

1 The end of masculinity?

Activity 1.1

- Before you begin reading this book, note down what you understand by the terms “masculine” and “masculinity.”
- Now examine what you have written down: is it
 - descriptive (that is, derived from what you have seen of masculinity [and men] in action), or, rather,
 - prescriptive (that is, a set of predetermined criteria applied to men’s behavior as a template as to what masculinity should be)?
- What does your response to the preceding exercise suggest to you about how you think about gender in general, and about masculinity in particular?

After the release in 1999 of David Fincher’s movie *Fight Club* (*Fight Club*, 1999), rumors began to circulate about the establishment of actual fight clubs, modeled on the principles of the fight club as outlined first in Chuck Palahniuk’s novel (Palahniuk, 1996), on which the film was based, and then reiterated in the movie itself. Particularly disturbing were news items indicating that many of these fight clubs had developed among boys, especially teenage boys, in schools ranging geographically from the United States to as far away as Australia (see, for example “Police, D203 officials break up Jefferson ‘fight club,’” 2011; Malkin, 2008; “Fight club draws techies for bloody underground beatdowns,” 2006). Aside from concerns about a general increase in violence that such reports suggest, there arises also the following important question: to what in this younger generation of males did the movie speak, so as to encourage this mood of violence and the propagation of fight clubs?

Both the novel and the film offer several causes. We are told early on in both that “What you see at fight club is a generation of men raised by women” (Palahniuk, 1996: 50). This observation is compounded and supported by the fact

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that, after the age of about six, the narrator grew up with an absentee father, with whom he has maintained only a casual, sporadic relationship (Palahniuk, 1996: 50). Tellingly, of Tyler Durden, who turns out to be the narrator's alter ego, the narrator says, "Tyler never knew his father" (Palahniuk, 1996: 49). The implication here is that an earlier generation of men failed in their responsibilities towards their sons, who therefore perforce grew up in the care of women. The narrator remarks cynically, "I'm a thirty-year-old boy, and I'm wondering if another woman is really the answer I need" (Palahniuk, 1996: 51). He wonders further whether "Maybe self-destruction is the answer" (Palahniuk, 1996: 49).

To this assignment of blame by an entire generation of men is added the accusation that those elders have created for their successors a wasteland that is both physical (the destruction of natural habitats and consequently of the creatures that live in these, the creation of polluted and polluting cities, and so on) and ethical and spiritual. Thus, for example, the narrator has come to invest not only his money but his sense of self-worth and identity in purchasable objects, such as the IKEA furnishings that used to decorate his apartment before the blast that reduced everything in his personal urban habitat to splinters: "... you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you" (Palahniuk, 1996: 44). Durden's remedy is, first, to remasculinize the younger generation of men by toughening them up through fight club. This requires their complicity in keeping the very notion of a fight club secret, which in turn binds them as a group. Unlike professional boxing or wrestling and other forms of socially accepted aggressive activity, there are really no winners or losers in fight club:

Fight club isn't about winning or losing fights. Fight club isn't about words. You see a guy come to fight club for the first time, and his ass is a loaf of white bread. You see the same guy here six months later, and he looks carved out of wood. This guy trusts himself to handle anything. There's grunting and noise at fight club like at the gym, but fight club isn't about looking good. There is hysterical shouting in tongues like at church, and when you wake up Sunday afternoon you feel saved.

(Palahniuk, 1996: 51)

Fight club, then, is about restoring to men a sense of their own masculinity and a hardened male body no longer softened and sapped by the feminizing influences of the dominant culture of late capitalism.

The second aspect of Durden's solution to the dilemma faced by a younger generation of men is Project Mayhem, the aim of which is to conduct a campaign of terrorism focused on subverting and eventually destroying capitalist culture itself:

... Tyler said, picture yourself planting radishes and seed potatoes on the fifteenth green of a forgotten golf course.

You'll hunt elk through the damp canyon forests around the ruins of Rockefeller Center, and dig clams next to the skeleton of the Space Needle

leaning at a forty-five-degree angle. We'll paint the skyscrapers with huge totem faces and goblin tikis, and every evening what's left of mankind will retreat to empty zoos and lock itself in cages as protection against bears and big cats and wolves that pace and watch us from outside the cage bars at night.

(Palahniuk, 1996: 124)

Durden's vision, then, is to return both society and men to a pre-industrial, even primitive state, so that a proper balance can be restored both to nature and to gender, with a particular emphasis on the masculine.

Both the novel and the movie *Fight Club* emerged from a general sense developing toward the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first in many Western (and especially English-speaking) societies that masculinity has found itself in crisis. Yet, in *The Future of Men*, a slim, unassuming volume published in 1997, between the publication of Palahniuk's novel and the appearance of Fincher's film, Dave Hill surveys the changes in the cultural understandings of what it is to be a man, and of what masculinity is, and comes to relatively positive conclusions. He notes that many believe that there is "a crisis of male identity in the West" (Hill, 1997: 5), but proposes, toward the end of the volume, that there has in fact been a series of positive and desirable changes; for instance:

Never again will masculinity be as containable or as easy to describe in false terms as it has been during the last 150 years. Tomorrow's materially comfortable young men will have more freedom of identity on their hands than their grandfathers and even their fathers could have imagined. The luckiest will achieve the state of sustained independence which forebears enjoyed for a few years only before slipping into the state of mind called suburbia.

(Hill, 1997: 44)

He remarks that

Even present-day first impressions hint at how much more relaxed and elastic the category of masculinity is becoming: men do not look alike any more.

(Hill, 1997: 47)

Hill goes on to forecast that the new order of things

will involve men and women alike accommodating more flexible models of masculinity which acknowledge many features in common with femininity and which, largely as a result of this, are also able to accommodate those aspects of "masculinity" which do not do damage to children or women and do not denigrate either those men who do not exhibit the same "masculine" traits or those women who do. In this process men will be under the greater

pressure to change, for they will need to share pieces of male territory with women with better grace than they have sometimes exhibited before.
(Hill, 1997: 52)

Thus, although Hill does note some problems (for example, that "The capacity of young and not-so-young men, including those who are highly educated and with considerable professional responsibilities, to remain puerile far into adulthood is already a depressing feature of contemporary life" [Hill, 1997: 50]), in the main his view is a largely positive and optimistic one of men changing and adjusting to new conditions of living in the culture. However, compared with the strident claims in the media of a crisis in masculinity and the publication of a spate of books on the topic, Hill's voice appears to be a minority one.

That "crisis in masculinity" (if this is indeed what it is) has been attributed to a number of causes; for example, second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s (here we might remind ourselves of the narrator's observation in *Fight Club* that his is a generation of men raised by women), and the civil rights movements of the 1960s such as Black Liberation and Gay Liberation. Social, political, and other inequities and injustices were traced back to the dominance and power of white, middle-class, heterosexual males, who were then compelled to examine the power structures and dynamics of their societies, and their own roles in these. Changes brought about by these liberationist movements have included legal and political reform, as well as a greater social tolerance, if not always a simple acceptance as equals, of women, blacks, and gays and lesbians, especially in the public sphere, together with an increasing tolerance also of transgender and transsexual identities. There have also been shifts in language (for example, an awareness of the way assumptions about gender or race may be structured into the way we speak), which in turn have produced a more careful public use of language. Although this has often been dismissed as mere "political correctness," it has also brought about profound changes in the ways in which people think of, and speak to and about, one another.

Despite the evident belief of many that masculinity and femininity are unchanging and inevitable properties of male and female bodies, respectively, these attributes are in fact culturally specific and historically conditioned. If this were not so, men and women could be expected to behave identically everywhere, in all cultures and at all times; but this is not the case, as much historical, anthropological, and sociological research indicates. Take, for example, the case of the Wodaabe people of West Africa, especially in Niger. Once a year, at the end of the rainy season in September, this nomadic people, split into various clans and families, gathers at an appointed site which has been kept secret until this point, in order that the young men participate in the week-long Gerewol (or Jeerewol), to dance and impress the marriageable women. The men paint their faces and decorate their bodies to accentuate their best features, paying particular attention to enhancing the whiteness of the eyes and teeth through the use of dark pigments; and it is the women who judge this male beauty pageant (see, for example, "Wodaabe" online video). Such a practice appears to invert the roles and

relationships between men and women as we understand them in the West. Yet, within Wodaabe culture, the capacity of a young man to attract the attention of an eligible partner through his physical beauty and his ability to dance both is a sign of his masculinity and, at the same time, in part *constitutes* that masculinity. (For an anthropological account of the Wodaabe and the Gerewol, see Bovin, 2001: 37–54 and 58–61; for travellers' accounts, see Jones, 1998; Middleton, 2004.)

Activity 1.2

- The Wodaabe Gerewol is a ceremony designed to enable men to find wives, and women to find husbands; but it is the women who choose, on the basis of the men's physique, body decoration and looks. Whiteness of eyes and teeth constitute key elements in the men's attributes. Imagine in our own culture a similar beauty contest held in which women judge men:
 - In what, do you imagine, the characteristics of male attractiveness and beauty consist?
 - To what degree are these determined by current representations of ideal masculine beauty, and to what degree by other concerns, such as evident physical and mental health, earning capacity, temperament, etc.?
- Who determines the standards of male beauty in our culture, women or men?
- Who determines the standards of female beauty in our culture, women or men?
- These standards are obviously disseminated through the culture through such factors and media as advertising, film and television; can you think of any other ways they are circulated and reinforced (for instance, through parental or peer instruction)?

Modern Western notions of gender may be traced back only as far as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the period known as the Enlightenment, and to the Industrial Revolution, to which the Enlightenment contributed. The shift from an agrarian economy to an industrial one had important consequences for people in society. Whereas in an earlier social and economic structure, work was centered in the home, whether in cottage industries such as weaving of cloth or in agricultural occupations, with the building of factories and the development of towns and cities around them, together with the emergence of mining centers, a new structure of work appeared that had an impact on family structures and on gender. It became normal for men to leave their homes to find and maintain employment, whereas women remained at home, keeping house and

tending children. The public sphere thus came to be identified more strongly with men; the private, with women.

Although of course many members of a culture will refuse and resist changes in its structuring of gender, such transformations are inevitable. Cultures alter as their historical conditions alter. The so-called "crisis in masculinity" of the closing decade of the twentieth century and the opening decade of the twenty-first may thus be understood as a reaction to shifts occurring structurally in the culture, shifts that affect the way people understand and respond to notions of sex, sexuality, and gender. Moreover, given that historically men have wielded the most power in the culture, it is to be expected that it has also been men who have been most vocal about the perceived crisis in masculinity, because it is they who have the most to lose.

One way of understanding the notion of crisis is as a reaction of anxiety or even panic to cultural change. This usually alarming and undesired emotional response on the part of individuals is then projected outward as a generalized social response that redefines change as catastrophe. The "crisis" then ceases to be simply a reaction to perceived change. Instead, it is understood as a real threat. An important question we might ask, therefore, in relation to the perceived crisis in masculinity toward the end of the twentieth century is the following: is this the first time that such a crisis has occurred, or at any rate has been perceived? Certainly, much of the rhetoric around the notion of a crisis in masculinity implies that this has been a unique moment, historically speaking; yet some investigation into the history of masculinity suggests that this may not be the case. For example, during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England a debate arose regarding the feminization of men and the masculinization of women in the upper middle class and nobility, signaled particularly in the fashions worn by each, and by the trend among women toward wearing spurs and carrying ornamental daggers. In 1620 a pamphlet, *Hic Mulier: or the Man Woman*, accused women of losing their femininity. Shortly after came a response, *Haec Vir* ("the womanish man"), justifying and explaining women's behavior by arguing that men had lost their masculinity, so that women had *had* to become masculine in place of the men (see, for example, Jardine, 1983: 154–58).

The causes of this acrimonious debate are numerous, including the longevity of Queen Elizabeth I's reign and the ambiguous sexuality of her successor, James I; and they need not detain us. Another, more recent example of a crisis in masculinity, as the historian Christopher E. Forth points out in his *Masculinity in the Modern West: gender, civilization and the body*, is the concern that arose toward the end of the nineteenth century about the "softening" and feminizing effects on men and their bodies of what was vaguely called "civilization." Whereas the Renaissance and the Enlightenment viewed the development of European societies as progressive, so that the export of European culture at the expense of indigenous ones to the Americas and, later, to Africa, Asia, and the Pacific was considered to enhance and improve the lot of non-European peoples in those regions, by the end of the nineteenth century "civilization" was thought to

be exerting a negative effect on men and their bodies. There was, consequently, a fear that men would "degenerate," an idea linked to the new theories of evolution. That is, there was a concern that men would start to "de-evolve," returning to earlier evolutionary stages. Forth observes that there was "the feeling that the path toward remasculinization led away from the comforts and conveniences of the city toward more dangerous locales where death lurked at every step." He comments further that "this belief in the hygienic and therapeutic value of pain, violence and hardship has functioned in the West as a method of preserving men from the conditions of a civilized existence that, if left unchecked, threatened to render them soft, cowardly and effeminate" (Forth, 2008: 141). There were, in consequence, various calls to "toughen up" both boys and men, and various programs, including exercise regimens, to achieve this goal. The point to grasp in these examples is that crises in masculinity are perceived from time to time, and for various reasons.

The popular media persistently return to the issue of a contemporary crisis in masculinity, in different guises. These include its framing in terms of questions like "What is it that women want of men?" or "What is happening to men?" The emergence in the 1990s of the figure dubbed the "metrosexual" likewise occupied the media spotlight for a while, and still surfaces occasionally. The metrosexual (the coining of the term is credited to Mark Simpson, who used it to describe the British star soccer player David Beckham; see the various pieces collected on Simpson's webpage, www.marksimpson.com) is a male, usually relatively young (to his mid-30s), with sufficient disposable income to spend on grooming and dressing. A frequenter of the gym in order to keep his body in shape, the metrosexual is unafraid to use "product" on his face, hair, and body, or to visit a salon in order to undergo rubs, scrubs, and other treatments, including applications to depilate his body in order to remove unwanted body hair. For many, the metrosexual represents a feminized man, which in turn implies homosexuality, although metrosexuals themselves make it very clear that they are in fact heterosexual (with which the term "metrosexual" self-consciously rhymes). The metrosexual, then, embodies for many in the culture, especially men, an uneasiness around issues of gender, and particularly of masculinity.

The media were also responsible for summoning up a panic among the public around the issue of boys' performance in school. The anxieties evoked ranged from concern about boys' academic performance, in relation both to girls' improved academic performance and to the scholarly achievement of boys, historically considered, to boys' behavior both within and outside the classroom. Arguments ranged from the hypothesis that coeducational classrooms unfairly matched boys against *both* other boys *and* girls, to theories that boys require different kinds of pedagogy and pedagogical attention, whether because they are socialized differently from girls, or because their brains are wired differently (see, for example, "Boy-girl learning differences," 2001; Hall, 2003; Leo, 1999; Muggertidge, 2003; O'Beirne, 1998). However, as Michèle Cohen notes, concern about boys' education has a history that reaches back farther than the late twentieth century. For example, she cites the philosopher John Locke's considerations

about the schooling of young men in his 1693 educational treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (Cohen, 1998: 21–23). Debbie Epstein et al. observe that

the discourses in which debates about the schooling of boys have been framed are both narrow through the ways in which the terms “achievement” and “education” have been understood, and masculinist in style; that they lack a historical perspective; that it is unhelpful to set up a binary opposition between the schooling of girls and that of boys, according to which, if one group wins, the other loses; and that questions around equity and differences among boys and among girls as well as between boys and girls are key to understanding what is happening in schools.

(Epstein et al., 1998: 4)

They discern three dominant strands in “the public debates about boys and achievement”: “the ‘poor boys’ discourse; the ‘failing schools’ discourse; and the ‘boys will be boys’ discourse” (Epstein et al., 1998: 6). The “boys in school” problem thus becomes defined doubly as both *produced* by the crisis in masculinity and *contributing* to it.

Underlying this debate, from the perspective of those expressing concern for boys’ scholastic performance, is what we might call a hydraulic model of such performance, or, in the words of Epstein et al., “if one group wins, the other loses.” Thus, in addition to competing with other students simply on the basis of educational performance, the individual student has been made also the representative of her or his gender group in that competition. This is not, of course, the only model of understanding the issue that could be invoked. Although no doubt some women might adopt a possibly vengeful “It’s our turn now – let’s ‘get’ the boys” attitude, for most it is clearly a question simply of equity. This is particularly so in the light of the fact that “in the British context, the 11-plus examinations, by which children used to be selected for secondary schooling, were deliberately skewed so that girls had to achieve better results than boys in order to gain entry to selective grammar schools. To do otherwise would have meant that grammar schools would have been overwhelmingly populated by girls” (Epstein et al., 1998: 5). Such action suggests that more is at stake than simply a neutral assessment of children’s scholastic ability.

In 1991 an extremely popular work, *Iron John: a book about men*, asserted that contemporary males suffer because they have been deprived of what the author calls “the deep masculine.” Robert Bly, the author of this best seller, is a poet and the founder/leader of what has come to be known as the mythopoetic men’s movement, characterized by their “wild man in the woods” camps, which received a good deal of media attention by the late 1980s. Bly infers the quality or attribute of the deep masculine from a range of stories, folk tales, myths, and an eclectic selection of anthropological information. He mines these in order to postulate that Western culture has lost continuity with traditional forms of masculinity, including the rites of passage by which a boy is inducted by adult males

into manhood, together with all that this implies in terms of duties and responsibilities. The mythopoetic men’s movement was founded in order to reclaim and restore that continuity, together with the deep masculine. The movement has spread worldwide, especially among English-speaking nations, with Bly finding many disciples outside the United States in countries like Australia and the United Kingdom.

In his preface Bly states, “I want to make clear that this book does not seek to turn men against women, nor to return men to the domineering mode that has led to repression of women and their values for centuries. The thought in this book does not constitute a challenge to the women’s movement” (Bly, 1991: x). However, much of his argument in the book revolves around the responsibility of women, and particularly liberated, feminist women, for the sapping of this “deep masculine” in their menfolk. For example, only a few pages after the above statement Bly has the following to say:

As men began to examine women’s history and women’s sensibility, some men began to notice what was called their *feminine* side and pay attention to it. This process continues to this day, and I would say that most contemporary men are involved in it in some way.

There’s something wonderful about this development – I mean the practice of men welcoming their own “feminine” consciousness and nurturing it – this is important – and yet I have the sense that there is something wrong. The male in the past twenty years has become more thoughtful, more gentle. But by this process he has not become more free. He’s a nice boy who pleases not only his mother but also the young woman he is living with.

In the seventies [that is, the period during which feminism consolidated gains made during the Sixties and developed further political power] I began to see all over the country a phenomenon that we might call the “soft male.” Sometimes even today when I look out at an audience, perhaps half the young males are what I’d call soft. They’re lovely, valuable people – I like them – they’re not interested in harming the earth or starting wars. There’s a gentle attitude toward life in their whole being and style of living.

But many of these men are not happy. You quickly notice the lack of energy in them. They are life-preserving but not exactly life-giving. Ironically, you often see these men with strong women who positively radiate energy.

(Bly, 1991: 2–3)

Although Bly may not say so explicitly, there is certainly the implication that somehow these young men have become “soft” under and because of the influence (for which, read “power”) of women. Such men have apparently succumbed to the feminine discovered within themselves; they seek to please their mothers and their partners, and their “energy” has been eclipsed, if not indeed drawn off, by that of the women with whom they associate. That is, whereas on the one hand

Bly disavows antiwoman and antifeminist sentiments, on the other these are implicitly inscribed into the text he is writing.

Bly also remarks in his preface that

Most of the language in this book speaks to heterosexual men but does not exclude homosexual men. It wasn't until the eighteenth century that people ever used the term homosexual; before that time gay men were understood simply as a part of the large community of men. The mythology as I see it does not make a big distinction between homosexual and heterosexual men.

(Bly, 1991: x)

We may discern here the same ambiguity as is evidenced in the book towards women and their influence over men: whereas on the one hand Bly gestures towards the inclusion of gay men under the rubric of "men," on the other he divides heterosexual from homosexual men. In the first place, this is both the first and the last mention of homosexual men in the book, which in turn suggests that a homosexual orientation is less important than the fact of being sexed male, something that many gay men would no doubt contest. Indeed, Bly's gesture of inclusivity in fact ignores and erases the experience of homosexual men, historically speaking.

In the second place, his historical "perspective" is inaccurate in at least two ways. To begin with, the term "homosexual" was not coined until 1869, that is, the mid-nineteenth century (Dynes and Johansson, 1990: 555). This is an error of simple fact. The other inaccuracy is to be found in the statement "before that time gay men were understood simply as a part of the large community of men." As a number of historians have been at pains to point out, the presence of homosexual men in the social community has elicited, at best, an ambivalent response, and, at worst, forms of antagonism and violence against such men that would be readily recognized today as homophobia (see, for example, Boswell, 1980; Bray, 1982). Moreover, the social toleration of homosexuality in men was often conditional on factors such as class, power, and wealth, as well as religious feeling. Male-male sexuality might be willfully overlooked in the great and powerful in ways that did not operate to the advantage of the less powerful. One historical example is provided by the younger brother of King Louis XIV, Philippe de France, Duc d'Orléans (1640–1701), who, although married, scandalized the French court with his homosexual liaisons, but who was not persecuted on account of those liaisons, and who served as courier and soldier (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2010). In other words, gay men were *not* perceived simply as "part of the large community of men," although certain accommodations could be reached in specific cases. The same is true of particular professions or occupations: "Bohemian" types, such as actors or artists, were often allowed some latitude because of the claim to artistic temperament.

Such historical inaccuracy results from the desire to identify a stable, permanent notion of the masculine. It can be seen also in the work of the Australian

Steve Biddulph, a family counselor and a disciple of Bly who has published a number of extremely popular books. In his 1994 best seller *Masculine: an action plan for changing men's lives* (which went into a second edition only a year after its first appearance), Biddulph remarks:

The Industrial Revolution is usually seen in terms of what we gained – and we gained a good deal (or you would have just spent the day hoeing turnips in the rain!). But we have yet to take stock of what we lost. For the first time in half a million years of human existence, men stopped working alongside women and children in their villages and farms and went to work apart, in factories, and mines. And in a break with eternal tradition, boys began being raised by women. For aeons of time before this, boys grew up with the sweetness of male teaching from several older men who took pride and placed great store in their maturation. Unless the tribe or village raised good men, everyone's life was endangered.

(Biddulph, 1995: 30)

Here Biddulph lays the responsibility for the implied demasculinization, or at any rate the faulty masculinization, of boys at the feet of women, although without attributing the Industrial Revolution itself to anyone, although it was of course men who brought it about. Moreover, there is a globalization of a culturally specific notion of masculinity in the final sentence: the introduction of "the tribe or village" suggests that Biddulph is speaking of a universalizing (that is, a generic) idea of the masculine, rather than situating "masculinity" as a culturally and historically specific quality.

Furthermore, the Industrial Revolution is identified as a critical moment in vast temporal spans ("half a million years," "eternal tradition," "aeons of time"), yet nowhere is there a sense that cultures change through time, and that notions of gender and gender-appropriate behavior (or how people learned these) might likewise change. Somehow, therefore, masculinity was passed on unaltered from father to son, until the critical moment of the Industrial Revolution, at which point everything shifted radically. Although many historians of various stripes agree on the importance of the Industrial Revolution and its lasting impact on the cultures that succeeded that period, no historian would advance so nostalgic and, above all, so historically naive a depiction of the structuring and dynamics of gender at the time.

Biddulph's portrait of the period is also class-blind. What of the masculinity (or, better, masculinities) of the nobility and the middle class? These are simply swept into invisibility in Biddulph's creation of an idealized working-class male who somehow imbibed his masculinity at his father's knee, and who would pass it on to his own son. The details remain vague about what that masculinity might have been like, except that it was warm and comforting, and different from the warmth and comfort offered by the mother to her son.

In addition, Biddulph seems to imagine that the family has been structured identically in all cultures and at all times, although his last-minute inclusion of

"tribe" and "village" suggests a belated realization that this might not indeed have been the case. Nevertheless, his idealized vision of an imaginary father-son pair, happily working side by side in the fields or at the cottage loom, fails to take account of other historical possibilities, for example, those fathers of the nobility who sent their young sons to be squires in royal households, or whose children were seized as royal wards in order to forge or prevent political alliances. Or, indeed, those youthful middle-class sons dispatched to other households both foreign and domestic to learn a commercial trade and to make important social and business connections. Nor does Biddulph consider the possibility expressed by many historians of the family that for the working class (itself an anachronistic term if referring to pre-Industrial Revolution culture), "family" was not a simple and heart-warming notion of hearth and home. It was a way of surviving in a feudal or semifeudal social structure, and of ensuring, via multiple offspring, one's own survival, as an aging and increasingly incapacitated dependent, in a culture that lacked any conception of public welfare.

Identifying such historical vagueness in such accounts is not mere scholarly pedantry. Rather, that inaccuracy is central to the project of the work of such writers as Bly and Biddulph. By creating a picture of the past that lacks nuance, they are able to mythicize that past and so render it universal, applicable to all cultures in all places and at all times. Simultaneously, they are able to invoke a moment when things changed, and not necessarily for the better. Historical accuracy and detail would not only dull the edge of this strategy, whose principal objective is to identify women as the cause of men's problems; they would introduce elements and raise questions that might render that aim ineffective.

Bly's ambivalent handling both of women and homosexual men suggests that he feels profoundly uneasy at having to address these two groups in a postlibertarianist context, but at the same time is compelled to do so in order to appear politically balanced and objective. Clearly gay men are the more problematic group, because they are dismissed in the preface as being simply included under the umbrella of "men," even although the history of homosexual men and homophobia makes it clear that they have *not* been regarded by the dominant heterosexual male community as belonging to and participating in the "real" or "complete" masculine. Women pose a different problem. By effectively ignoring and excluding gay men and their experience, Bly foregrounds heterosexual masculinity, which necessarily means that he must engage with women as a factor in the shaping of masculinity. The thrust of his book, indeed, is an attempt to find a way of defining and constructing the masculine independently of women.

Another example of a popular response to the felt crisis in masculinity may be found in the establishment in 1990 of the Promise Keepers, a conservative Christian organization intended to transform men into more devout members of society. This objective, on the face of it, would appear to be laudable and apolitical. Nevertheless, there *are* political underpinnings to their ideology.

which is suggested by the multiplicity of meanings and levels of importance attributed to this organization:

What to make of the Promise Keepers? In the current world of electronic 24-hour news media with around-the-clock deadlines and instant analysis, the early answers have been concise, often unitary, and capable of being captured in a sound bite. Promise Keepers are a reactionary reassertion of patriarchal authority; they are a pawn of Christian Right political operatives; they are another sign of our current evangelical religious revival; they are part of a new phenomenon – men coming to terms with their own vulnerabilities and responsibilities. Promise Keepers is a new phenomenon; it is another example of that old-time religion; it is political; it is religious.

(Williams, 2001: 1)

Rhys H. Williams suggests that

PK [Promise Keepers] becomes a kind of Rorschach test, allowing observers to read on to it what they expect to find in modern society and its religion. And, reactions to PK also reflect the ambivalences, tensions, even contradictions that Americans bring to the intersection of religion and politics.

Thus, an "undercover" *MS* magazine investigation finds PK to be what I might paraphrase as "patriarchy with a human face." Men are being told to be nice masters, but masters just the same. Messner's (1997) study of the politics of masculinity puts PK in the center of antifeminist backlash. Those convinced that the nation is absorbed by a "culture war" often view PK and its adherents as shock troops for what is still called the "Christian Right" and therefore cannot believe that PK is not political before all else. And religion writers from such papers as the *Charlotte News-Observer* and the *Dallas Morning-News* find sincere, religiously motivated "average Joes" trying to figure out how to be better husbands, fathers, and Christians; in addition, they duly note that many of the participants' wives report being thrilled that their husbands are getting involved with this type of religious group.

(Williams, 2001: 1–2)

This ambiguity about what the Promise Keepers means as an organization does not, in itself, signify therefore that it has no political ideology or agenda. As Williams and others in *Promise Keepers and the New Masculinity: private lives and public morality* suggest, it is more likely, rather, that the loose structure and belief system of Promise Keepers allow for variations in ideology and agenda, although the latter is bounded by particular precepts and goals.

Bryan W. Brickner, in his mostly carefully neutral study of the Promise Keepers, characterizes its relation to politics thus:

When Bill McCartney asks men to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and to accept him as their Savior, it does not concern politics.

When Dr. Tony Evans tells men not to *ask* for the leadership of their family back, but to *take it back*, it is not about politics. When Charles Colson warns men that American culture is collapsing and that “it is of life-and-death importance to this nation,” it is not about politics. When Pastor Raleigh Washington tells men “to establish committed relationships across racial lines,” it is not about politics.

According to the Promise Keepers, all of these issues may have been politicized, but they are not political. This is how Promise Keepers defend their movement as being nonpolitical. Politics is about issues that are open to discussion; issues that are debatable. Politics is *not* about the immutable. More accurately, politics should not debate that which is timeless: God’s word. (Brickner, 1999: 2–3; original emphasis)

The referring of such issues to the word of God as irrefutable and beyond question is a tactic that immediately forecloses any debate about their nature and merit, political or otherwise. “The leadership of their family” *implies* a certain politics, as does Dr Evans’s urging of his membership to seize that leadership. That this is the case is highlighted by Brickner’s account a little later of the discussion in a group of members belonging to the Promise Keepers:

Once, Joseph [a member of a Promise Keepers group] said that women have taken over the leadership of the family; he implied that women were to blame for the disintegration of traditional family values. Almost in unison, the group challenged him, upholding the view usually stated by Promise Keepers that women have only stepped into the leadership role because men have abdicated it [sic]. Men have failed, the others emphasized, women have only taken on more responsibility because of men’s failures. (Brickner, 1999: 26)

This is not, then, an argument simply about an abstract or hypothetical notion of leadership, but also about power, about who controls the family – which means that it is about politics. Implicit in this is the idea that “American culture is collapsing” not simply because it is more secular and materialist than the Promise Keepers would have, but also because men’s ascendancy has been challenged and diminished.

A similar juggling with meaning is to be found in the suggestion offered by the Ambassador Training Level One manual with regard to answering questions about the Promise Keepers’ attitude toward homosexuality:

2. Example 2: “Isn’t Promise Keepers really anti-homosexual?” You might answer, “Our statement of faith clearly states that we believe the Bible is the Word of God, so in areas where the Bible clearly speaks to an issue, we must agree with it. Our purpose statement says clearly that we are committed to uniting men; therefore men who are struggling with homosexuality are welcome at our gatherings.”

(Brickner, 1999: 5)

Brickner summarizes this: “Promise Keepers is not antihomosexual; they are pro-Bible. Because the Bible is clear (according to Promise Keepers) about the sin of homosexuality, it is not a political issue. Men who are ‘struggling with homosexuality’ and ‘committed to uniting with men’ are welcome at Promise Keepers gatherings in the same way as are other sinners” (Brickner, 1999: 5). However, the history, from early modern Europe onwards, of homosexual men and women shows that they have *not* been treated in the manner of “other sinners,” who (setting aside murderers and the like) in general were not legally outlawed as a matter of course, persecuted both within and outside the law, and made to suffer physical violence and death at the hands of law-enforcement officers and of self-appointed vigilantes because they were petty thieves, adulterers, or seducers. The Promise Keepers “welcome” only those gay men “who are struggling with homosexuality,” that is, those who cannot accept their own sexual orientation, often *because of* the history of the persecution and denigration of nonheterosexual people. Thus, the net *effect* remains the same as for an avowedly antihomosexual group.

What emerges from Brickner’s account is that the Promise Keepers, whatever their professed religious faith and social ideology, remain a men’s organization charged with the task of reclaiming and retaining male power and privilege. Unsurprisingly, therefore, that organization has been criticized by, among others, feminist groups for the way in which it attempts to impose on women a traditional, subordinate role. We may infer from this that the women’s movements of the 1960s are held responsible by the Promise Keepers for causing a fundamental imbalance in gender relations, the proper nature of which is comprehended as conservative, traditional, and patriarchal.

However, in the final chapter of his book, Brickner departs from his objectivity in the rest of his account. He remarks, having commented on the openness of the men he interviewed and the meetings at which he participated:

I also found them to be pathetic, weak, tormented, and pained. How is that possible you might ask? We differ on metaphysical principles, I suppose. I would often see a Promise Keeper as a bewildered other – a victim – a slave – a weak man in need of comfort and direction, in need of a concierge. The interesting point is that they embrace these characterizations. They recognize they are victims of Adam’s sin, slaves to this world, and weak men in need of the loving grace of Jesus. These “negative” characterizations are espoused as signs of strength, as God’s will.

As an example of something good to say about the group, Brickner paints an image of a father and son at breakfast; but, tellingly, as an example of something bad about Promise Keepers, he remarks on their acceptance of

the Bible as literal truth, [and] the reliance/acceptance of a moral order based on original sin, which happens to be caused by a woman, or the convenience of a masculine holy trinity.

(Brickner, 1999: 124)

Ironically, then, Brickner finds the membership of the Promise Keepers not masculine enough, despite its being all-male and focused on issues that, at some level, connect with masculine power and control. This, in turn, suggests that there is another model of masculinity against which the author measures the Promise Keepers. However, we should be wary of assuming that it is therefore necessarily a more radical or liberal model.

Equally, it would be a mistake to assume that neither the mythopoetic men's movement nor the Promise Keepers group has anything of real benefit to offer its respective memberships. Clearly, many men feel that they *have* benefited from belonging to one or the other of these groups. Our purpose in considering their beliefs and attitudes critically has been, rather, to show, first, that they are founded in anxiety about men's place in the contemporary world and, second, that that anxiety proceeds from the sense that men have lost power to women.

Many theorists of gender, and of masculinity in particular, are more cautious than Dave Hill about the future for men, although for reasons that are not necessarily grounded in a historically or culturally localized panic about the crisis in masculinity. For example, Roger Horrocks, a psychotherapist, opens his tellingly titled *Masculinity in Crisis* with the following:

This book argues that masculinity in Western society is in deep crisis. The masculine gender has all kinds of benefits, but it also acts as a mask, a disguise, and what in psychotherapy is called a "false self." But who are we behind the false self?

But more than this, I shall suggest that masculinity is a crisis for men today – that the masculine gender is a precarious and dangerous achievement and is highly damaging to men.

(Horrocks, 1994: 1; original emphasis)

For Horrocks, then, *crisis is already structured into the masculine*. However, his notion of "crisis" is perhaps better described as a radical and fundamental instability within the masculine, and may be thought of as an issue for the men of yesterday as well as today.

Like Horrocks, Anthony Clare, a doctor and psychiatrist, sees the crisis in masculinity as, in a sense, of men's own making. *On Men: masculinity in crisis* considers various aspects of what it is to be a man, from the biological, including an understanding of genetics, to the social. Clare points out a number of ironies, such as that men's scientific ambition to intervene in and engineer the reproductive process, resulting in such technologies as *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), has resulted in the increasing irrelevance of men, to women, to children, and to society as a whole (Clare, 2000: 101–28). He observes that "At the heart of the crisis in masculinity is a problem with the reconciliation of the private and public, the intimate and the impersonal, the emotional and the rational" (Clare, 2000: 212). Unlike Hill's, Clare's prognosis is pessimistic:

Unless men wake up to what is happening all around them they will find themselves in even greater trouble. The omens are not good. Richard Scase is

but one of a number of social analysts who believes that current trends spell disaster for men. In his recently published book, *Britain Towards 2010*, Scase predicts that there will be more single persons, fewer children, persistently high rates of divorce and a "churning" of partners (repeated changing rather than any consistent commitment). Most of the single people will be male – one in three men will be living alone by 2010. Some one and a half million men will be permanently excluded from the workforce, either because of early retirement or because they just will not have the education and skills necessary for employment. And given the growing demand for skilled people able to work creatively and collaboratively rather than in a hierarchical, competitive and status-obsessed fashion, men may find themselves redundant in the job recruitment market.

(Clare, 2000: 220–21)

In *Male Trouble: masculinity and the performance of crisis*, a study of both film and drama in relation to the idea of "male trouble," Fintan Walsh observes that "recent studies have revealed how throughout the twentieth century, national crises and trauma (translated as emasculating) have been quickly followed by periods of remasculinization." He goes on to summarize some of these:

George Mosse, for example, identifies the rise of Fascism in 1920s Germany as the assertion of a fanatical, militaristic masculinity in response to national humiliation at the Treaty of Versailles following the First World War. Leon Hunt understands the "uncertain maleness" of 1970s Britain as an effective working through the disintegration of the Fordist heavy industries, deteriorating labour relations, the impact of First Wave Feminism, and the rise of the gay movement. Susan Jeffords identifies a rise in macho-masculinity in the United States throughout the 1980s, as exemplified in the figure of Rocky. Jeffords equates this development in the form of masculinization in response to 1960s hippy culture, and the allegedly weak leadership of President Jimmy Carter.

Walsh remarks: "What seems important to note here is that there is nothing new about troubled masculinity" (Walsh, 2010: 9).

Other scholars and writers take a longer historical perspective on the question of whether masculinity is indeed in crisis, and if so, what the causes might be. For example, in *The End of Masculinity*, John MacInnes, a sociologist, develops the thesis that the European Enlightenment, in substituting the notion of a social "contract" for the divine right of kings, led to a notion of gender difference that contained within it the cause of its own confusion. He observes,

It has become a cliché to argue that masculinity is in crisis. But although men's privilege is under unprecedented material and ideological challenge, the briefest historical survey will show that masculinity has always been in one crisis or another. ... This is because the whole idea that men's natures

can be understood in terms of their “masculinity” arose out of a “crisis” for all men: the fundamental incompatibility between the core principle of modernity that all human beings are essentially equal (regardless of their sex) and the core tenet of patriarchy that men are naturally superior to women and thus destined to rule over them.

(MacInnes, 1998: 11)

For MacInnes, the logic of a gender system which sought simultaneously to extend equal rights to both sexes but also to preserve the dominance of the male sex necessarily contained within itself, as Christopher Forth puts it, “the seeds of its own undoing” (Forth, 2008: 237); and it was that collapse that was being witnessed toward the end of the twentieth century.

Forth lengthens the view still further, seeing historical continuities rather than ruptures. He explores the competing and often contradictory impulses and consequent tensions that have constructed masculinity in the Anglo-European world since the sixteenth century and that have in effect constituted a perpetual state of crisis for men in that world. He observes that,

Judging from the widespread academic and media claims today about a “crisis of masculinity” in the Western world, one might guess that inadequacy and defensiveness are common feelings among many men, though the pervasiveness of and rationale for this anxiety are the subject of considerable disagreement. Most scholars concur that the very term “crisis” is simply inadequate. If there is no stable or non-critical period to be found prior to the disturbance in question (and historians have not found one), then the very idea of a crisis makes little sense.

(Forth, 2008: 3)

Forth adds:

Put differently, the recurrence of “crisis” as a means of describing masculinity at various historical moments is to some extent made possible by the paradoxes that lurk at the heart of modernity’s relationship with masculinity and the male body. After all, modernity is continually troubled by what Ulrich Beck describes as “counter-modernity,” a discourse that “absorbs, demonizes and dismisses the questions raised and repeated by modernity” by positing “constructed certitudes” in the face of the liquefying tendencies of modernization. Arising with and in reaction to modernity, counter-modern impulses seek to renaturalize many of the things that modernity sends into motion, often by imagining a new modernity purged of its unhealthy or “feminizing” components. ... Insistence upon an essential, embodied and recuperable masculinity lurking beneath the veneer of civilization is one of the most durable examples of a counter-modernity that asserts itself within and against modernity.

(Forth, 2008: 5)

Forth regards the various “crises” through which masculinity has historically made passage as precipitated by a fundamental conflict between and mutual contradiction of understandings of the male body and the workings of civilization. He ascribes to the latter what he calls the “*double logic of modern civilization*”: “a process that promotes and supports the interests of males while threatening to undermine those interests by eroding the corporeal foundations of male privilege. Civilization, in short, both supports and dismantles the ‘natural’ rationale for male dominance” (Forth, 2008: 5; original emphasis). Echoing Horrocks’s observation that “*masculinity is a crisis*,” Forth remarks that, “Founded upon the central paradoxes of modernity, a ‘crisis of masculinity’ is a recurring, even structural feature of life in our world” (Forth, 2008: 15). He concludes his study by observing:

Although sometimes perceived as being an extension and facilitator of “patriarchal” gender relationships, modernity continues to function as a double-edged sword that, among its many paradoxical effects, extends and supports male dominance while creating the conditions that subvert the “natural” basis for that dominance. The same civilization that bolsters male dominance also contains the seeds of its own undoing, which is one reason why this concept has elicited such diverse reactions throughout the modern era. Yet history is not necessity, and the negative patterns of the past might be undone if people are prepared [to] break with modes of thought and behavior that have outlived their usefulness. ... By probing the durable and entrenched aspects of this tension between masculinity and modernity, this book illustrates both the possibility and the difficulty of moving beyond the constraints of history.

(Forth, 2008: 237)

A literary scholar, Sally Robinson, in *Marked Men: white masculinity in crisis*, identifies the crisis as emanating, in America, from the liberationist movements of the 1960s, and as affecting chiefly white men who constitute (or who are represented, or who represent themselves, as constituting) the “mainstream.” However, she notes that

The “mainstream” is, in fact, a far more volatile space than is usually acknowledged in literary or cultural criticism, as most critics assume that the action is found on either end of a high-low cultural, and class, divide. The middle, as I see it, is an essentially *defensive* cultural and political formation, one characterized by suspicion, even paranoia, about the passing of a now delegitimized cultural order.

(Robinson, 2000; original emphasis)

That is, the “mainstream,” which continues to be invoked as though it were an identifiable and stable population majority, is in fact a site of uncertainty and of contestation. Robinson remarks:

Announcements of crisis, both direct and indirect, are *performative*, in the sense that naming a situation a crisis puts into place discursive conventions

and tropes that condition the meanings that event will have. A crisis is "real" when its rhetorical strategies can be discerned and its effects charted; the reality of a particular crisis depends less on hard evidence of actual social trauma or do-or-die decision-making than on the power of language, of metaphors and images, to convincingly represent a sense of trauma and turning point. ... The language of crisis imposes a certain narrative logic on an event or, more nebulously, a social trend or cultural formation. And while we might assume that logic to be governed by a teleological drive toward resolution and closure, the rhetoric of crisis actually functions to defer that closure. The rhetorical power of "crisis" depends on a sense of prolonged tension; the announcements of crisis are inseparable from the crisis itself, as the rhetoric of crisis performs the cultural work of centering attention on dominant masculinity. The question of whether dominant masculinity is "really" in crisis is, in my view, moot: even if we could determine what an actual, real, historically verifiable crisis would look like, the undeniable fact remains that in the post-liberationist era, dominant masculinity consistently represents itself as in crisis.

(Robinson, 2000: 10–11; original emphasis)

Robinson's point here is that a language of crisis in fact *produces* the perception of crisis. The two things (language and perception) are inextricably linked. For her, post-1960s masculinity has always been, that is, has always represented itself as, in crisis.

In what, then, does this crisis for men consist? Robinson's argument is that, until the liberationist movements of the 1960s, white men (and particularly white middle-class men) enjoyed a measure of power that was linked to their being "unmarked." That is, because "gender" appeared to refer to and mean "women," and "race," "black" and other people of color, to be male and white constituted not only a norm but also a "natural" kind of identity. The effect of this was to erase white masculinity from the social picture, so that white masculine power appeared to recede into the background, if not, indeed, to vanish entirely. One effect of the liberationist movements around gender and race was to make white masculinity visible by insisting on the gendering and "racing" of white men. This in turn raised both questions and criticisms about the power that white men have traditionally exercised in the culture, while at the same time concealing it under a mask of normativity and naturalness. In addition, and importantly, the marking of white men in this way also brought into visibility the white male body, hitherto an assumed cultural norm that was beyond question. Such materialization of the white male body also made it vulnerable, that is, literally capable of being wounded, in terms of what could be said about it in the culture.

Robinson persuasively argues that the reaction of white men has been to lay claim to a form of identity politics, the tactical strategy adopted in the 1960s and afterwards by minority groups or groups treated as minorities, in order both to establish a political position with regard to the politics of the dominant, and to acquire a voice that would be heard in political debate. Because such identity

politics commence from the position of belonging to an oppressed and silenced, and hence victimized, social group, white men as a group began to lay claim to an equal (if not, indeed, greater) marginalization and oppression. Images both literal and metaphoric of "wounded" masculinity and of "wounded" white men began to appear in both popular and more highbrow cultural texts, and, as Robinson demonstrates in her readings of various texts, such wounding is linked to the "marking" and rendering visible of white men as both gendered and racialized identities. In this way, the symbolic vulnerability of the white male body made visible and material became the motive for a claim of victimhood.

Robinson's focus on white masculinity does not mean, of course, that men of color may not equally have experienced a sense of crisis around being men. However, the reasons for any such sense are likely to have been different. For example, negative shifts in the national economy are likely to affect most immediately those (of whatever ethnicity) in the lower socioeconomic bracket, making it difficult to hold down jobs, keep families, and so on. Moreover, Caucasian and non-Caucasian masculinities define one another within a complex system of race, gender, and sexuality. Indeed, there would be no point in having a term like "Caucasian" unless there was at least one other, oppositional (but not necessarily contradictory) term to give it some boundary of meaning. That "meaning" is not purely linguistic or categorical: it includes a range of social and cultural values, understandings, and assumptions. Accordingly, therefore, a shift, or "crisis," in the one necessarily entails a complementary shift in the other.

If we return to the examples with which we began this chapter, namely, Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club* and Fincher's film version of it, we might note an important (indeed, critical) discrepancy between the two. The tone of Palahniuk's narrator is ironic, which should alert the reader to the need to evaluate the statements he makes with care. Moreover, we need to bear in mind that Tyler Durden is a projection of the narrator's own mental and emotional state. This, in turn, suggests that we need to judge whether fight club and Project Mayhem represent an intrinsic and foundational masculinity emerging to claim its own presence and status, as the narrative proposes, or are, rather, simply the plausible effects of an unsettled mind. The novel closes with some ambiguity: the narrator is in a mental institution, but is furtively treated by some members of the hospital staff as "Mr Durden," with encouragements as "Everything is going according to the plan." "We're going to break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world," and (perhaps chillingly) "We look forward to getting you back" (Palahniuk, 1996: 208). However, the film strips the strong sense of irony out of the narrative by making Tyler a separate, independent character. It also omits the mental-institution ending. As a result, the story of the narrator is presented as something to be taken seriously, a genuine comment on the state of masculinity at the end of the twentieth century. It is presumably this to which young males respond in their emulations of Tyler Durden's fight club.

Crisis (whether real or only perceived) and masculinity, it would appear, have gone hand in hand historically, although the immediate causes for any sense of crisis have often differed. As we have seen, the growing cultural anxiety towards

the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first about a crisis in masculinity can be connected to other anxieties about the waning of masculine power and the emergence of new or hitherto ignored or suppressed ways of being men. In order to explore these ideas further, we need now to understand the terms and concepts within which debates about gender, and about masculinity in particular, are conducted.

Activity 1.3

- Begin keeping a journal and/or scrapbook of items about the current state of men and masculinity that you encounter in your reading, listening or viewing.
- After you have collected a sufficient number of these, examine them, and see if you can determine:
 - particular “themes” or preoccupations;
 - recurring suggestions and recommendations as to how the “crisis in masculinity” might be solved.
- Reflect critically on this material.
 - While of course the rhetoric will suggest that it is boys and men who are losing their masculinity, to their detriment, in reality whose interests are threatened by the “crisis in masculinity,” and to whose real benefit are the solutions suggested?
- In the chapter you have just read, for example, these matters are made almost explicit with regard to the Promise Keepers: for this group, the “crisis in masculinity,” presented as a failure of religious faith, is less about how boys and men find their identity in a changing social and cultural world than it is about how males may retain their familial and social power in that world.
 - Can you similarly analyze the material you are collecting?

Suggested further reading

- Foster, T.A. (ed.) (2011) *New Men: manliness in early America*, New York and London: New York University Press.
- Garcia, G. (2008) *The Decline of Men: how the American male is getting axed, giving up, and flipping off his future*, New York: Harper Perennial.
- Kimmel, M. (1996; 3rd edn 2011) *Manhood in America: a cultural history*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- , (2005) *The History of Men: essays on the history of American and British masculinities*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- , (2009) *Gayland: the perilous world where boys become men*, New York: Harper.

Messner, M.A. (2000) *Politics of Masculinities: men in movements*, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira press.

Nelson, D.D. (1998) *National Manhood: capitalist citizenship and the imagined fraternity of white men*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Rotundo, E.A. (1993) *American Manhood: transformations in masculinity from the Revolution to the modern era*, New York: Basic Books.

Sax, L. (2007) *Boys Adrift: the five factors driving the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men*, New York: Basic Books.

Schwalbe, M. (1996) *Unlocking the Iron Cage: the men's movement, gender politics, and American culture*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.