a primary lens for analysis because of the inextricable link between gender and power, in this case, as represented in the academic disciplines.

Inevitably, asking questions about gender led to asking questions not only about women and femininity but also about men and masculinity, and so the field of masculinity studies arose in the 1990s, not as a competitor to women's studies but as its complement.

Masculinity studies ask questions of how we understand what a "real man" is, how notions of men and masculinity are also shaped by race, social class, sexuality, and other forms of difference, and how ideas about masculinity affect men and women.

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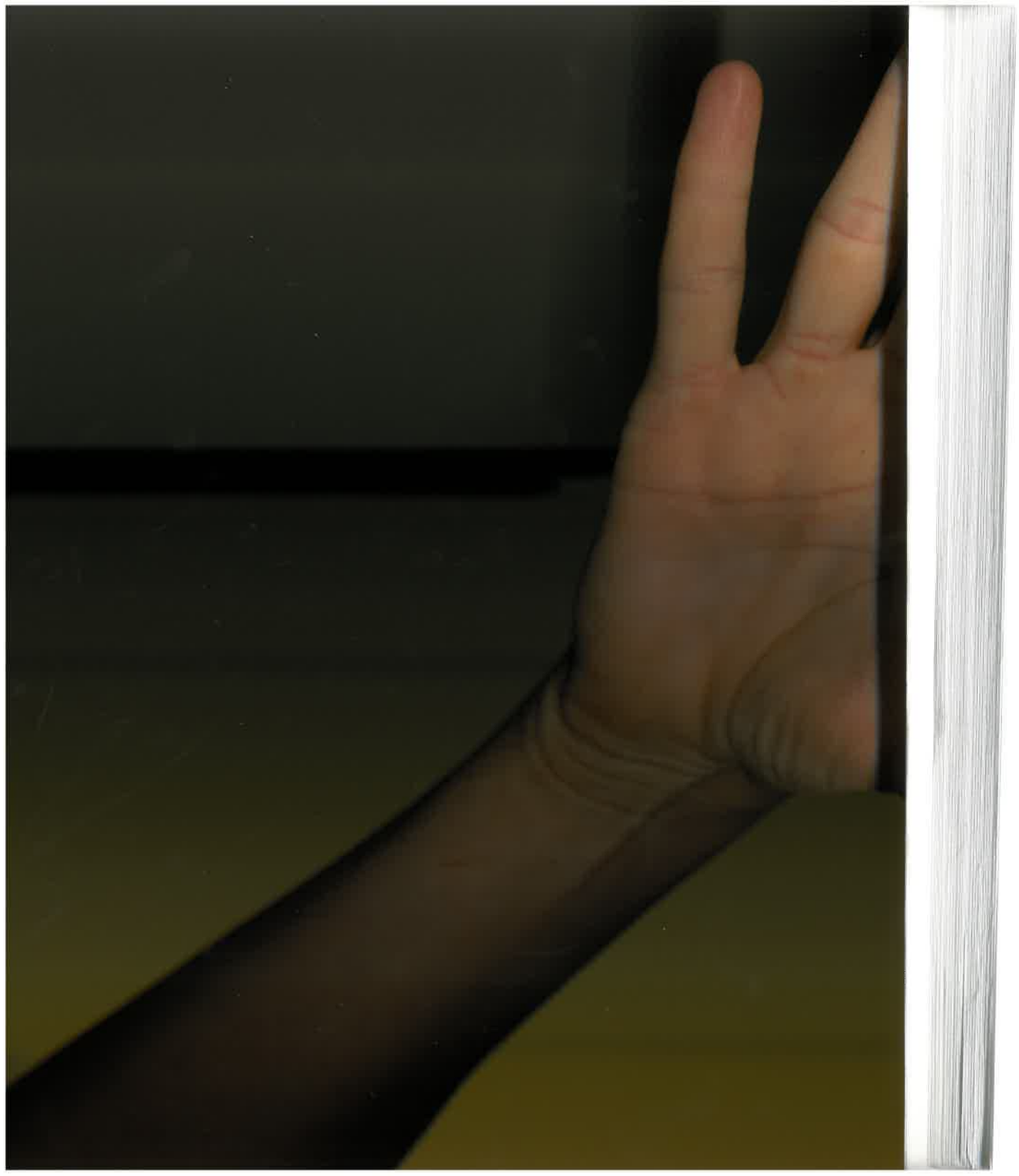

At our institution, we teach a course on men and masculinities that is grounded in the important contributions that feminist scholars have made to our understanding of gender. The course attracts many young men who are interested in asking questions about what role masculinity plays in maintaining structural inequality, how ideas of what is masculine and what is feminine have changed over time and vary from one culture to another, and how masculinity is represented in media and the arts. Most importantly, students ask critical questions about how masculine ideals affect society and people's lives in terms of everyone's access to power and resources.

As an example of the kinds of thinking we encourage our students to engage in today, take the report that Oxfam published that revealed that eight men own the same wealth as 3.8 billion people. Students who have taken courses on masculinity and gender in society are equipped to understand that it is no accident that the world's wealthiest people are men. (It's also no accident that of these eight men, most are white, speak English, and live in the United States.) We train our students to take a hard look at such inequalities, ask critical questions about history and unequal distribution of power and resources, and—we hope—go out and change the social systems that perpetuate such inequality. Honestly, isn't *that* what Mr. Nass is really worried about?

Of course, the Right has reacted (a bit hysterically) to this field of study: It's part of "the Left's feminization of male culture in America," "propaganda" to reduce "young men to brainwashed nancy-boys," "a men's auxiliary of women's studies," and part of a "plan to subvert Christian and traditional values and replace them with diversity and multicultural mush."

Just days after Nass unleashed his invective against the University of Wisconsin's masculinity studies program, Fox News contributor Todd Starnes targeted two other universities (one of them Oregon State University) for supporting programming that encourages critical thinking about men and masculinities from multiple scholarly perspectives. Starnes's attempt at satire relies on a grab bag of conservative rhetoric about men and women that does nothing to help any of us understand and respond to the challenges we face as a country and in our communities.

Such absurd fearmongering is made possible by dominant Western ideals of what men "should be." Expressions like "Man up!" and "Boys don't cry" perpetuate patterns of belief and social behavior that have a negative impact not only on the lives of women and other marginalized groups but also on men themselves. The evidence from fields like psychology, public health, history, and law is overwhelming and continues to grow. Young men on college campuses, for example, are more likely to engage in high-risk behavior such as alcohol and drug abuse (Miller 2008; Swartout and White 2010). More troubling still is that suicide rates among young college-aged (as well as working-class) men are consistently very high for a variety of reasons (see, for example, Pitman et al. 2012).

Failure to pay close attention to masculinity—in ways that are informed by critical scholarly approaches from fields like women studies, queer studies, and critical race theory—is to fail society as a whole and young men in particular. Outside of universities, community organizations such as domestic violence centers, churches, and peer-support groups also provide men with the opportunity to learn about and understand male privilege as they work to create change in the world.

If anyone is "waging a war on men," it's not academics, scholars, teachers, or community organizers who work to help men understand that they don't need to buy into the misogynistic, homophobic, and racist rhetoric of "traditional values." It is people in positions of power who legitimize violent and destructive expressions of masculinity, in part by rehashing the same tired language of "war" and "attack" that the Right has used at least since the 1980s to incite aggressive responses to social issues that require the kind of critical thinking and dialog that students in courses on masculinity and gender practice.

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