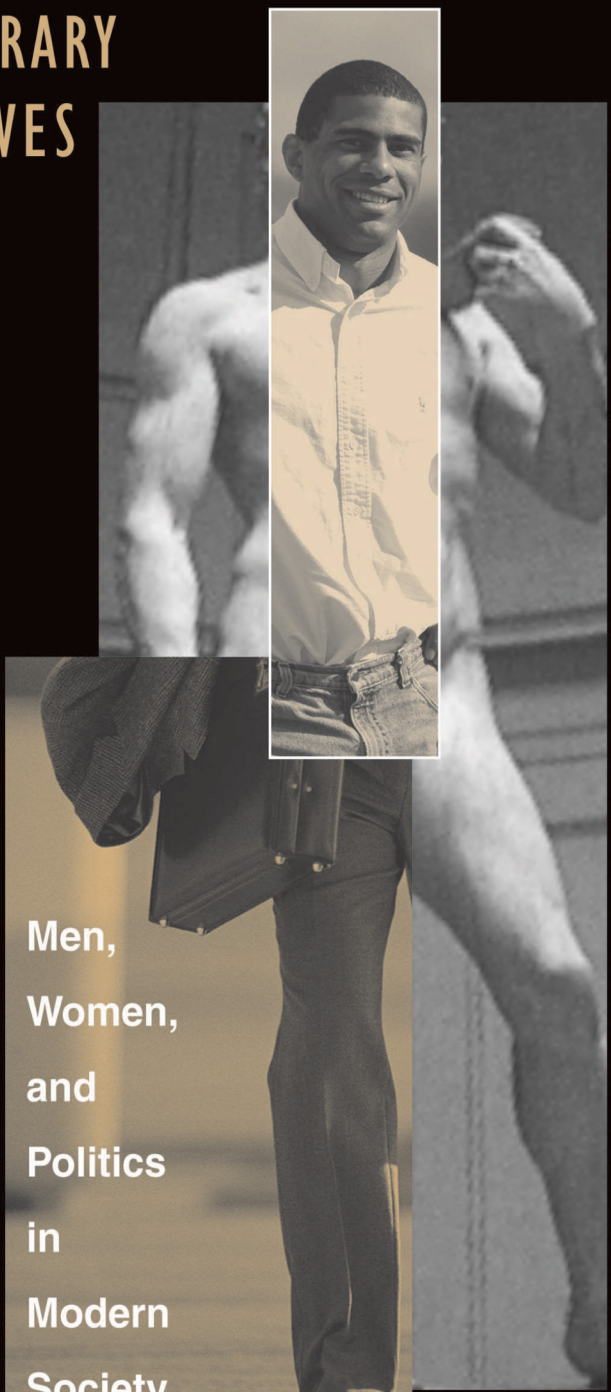
SECOND EDITION

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON MASCULINITY



KENNETH CLATTERBAUGH

Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society

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Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society

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Contents

Preface to the Second Edition

It has been more than five years since I wrote the first edition of *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society.* In that time there have been significant changes in both academic and popular thinking about men and masculinity. First, there is a considerable body of new literature in both books and magazines that addresses a common set of issues. Second, the area of men's studies is now considerably stronger and more professional. Third, Robert Bly's *Iron John,* the top-selling nonfiction book of 1991, created a media sensation about the so-called men's movement. Fourth, the secular men's movement, for all these changes, has clearly begun to wane. Fifth, a prominent and rapidly growing evangelical Christian men's movement has captured the attention of the mass media and hundreds of thousands of North American men.

My own thinking about what is loosely called "the men's movement" has progressed. I have always been aware that this aggregate movement is just that: a collection of incompatible separate movements. But I am now much more aware of what these components have in common and how they have shared certain ideas and themes. And the balance of power within the movement has certainly shifted from a powerful profeminist perspective to an antifeminist stance. I argue in the final chapter that in spite of its profeminist beginnings, this aggregate movement's net effect has been to undermine feminism and to shore up patriarchal institutions and thinking.

This deep transformation in the aggregate movement makes it even more difficult for me, who continues to hold a socialist profeminist perspective, to present the various perspectives fairly. As I remarked in the first edition, it remains for the reader to judge whether I have been successful.

Kenneth Clatterbaugh

▪ Acknowledgments ▪

I am, as always, indebted to many students, friends, and colleagues, and to my spouse, Linda Heuertz, without whose help and conversation this second edition would never have been completed. The following acknowledgments of specific help are not in any particular order.

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K. C.

▪ ONE ▪

Introduction to the Men's Movement

Since the early 1970s, North Americans have been reading about a men's movement. We have been treated to images of men gathering in support of the feminist cause, coming together to denounce feminism, standing around roaring campfires and shouting "ho," and gathering in football stadiums and praying to become better men. What these images indicate is that the men's movement is not a single movement but is rather several movements that have been gathered under a single description. Because these movements are collected under a single description—one that each movement often claims for itself—the academic literature as well as the mass media are not particularly discriminating in their references to the parts of the whole. There is a need, therefore, for a more systematic identification of the component movements in the aggregate called "the men's movement."

As a social philosopher I tend to view the components of the aggregate movement as a set of sociopolitical perspectives. The way men live, how we see ourselves, and how we are seen are issues of great social importance. But these perspectives on men are also political: They offer an agenda for society as a whole. And each perspective is continually contentious in its discussion of other perspectives. With the exceptions of the first edition of this book and William G. Doty's *Myths of Masculinity* (1993), which draws heavily upon my own categories, there has been little sustained work on the categorization of perspectives on men and masculinity. Since the identities of groups are not static, a remapping of the perspectives on men is needed: Groups change their principles, accent different principles, and new groups appear as old groups disappear. This new edition of my book is my effort to survey once again this shifting territory.

To identify and to understand a sociopolitical perspective we need four kinds of information: that perspective's description of social reality, its explanation of why that reality exists, its vision of what should replace it, and its agenda for achieving that end (Wasserstrom 1980:52). Accordingly, I organize the treatment of each perspective around the following central questions:

1. What is the social reality for men in modern society?
2. What maintains or explains this social reality?
3. What would be a better social reality?
4. How can we achieve this better reality?

These four central questions do more than help us to identify perspectives on men and masculinity: They offer a logical structure for discussion and critique as well. Although all perspectives describe, explain, and evaluate social reality as well as set an agenda appropriate to those evaluations, there is sharp disagreement among them as to what is the correct description of social reality and how it should be changed. We find wide differences, for example, regarding the nature of the masculine social role or the impact of the contemporary feminist movement on men, and these, in turn, have led to disagreements over whether and how society ought to change. In addition to these disagreements within the components of the men's movement, there are also criticisms of the movement as a whole. Thus, our task in this book is both descriptive and evaluative.

This book takes up about eight major perspectives that dominate contemporary discussions of men and masculinity. I call these perspectives the *conservative, profeminist, men's rights, mythopoetic, socialist, gay, African American,* and *evangelical* perspectives. In subsequent chapters each of these perspectives will be described and evaluated. But before we begin this examination, let us return to the four central questions that constitute our framework for discussion.

1. What is the social reality for men in modern society?

The social reality for men in North American society is to be masculine or, more accurately, to adopt one of the many *masculinities* that are available to men. There are many ways of being a man, although masculinities are not all equally approved or equally condemned, and not all masculinities are approved by the same people. Throughout this book we shall be discussing men and masculinity, but it should never be thought that there is a single masculinity that applies to all men. The task of describing male reality or men's masculinities is a difficult one, regardless of the sociopolitical perspective; it is especially difficult when there is so much disagreement over what it means to be a man.

In discussing masculinity we will find it helpful to distinguish among four components. First, there is the question of what men are—the *masculine gender role.* This is a set of behaviors, attitudes, and conditions that are generally found in men of an identifiable group. For example, if men in this group tend to behave aggressively, aggressiveness is a part of their masculine gender role; if they tend to value rational discussion or to do certain kinds of work, then that, too, is a part. Distinct masculinities are social roles that belong to *identifiable* groups of men who exist in reasonably specific historical, ethnic, or religious situations. Within the conditions that determine a masculinity, I include privilege or lack of privilege. Thus, if some men are generally treated as more suited for political office, then that privilege is included in their masculinity. If some men are disadvantaged in being selected as the custodial parent—gay men, for example—then that, too, is an element in their masculinity or social role.

Second, there is the question of what people think men are—the *stereotype of masculinity.* A stereotype is a general idea of what most people consider to be the masculine gender role. If it is widely believed that men are wealthy, then that belief is part of the gender stereotype, regardless of whether it is part of the gender role.

The gender role and the stereotype are quite distinct. If we were interested in the masculine gender role, we would have to study an identifiable group of men. If we were interested in the stereotype of masculinity, we would have to survey people and ask them what they thought was typical of those men. The stereotype of what men are and the role that men actually play need not agree; in fact, there is considerable evidence to suggest that gender stereotypes are inaccurate. "Gender stereotypes . . . may not be based on statistically significant differences in behavior between the sexes but, at best, are exaggerations of a grain of truth" (Basow 1986:12).

Third, there is the question of what people think men should be—the *gender ideal.* The gender ideal is a widespread notion as to what the gender role for men should be. If it is widely believed that men of a certain age and means should be married, then that is part of their gender ideal. Obviously, what people think men should be may be quite different either from what men are or from what people think men are. Stereotypes and ideals, too, are historically situated; they reflect the ideas of specific groups about what men (of specific groups) are and should be.

Roles, stereotypes, and ideals tend not to become too disparate, however, because stereotypes are partially formed through perceptions of roles, and ideals and stereotypes serve as guides in developing gender roles (Basow 1986:13). Sociologists or social psychologists may question the accuracy of stereotypes and ideals in relation to actual social roles; but of importance to us is what a particular perspective is claiming when it

describes masculinity. Is the perspective clear about the group of men being identified? Is it clear about the differences among role, stereotype, and ideal?

Certain masculinities are favored socially or come closer to the gender ideal. Boys are taught to adopt these social roles and ideals. Certain collections of behaviors, attitudes, and conditions (certain masculinities) are favored and rewarded, others are ignored, and still others are punished. Masculinities that are favored are *dominant* or *hegemonic* masculinities. These masculinities may vary from subculture to subculture, but they are dominant in the sense that they are favored and actively promoted throughout society, and those who appear to exemplify them are most likely to be placed in positions of power and trust. Thus, there is a strong set of similarities among the powerful men who sit in boardrooms, in legislatures, and in other responsible positions. And there are strong similarities among men who are excluded from positions of power and prestige. Of course, there are exceptions and there are changes, but there are also rules of thumb that favor certain sets of behaviors, attitudes, and conditions: For example, to be articulate, loyal, heterosexual, white, and wealthy are favored characteristics of hegemonic masculinities.

Fourth and finally, there is the subjective process each person goes through in arriving at his or her gender. One's *gender identity* is the self-definition of gender to oneself. Obviously, what an individual is as well as what an individual thinks he or she should be may itself vary from the more generalized gender role, stereotype, and ideal. Each of us is an individual, and how we are and how we think we are gendered is often a big part of that individuality.

Our eight perspectives disagree sharply in their descriptions of masculinity, largely because they differ on what to include in the masculine gender role. In other cases, they do not agree on the gender ideal. (Of course, any disagreement about these components of masculinity entails a difference in its description.)

The description of masculinities from some of these perspectives gives great weight to certain dynamic processes operating on men, including economic patterns, changing stereotypes and ideals, the media, social structures such as the military, and social movements such as the feminist or other liberation movements. Without fail, however, each perspective expresses an opinion about feminism and how it does or does not affect male reality. But feminism is not a unified theory. Within the profeminist perspective, for example, there are both radicals and liberals, and within the socialist perspective there are both classical Marxists and socialist feminists (Jaggar 1983; Tong 1988). A careful student of the diverse feminisms will notice that many of these perspectives offer only a superficial understanding of feminism. They either embrace all feminism or reject all

feminism; seldom do they draw any fine distinctions. Thus, when advocates of a perspective on masculinity make claims about feminism, we must first discover, to the extent possible, what they have in mind before we can begin to understand or critique it.

The eight perspectives under study here are divided according to the masculinities that they consider important and in terms of their assessments of the impact of feminism. When I identify each perspective's description of the social reality of the American male, I shall accordingly focus on these two dimensions.

2. What maintains or explains this social reality?

Raw descriptions of reality are not very interesting in themselves. Unless we can explain that reality, unless we have some theory about how it comes about and what maintains it, we have not really come to an understanding of it. In the perspectives under study, the accounts of masculinity go beyond mere description and offer an explanation of the forces that create and maintain it. Typically, some aspect of male reality is identified as the maintaining cause.

The advocates of some perspectives, for example, believe that masculinities are primarily a manifestation of male biology; others believe that they are primarily learned and socially reinforced through ideals and stereotypes. I stress the word *primarily* because most of the eight perspectives posit one underlying cause or pattern that shapes male reality more than any other. Thus, one perspective may agree with another regarding the general list of causes of masculinities but disagree about which ones are most significant. A biological conservative, for example, may agree that gender ideals are a factor in shaping masculinities but argue at the same time that genetically determined tendencies toward certain behaviors are much more influential. In other words, if gender ideals could be changed and genetic tendencies were to remain the same, male reality would remain unchanged. Many of the disagreements among our eight perspectives are actually differences over the best explanation of masculinities.

The importance of such an explanation is not just that we gain understanding by learning why something is the way it is. We also need to know which causes, if any, are most crucial in maintaining male reality if we hope to affect it.

3. What would be a better social reality?

With this question we make a significant move from description and explanation to evaluation. To answer it a perspective must look at the described male reality and judge whether certain dimensions of it are good or bad. It must also survey the alternatives and determine which of them

are possible and which desirable. For those that are undesirable or unjust, it must offer replacements. These replacements are usually defended with the argument that they would create a better society. For example, adherents of the profeminist perspective point to the oppression of women as the greatest societal ill; but they may conceive of that oppression in terms of inequality, violence, or an unfair division of labor. In its place they would offer a society of equal opportunity, safety, and equal pay for equal work. They also disagree among themselves about whether the net benefits for men will be positive or negative: Some argue that there must be an overall loss of male benefits in order to dismantle male domination; others argue that the long-term benefits will outweigh the short-term losses. Of course, *all* profeminists believe that when the gains for women are added in, society will be better off.

4. How can we achieve this better reality?

The description of reality tells us where we are, the explanation tells us why we are there, and the assessment of that reality tells us where we want to be. The answer to the fourth question, finally, tells us how to get there. The selection of strategies toward a better society must conform to four conditions: (1) The strategies must be feasible; they must be actions that individuals or groups can initiate. (2) They must have, or be likely to have, the desired result. (3) In reaching the desired result, they must not violate moral principles or individual rights. And (4), when there is conflict between individual rights or moral principles, an agreed adjudication of this conflict must be arrived at.

Consider, as an example, the effort to set an agenda for pornography. Suppose that we have already described, explained, and evaluated this issue. That is, we have found that the use of pornography is widespread, that it is caused by a learning process that links violence and sexuality, and that it is socially harmful to men and to the women and children victimized by men who use pornography.

Assuming we have reached the above conclusions, the agenda-building question remains: What can we do to ensure that men will use pornography less? As one strategy, we might impose severe penalties on anyone caught using pornography. But such a strategy might interfere with basic freedoms; and, in any case, given the number of pornography users, policing that many men would not be feasible. Suppose we were to ban the public display of pornography and place zoning limits on the stores in which the pornography could be sold. But, although availability may expedite the use of pornographic materials, it is hardly the cause of such use; and diminished availability is unlikely to reduce use significantly, as communities that have tried to restrict availability have discov-

ered. Another strategy might be to elect a censorship board that would prevent the publication of pornographic books or the making of pornographic films. Such an agenda, however, would be impermissible to anyone committed to the right of free expression, even though some have argued that pornography so harms individuals that justice for victims and potential victims supercedes the pornographer's right of free expression.

As we have seen, each of these strategies encounters a serious challenge from the four conditions previously noted. A fourth strategy, one that would avoid the above pitfalls, is to educate men about healthy sexuality and the harm that comes from pornography while socially empowering those persons who are most likely to be victimized by its use.

Our simplified example illustrates the difficulties in finding an agenda, even when there is general agreement about the description, explanation, and evaluation. The agenda-building task becomes even more complicated when perspectives disagree in some of their answers to the first three questions.

One of the purposes of this book is to help the reader look critically at the conservative, profeminist, men's rights, spiritual, socialist, gay, black, and evangelical perspectives. The task is not an easy one, however. In the first place, the perspectives often rest on hidden assumptions about human nature, social change, and right versus wrong. These assumptions can be buried so deeply that they are seldom made explicit, let alone defended. Second, the perspectives are dynamic. As "moving targets," they change with new information from the social sciences; they shift in their emphases and borrow from one another. Indeed, the process of distinguishing among these perspectives is sometimes a matter of subjective judgment.

For these reasons, the criticisms and responses in each chapter are not definitive; in most cases, they reveal only the beginnings of a long and complex debate. Thus, the fact that a critique follows each perspective does not mean that the perspective fails on those grounds; and the fact that a response follows each criticism does not mean that the criticism has been satisfactorily and definitively answered. Ultimately, the reader must work out, to his or her own satisfaction, the adequacy of each criticism and each response.

Obviously, adherence to any one of the perspectives will yield criticisms of the others. For example, from the profeminist perspective, no other perspective that denies men are privileged relative to women can be satisfactory. Interperspective conflicts such as these are frequent, and many of them will be noted in the critique sections of each chapter.

However, there are some general criteria that do not depend on adoption of any particular perspective; these criteria tend to be the minimal

standards to which any perspective must conform if it is to be credible. Many of the criticisms invoke these criteria, at least implicitly, and they offer a good starting point to the reader who is interested in a critical look at each perspective.

CLARITY

The perspectives presented in this book have been put forth by people who aspire to persuade us of the truth of their views. But before we can settle the truth or falsity of a position, we must *understand* it. Indeed, if a claim is presented in such a way that it has no clear meaning, we are not in a position to say whether it is true or false. That is, if it does not succeed in saying something, it does not succeed in saying something true or false. So a first requirement of any perspective is that it be stated clearly enough that we can grasp its meaning.

Lack of clarity often arises from ambiguity or the imprecision of basic ideas or concepts. A key term may stand for two or more distinct ideas, or a concept may be ill defined. It is not uncommon, for example, to find authors who confuse the terms *woman* and *feminist.*

Having a requirement of clarity does not mean that these perspectives must aspire to the rigor of a mathematical proof. Many concepts that are important to sociopolitical discussions have a certain vagueness or are in the process of being defined. But a perspective gains clarity even when it demonstrates an awareness of the shortcomings of its basic ideas and the need to refine them further.

PROPER USE OF EVIDENCE

Once we have established that a position is sufficiently clear, we can turn to an evaluation of the evidence or to the reasons set forth in support of its claims. If an author asserts that men always dominate women, we want to know what evidence there is for that conclusion. Some authors simply stipulate claims without offering evidence for them. In some cases they offer no evidence, because they believe that the claims are self-evident; as the diversity of perspectives reveals, however, there is never much agreement about what is self-evident. In stipulating claims or assuming self-evidence, authors too often try to establish by sheer authority or emphatic statement something for which the rest of us need a reason. Such stipulated "truths" deserve our notice but not our assent; they may be true, but the author gives us no reason for thinking so.

Then, too, a perspective may offer only that evidence which supports its own point of view. Such an approach to evidence is grab-bag; one reaches into history and science and selects only the favorable examples.

For example, if a researcher believes that most criminals are wrongfully convicted, and then collects in a large volume only those cases in which criminals have been wrongfully convicted, his or her belief will seem to be supported by that selected evidence. The perspectives covered in this book are much more than disinterested theories about masculinity; they are positions of advocacy out to win converts. Thus there is the danger they they, too, provide selected evidence. The reader is urged to keep this fact in mind throughout.

The reader will also notice that I frequently use the definite article and the singular to refer to the various general types of perspectives—for example, the women's movement, the men's movement, the conservative perspective, the black viewpoint. By following this practice I do not mean to suggest that such points of view are single, monolithic entities. Quite the contrary; I use the singular to designate an aggregate in which there are many divisions and points of view.

THE EIGHT PERSPECTIVES

It is time now to present a brief sketch of the eight major perspectives to be presented in subsequent chapters. Each perspective encompasses a general category, within which there are many voices. I have tried to choose those voices that are in the mainstream of each particular view. Where there is more than one important subgroup to be represented, I have identified them and indicated some of their similarities and differences. Although some of these perspectives have roots in the social philosophies of the nineteenth century, each has emerged and taken form in response to modern feminist movements as well as to other components in the aggregate men's movement. Furthermore, the order in which these perspectives are presented is a rough approximation of the order in which they appeared historically. That they are presented in the order in which they appeared is important in understanding both the ways they influence one another and the aggregate effect of these movements. Thus, although each perspective is part of the contemporary men's movement, it also occupies a particular historical and ideological place within that aggregate movement.

1. The Conservative Perspective

Moral conservatives admire and protect social institutions and practices that they find grounded in the traditions of society. Such traditions are, for them, natural and best as well as time-honored. In North American society these traditions include different roles for men and women. Men are the providers and protectors; women are homemakers and caregivers.

Many moral conservatives divide the world into the public sphere, which includes politics and business, and the private sphere, which means the family. Men are naturally dominant in the public sphere, and women are naturally dominant in the private sphere. Violations of traditions are likely to lead to social unraveling and moral crisis. Thus, the moral conservative rejects the demand for less stringent roles for men and women. An irony of the moral conservative public counterattack on feminism is that it was led by a conservative woman, Phyllis Schlafly, whose writings and public appearances were instrumental in defeating the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (Gilder 1986:101ff.).

Biological conservatives often agree with moral conservatives that traditional roles for men and women are natural. However, biological conservatives do not ground their belief in the sanctity of tradition but in the biologies of male and female. The science of sociobiology, which first appeared in the 1970s, argued that social institutions and practices are significantly determined by the genetic predispositions of men and women. If men rule in the public sphere, it is because men are predisposed to do so; if women stay at home more often, then that, too, is their biological inclination. But although sociobiologists agree that social practices are indebted to biological imperatives, they disagree as to the extent of those imperatives. Thus, some argue that it is futile to try to change gender roles, others argue that there is much about our gender roles that can be changed relatively painlessly, and still others argue that only the most tyrannical measures will enforce equal gender roles on men and women.

Both moral conservative counterattacks and sociobiological critiques of feminism appeared in the 1970s; they were the first wave of resistance to the contemporary feminist movement. And although these two forms of conservatism depend upon different assumptions, they both argue in the same direction. Furthermore, many moral conservatives draw upon biological arguments to bolster their claims that what is traditional is natural.

2. The Profeminist Perspective

Concurrent with conservative resistance, a movement of men sympathetic to feminist analyses and agendas appeared in the early 1970s. These men took the label *profeminist* rather than feminist because they recognized the personal experience of being a woman as an important component of being feminist. Profeminist men reject the claim that traditional masculinities are either biologically grounded or necessary to social stability. For them, masculinities are created and maintained through male

privilege and its corresponding oppression of women, although they allow that traditional masculinity is also harmful to men.

Radical profeminists follow the lead of radical feminism in holding that masculinity is created and maintained by misogyny and violence against women, and that patriarchy is the social and political order in which this masculinity exists. To counter the patriarchal order, radical profeminists believe that it is necessary to repudiate masculinity and to replace it with new behaviors and attitudes that are informed by feminist values. That is, men may unlearn patriarchal behaviors by working against violence, learning to take on more caretaker roles, and helping to create noncompetitive, nonhierarchical organizations.

Liberal profeminists follow the lead of liberal feminism in maintaining that masculinity is a set of limitations that are imposed on men, much as femininity is a set of limitations that are imposed on women. These limited ways of behaving are encouraged by a system of rewards, punishments, and social stereotypes and ideals. Both men and women are prevented from self-realization by these restrictive roles. The best way for men to combat sexism is to break through their own limitations and to become fully human, just as women have had to struggle to overcome the limitations of femininity. The model for liberal profeminist men is the liberal women's movement—specifically, the National Organization for Women (NOW).

3. The Men's Rights Perspective

In the late 1970s many men, some of whom had been in the profeminist ranks, began a new movement that has come to be known as the men's rights perspective. This perspective concurs with the profeminist view that masculinity is damaging to men but with the gigantic difference of the belief that the principal harm in this role is directed against men rather than women. Indeed, the premise of all men's rights literature is that men are *not* privileged relative to women. Since male privilege is a cornerstone of every feminist perspective, the men's rights perspective is in this assumption irrevocably antifeminist.

Having denied that men are privileged relative to women, this movement divides into those who believe that men and women are equally harmed by sexism and those who believe that society has become a bastion of female privilege and male degradation. Whereas the women's movement has created new options for women, men have not been given the same range of choices. Thus, a new sexism has been born, a sexism that thrives on male bashing and male blaming. The agenda of the men's rights perspective is to bring about an understanding of the new sexism

and to create laws that protect men against current injustices in such areas as divorce, child custody, affirmative action, domestic violence prosecution, and sexual harassment.

4. The Mythopoetic Perspective

In the late 1980s and early 1990s a new perspective appeared, one built around the writings and workshops of the poet Robert Bly. Men gathered to read poetry, drum, and speak of their emotional and psychic wounds. This perspective was founded on the neo-Jungian conviction that masculinities derive from deep unconscious patterns or archetypes. These patterns are best revealed through a tradition of stories, myths, and rituals. Men and women are essentially different kinds of beings who respond to different kinds of deep needs.

Bly believes that the women's movement has successfully tapped into the unconscious minds of women and found a way to unleash women's energy but that men have yet to find a positive and vigorous way of doing the same. Bly is implicitly critical of feminism because he believes it wounds men and holds out a kind of spirituality that is antagonistic to the deep masculine. Simply stated, Bly believes that modern men are overly feminized. Bly's movement has created several sympathetic submovements, such as the new warrior movement, that stresses wilderness experiences as forms of male initiation into manhood. The therapeutic nature of Bly's work also stimulated twelve-step movements that treat the behaviors of masculinity as addictions.

Bly's spiritual approach was quickly challenged from another neo-Jungian movement that had roots in the Wicca tradition, a pre-Christian pagan religion centered on an earth goddess with lesser deities. This voice, exemplified by John Rowan, argues that masculinity is overly influenced by a lack of feminization. In the Wicca tradition, the deep masculine should be controlled by the Great Goddess, often identified with various female deities such as Isis, Demeter, Kali-dra. Thus, this view is openly humanistic and feminist: It teaches that men have been cut off from a feminine understanding of themselves.

5. The Socialist Perspective

Sexism within the Left/liberal movements of the 1960s and 1970s emerged as an obvious problem by the 1970s. Different leftist men responded to the charges that women were clearly being discriminated against in leftist organizations. Some argued that the women's movement was a bourgeois phenomenon that only served to divide the working class. Others began to directly address issues affecting women, both

within their own organizations and within society as a whole. Unions began to understand their own histories of sexism; some political organizations formed women's caucuses and produced special publications for women members. A few profeminist socialist men began to explore masculinity in light of socialist assumptions and feminist critiques.

From this point of view, masculinities are grounded in economically determined class structures. In patriarchal capitalism masculinities are determined by who does what work, who controls the labor of others, and who controls the products of that labor.

6. Gay Male Perspectives

Gay men stand, along with black men, as one of the two most oppressed groups of men in North America. Gay men have long been considered feminized males—men who lack some crucial component of masculinity. Thus, most gay men have struggled with the questions of masculinity. They have asked of the masculinities that emerge in their own community whether they are truly masculine or some feminized version of hegemonic masculinities. And gay men have challenged both the viability of hegemonic masculinities and the morality of these masculinities. They have further challenged the very distinction between what is masculine and what is feminine. Perhaps because of the centrality of these questions in their lives, gay men have been involved as participants and antagonists in every perspective on men and masculinity. Gay men have much to teach straight men about their fears of male intimacy and friendship and about overcoming their homophobia. Indeed, most gay perspectives list homophobia as one of the principal causes of dominant masculinities.

7. African American Men's Perspectives

The component of race and ethnicity is frequently discussed within the predominantly European American men's movements as well as by men of many nationalities: Chicano, Japanese, Jewish, and so on. But perhaps the best-developed critique of other perspectives and the role of racism in shaping masculinities occurs in the writings of African American men. The 1980s and 1990s have produced a considerable literature, particularly in books and essays, that warns that black men are becoming an endangered species. All these authors agree that black men experience a unique set of difficulties that derive from history and societal racism. But the voices within this movement vary greatly in how they describe the reality of African American men and the extent of racism's effects. Whatever their differences, however, almost all African American perspectives note that

antiblack racism is a formative feature of hegemonic masculinities. Thus, they challenge both the viability and the morality of such masculinities.

8. Evangelical Christian Men's Movement

The leaders of the Promise Keepers often see themselves as the heirs of the waning secular men's movement. They believe they offer what has been lacking in the earlier movements. Promise Keepers is a religiously conservative movement. Based on a literal reading of the Bible, the movement teaches that men should be fathers and providers as well as the heads of their families. In what is a concession to feminism, this movement concedes that men have not been good providers and fathers. Men are to women as Jesus was to the Church. Men are also by nature sinners and dependent upon God. Indeed, having a personal relationship with Jesus is a foundational principle of Christian evangelism. Society is taken to be in moral crisis in part because men have abdicated their responsibilities and in part because women, influenced by feminism, have taken on the man's role.

Common Ground

For all of their differences, the components of the men's movements have many similarities. Each begins with a feminist viewpoint, whether or not it is ultimately opposed or endorsed. Some endorse specific principles of feminism: For example, that there should be no discrimination against women who work, though particular remedies for that discrimination, such as affirmative action, may be opposed. Each movement finds some significant parallel between women and men. Moral and biological conservatives see women as supreme in the domestic sphere and men as supreme in the public sphere. Evangelical Christians see men related to women as Jesus was related to the Church. Men's rights advocates are especially attached to the view that for every discrimination against women there is a comparable discrimination against men. Profeminists find that both men and women are restricted in their gender roles. Mythopoetics try to create a spiritual movement for men that can stand beside the spiritual movement for women. Black social theorists side with black feminists in identifying racism as the driving force in their lives; gay men find comparable common ground with lesbian feminists. Each movement claims that its agenda is in the best interests of men and women and eagerly solicits endorsements from prominent sympathetic women. At the same time, each movement tries to be supportive of men and to find ways to address issues of concern to men.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In identifying how the eight major perspectives answer the four basic questions, we will find it useful to consider the perspectives in a parallel manner. Chapters 2 through 9 of this volume are thus organized under the following headings: (1) Historical Sketch and Primary Sources, (2) Description and Explanation of Male Reality, (3) Assessment of Male Reality and Agenda for Change, (4) Critique: Criticisms and Responses, (5) Summary and Conclusions, and (6) Suggested Reading.

The historical sketch and primary sources section will include some very brief remarks about the history of the perspective and a description of the primary sources to be used in the ensuing discussion. The primary sources are selected writings that I consider to be the best and most available representatives of each perspective; they are also the most frequently cited sources in that chapter.

The reader will see that the description and explanation section of each chapter contains the perspective's answer to the first two central questions (What is the social reality for men in modern society? What maintains or explains this social reality?). In most of the writings, the answers to these two questions naturally occur together anyway. This second section will be subdivided under the two headings of *masculinities* and *feminism,* reflecting the importance of these topics within each perspective.

The third section of each chapter presents the perspective's answers to the third and fourth questions (What would be a better social reality? How can we achieve this better reality?). The focus here will be on evaluative and agenda-building tasks.

The fourth section of each chapter presents a number of criticisms and possible responses. Both interperspective criticisms and challenges to the clarity of the perspective and its use of evidence are featured here. At this point, I must remind the reader that these criticisms and responses constitute only the beginning of a critical discussion, only a direction for debate, rather than a definitive critique that, in many cases, would require an entire chapter or book to delineate.

In the fifth section of each chapter I shall briefly state my conclusions about the major strengths and weaknesses of the perspective in question. Although I try to present a fair picture of each perspective, I do not believe that they are all equally meritorious. It is in this section, therefore, that the reader can most easily discover my own conclusions about each perspective.

The section entitled "Suggested Reading" offers a list of further readings for a more thorough consideration of the perspective covered in that chapter. Although the primary sources are not repeated in this section,