

## Overview

### Introduction

Throughout the course of most of our educational experiences, the accomplishments of men have been a major topic of focus. Whether through the teaching of theories, research, or history, tales of men's contributions to culture and society have dominated our learning (Connell, 1989; Hearn, 2004; Kaschak, 1992; Sen, 2005). Most of us have learned of contributions by scientists such as Sir Isaac Newton and Copernicus; writers such as William Shakespeare and John Steinbeck; and political leaders such as Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson. The majority of the men we have learned about have been of European and middle-class backgrounds, leaving out the important contributions of **working-class** men and **men of color** (Bushweller, 2004; Iseke-Barnes, 2005). And while there has been some progress in the inclusion of more diverse voices in our curricula, our educational experiences have been dominated by stories of the contributions of men (Campbell, 2007; Connell, 1989; Hearn, 2004; Tietz, 2007; Tuwor, 2007).

#### **Who's Who in Masculinities Research: Ellyn Kaschak, Ph.D.**

Ellyn Kaschak has been Professor of Psychology at San Jose State University since 1974, where she has also been the Chairperson of the graduate program in Marriage, Family and Child Counseling and Director of the University's Family Counseling Service. She is one of the founders of the field of feminist psychology, which she has practiced since its inception some thirty years ago,

*Continued*

and has published numerous articles and chapters on the topic, as well as the award-winning *Engendered Lives: A New Psychology of Women's Experience*.

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This text, however, is not focused on men's historical contributions to our world. It is an introduction to the ever-growing field of masculinities. This field seeks to understand people's experiences of masculinities and the social and historical ways in which this phenomenon affects and is affected by human action. This is a relatively new area of exploration (Connell, 1989; Kimmel & Messner, 2001; Levant, 1996; Levant, et al., 2003; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). Scholars in this area are interested in the lived lives of men and others that grapple with masculinity and hope to understand how people view themselves and their place in the world as a function of their negotiation of masculinities. Masculinities theorists try to understand both the challenges and triumphs that people experience.

**Masculinity** is defined in this text as the complex **cognitive, behavioral, emotional, expressive, psychosocial**, and **sociocultural** experience of identifying with being male. More specifically, this text will use the term **masculinities**, assuming that there are multiple ways in which people may experience the world of masculinity (Addis & Cohane, 2005; Amaya, 2007; Bambert, 2005; Paulsen, 1999; Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). While not all people in this field take this perspective, because this text reflects multiple definitions of what masculinity means, where it comes from, and the various ways in which it may contribute to the lives of people who identify as men, the use of the pluralized term will often be warranted. Masculinity is referred to as a psychosocial phenomenon with a recognition that social and **relational** experiences play a crucial factor in the development and **negotiation** of the worlds of men (Harrison, 2005; Mahalik et al., 2001).

## Masculinity as a Construct

Studying masculinities as a subject can be difficult. This is partially because it is an example of what **social scientists** call a **hypothetical**

**construct.** Social scientists often study intangible phenomena that do not have a directly observable or measurable basis. For example, a very popular topic for **psychologists** (one of several kinds of social scientist) to study is self-esteem. Some people think that the construct of self-esteem can help to explain many of the things that people do or experience (Luo & Hing-Luan, 1998; Russel, Crocket & Shen, 2008; Vangelista et al., 2005; Verplanken et al., 2005). But self-esteem itself is not something that can be viewed under a microscope or weighed on a scale. It isn't a tangible physical substance the properties of which are largely agreed upon. If you want to ask someone out to dinner, you can't borrow self-esteem from *someone else* to make *you* feel more confident (although there have probably been times when you've wanted to)!

We may use the hypothetical construct of self-esteem to explain why someone may behave in certain ways. So if a person has a low opinion of themselves, doesn't have a lot of friends, and experiences anxiety around others, we may say it's due to the effect of low self-esteem. But self-esteem isn't a tangible or observable thing; it's a way of explaining a cluster (or group) of related experiences. A hypothetical construct therefore refers to a conceptual way of explaining something we cannot directly observe or measure but assume is made up of a cluster of human experiences that may include behaviors, thoughts, or emotions.<sup>1</sup>

Masculinity is a hypothetical construct because, in and of itself, it cannot be directly observed or measured. So, not surprisingly, social scientists do not all agree as to what we actually *mean* by masculinity. What aspects of human action and psychological and or social experience(s) should we focus on? Is masculinity something only experienced by people who are genetically defined as male, or can others experience masculinity? Is masculinity an identity, a set of behaviors, a cluster of characteristics? Is it stable and consistent across situations or **contextual**? Is it a psychological, social, or historical phenomenon? These are all questions that researchers in the field are studying, researching, and debating (and are discussed in more detail in chapters 3 and 4).

Not only do people disagree about what it is we are supposed to be studying when we study masculinity, but whatever masculinity *is* seems to be different in different cultures. Different cultures have varied

<sup>1</sup> Some definitions of hypothetical construct only include the observable aspects of human beings, our behavior.

expectations and beliefs about masculinities. For example, comparing European cultures to the United States can yield some interesting differences. While traveling in Italy in 1996, I noticed that many men kissed each other on the cheek as a sign of friendliness. This is not something I have seen many men do in the United States, where I suspect it would be viewed as “not-masculine” by many men.

On the same trip, I tried to buy a packet of blades for my razor. I usually buy razor blades that are designated for women, as they often come with aloe and other moisturizers that men’s razors do not have. The blades I intended to purchase were across the counter and I had to request them from the clerk. After several interchanges, I realized she would not sell them to me. “These are for ladies.” “Yes, I know. That’s what I want.” “These are for ladies,” Finally, I said they were for my wife and she let me purchase them. Clearly cultures view gender differently and have varying ideas about the way gender works and what kinds of behaviors and items are appropriate and for whom. Furthermore, those views vary between people in the same culture and across different situations.

Beliefs about gender vary not only across and within cultures but also over time. Throughout every culture’s history, expectations regarding the acceptability and meaning of human behavior has changed (Harvey, 2005). For example, until the end of the 18th century, it was very common for European men of upper-class status to wear powdered wigs as a symbol of their prominence (King, 2002; MacLeod, 2000; Pendergast & Pendergast, 2004). While some men in specialized roles can be found wearing wigs as a symbol of authority (such as some chief justices in Canada), it is much less acceptable for men to do so in the 21st century, and in fact many men suffer humiliation and harassment as a result of making these kinds of fashion choices, particularly if they are perceived as being feminine (Broad, 2002; Mirehya, 2005). Researchers also have different **models** about what masculinity is, where it comes from and how we should study it. A model can be thought of as a way of organizing complex information in order to make it easier to understand. Because much of life has multiple facets to it, models help us by organizing information in a way that makes it more accessible.

Many people use small-scale models of large complex phenomenon (houses, airplanes, cars, dolls, etc.) in order to get a better view of the phenomenon and perhaps explain how it works. Today, much of this is also done online. For example, some clothing stores will have

programs on their websites that allow you to see what a particular piece of clothing might look like (e.g., [www.macys.com](http://www.macys.com)). Sometimes the model helps you see the clothing in a way that is different than actually wearing it, because you can observe it in a way you could not in real life. Since we can't always have direct access to certain stores or clothing (and even when we do it can be pretty overwhelming), these web-models allow us to get a general idea about fit, color, etc.

The web-models that are used are of course created by people. These people make assumptions about a whole host of social variables (body size, gender, class, etc.) that pertain to potential customers who might decide to wear the clothes. They even make assumptions about the kinds of computers that might be used to access the website, what browsers people might be using, how their monitor will interpret color, etc. This means that different websites will display information differently as different models will come across differently based on a variety of factors based on these assumptions. So if three programmers made three models for the very same store, they might design very different ways of displaying clothing on the site.

We do the same kind of thing in the social sciences. We try to take complex phenomenon in the real world and explain them in ways that is organized and conveys a certain logic, structure, and approach. The study of masculinity is no exception. We try to explain masculinity with various models. These models were built during different time periods and in different situations from a variety of cultural perspectives. These different models are explored in chapters throughout this text.

Each model of masculinity contains a variety of assumptions. These assumptions concern what the researcher holds to be true about human nature and how they view what masculinity is, where it comes from, and where it is going. Because this field has such diverse contributors from various disciplines we find ourselves with many different ways of studying masculinities. This makes it imperative that we are aware of those assumptions and can be critical of their interpretations.

## Feminisms

The field of masculinities uses **feminist models** to critically study its content. It might seem odd that a field dedicated to masculinities would employ feminist theory and research to understand the phenomenon of masculinity. You might wonder how an area of study that

predominantly reflects women's writing can be helpful in studying others. In fact, the use of feminist theory and research makes a lot of sense, once you learn about the tools that feminism has to offer us in this investigation (Connell, 1995; England, 1999; Kimmel, 1998; Pateman, 2000; Soban, 2006; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001).

## Why Feminism?

There are several reasons why employing a feminist perspective can be illuminating in our study of masculinities. While the reasons are many (and one could certainly write a whole text *just* on this topic), we will highlight a few here.

One of the contributions of feminist scholarship is to give credit where credit is due. Throughout history, people who have made important contributions to culture are often not visible to the majority. This is particularly true when those people are women and/or **people of color**. Feminist theorists put gender on the map for us to study (Enns & Sinacore, 2005). They have helped others to see how the way in which we make sense of gender socially, historically, psychologically, and biologically contributes greatly to the ways in which we understand human beings.

### Who's Who in Masculinities Research: Carolyn Enns, Ph.D.

Carolyn Zerbe Enns is Professor of Psychology at Cornell College, where she teaches a wide range of undergraduate courses in psychology and women's studies. Her scholarly interests include multicultural feminist perspectives on psychotherapy and pedagogy, feminist therapy in Japan, and identity development among international students. She has published approximately fifty articles and chapters on topics that focus primarily on gender, pedagogy, and feminist theory and therapy. She is the author of *Feminist Theories and Feminist Psychotherapies: Origins, Themes, and Diversity*, and the co-editor (with Ada Sinnacore) of *Teaching and Social Justice: Integrating Multicultural and Feminist Theories in the Classroom*.

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### Who's Who in Masculinities Research: Ada Sinacore, Ph.D.

Ada Sinacore is the Program Director for the Counseling Psychology program in the department of educational and counseling psychology at McGill University. She has published many articles and book chapters involving feminism, gender, multiculturalism, and identity. She is the co-editor (with Carolyn Enns) of *Teaching and Social Justice: Integrating Multicultural and Feminist Theories in the Classroom* (2005).

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In addition, as you will soon learn, feminist scholars have been instrumental in highlighting how issues of **marginalization** affect our lives (Enns & Sinacore, 2005; Kronsell, 2005; Sinacore & Enns, 2005). In other words, some people have been denied access to full participation in culture as a result of their belonging to specific social groups. It is believed that this social exclusion affects people in multiple ways. Feminist research has often focused on women's experience in this regard. The process by which people are marginalized, however, can be applied to various social groupings (such as race, age, religion, etc.). Feminists have helped us understand not only the process of that marginalization, but the many ways in which it contributes to our lives (Kaschak, 1992; Sinacore & Enns, 2005). Understanding this process can also lead to some interesting insights about people's lives.

This focus on having marginalized experiences has also contributed to feminist scholars having a critical view of knowledge (Kronsell, 2005). In other words, one of the "advantages" of being outside of something is that it can give you unique ways of looking at it. For example, if you have ever moved from one home to another in a new neighborhood (or city, state, country, etc.), you may notice aspects of your new neighborhood that many locals do not. This is because, as an outsider, you notice certain aspects of the environment in ways that people who are "used to it" often do not. Similarly, feminist analysis provides us with wonderful tools for evaluating beliefs, ideas, and perspectives in ways that many often overlook (Kronsell, 2005).

Finally, feminists (and ideas influenced by feminism) have contributed much content to the field of masculinities (Connell, 1995;

Kimmel, 1998; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). As you will see, the concepts that have been gleaned from feminist analysis are used both directly and indirectly in the field. In other words, at times feminist theory is given appropriate acknowledgement and credit and other times it is used without citing the feminist origin of the type of analysis. Ironically, even **anti-feminist** thinkers sometimes employ feminist analysis without even realizing it.

## Types of Feminism

There are several different types of feminism (Enns & Sinacore, 2005). Feminist theory and research is done in every area one might study at a college, including anthropology, sociology, information technology, biology, economics, and psychology (Hrady, 1997; Jefferson, 2002; Rosser, 2005). This means that there are feminist anthropologists, feminist economists, feminist biologists, and so on. Each type of feminism gives us a unique and useful way to explore the world of masculinities.

But what are feminists concerned with, and what is a feminist model? All feminists are interested in understanding and bettering the lives of women and others who are marginalized (Sinacore & Enns, 1995). As stated, to be marginalized means that your experiences and worth as a person is not seen as equal to or as valid as others in the **dominant culture** in which you live, and that the culture actively supports the marginalization.<sup>2</sup> The marginalization becomes **institutionalized** when basic societal systems (governments, religions, businesses, families, etc.) support and perpetuate the marginalization.

Countries that withhold the right to vote, own property, or marry based on belonging to some social category (such as being **gay**, **lesbian**, or **transgendered**) reflects the marginalization of those who are denied these rights. People who identify as belonging to these marginalized communities currently struggle with modern marginalizations that can affect all areas of the human experience, including political, familial, economic, social, and psychological avenues of our lives. Feminists have been active in understanding, resisting, and changing these marginalizations (Kronsell, 2005; Sinacore & Enns, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Think of this as a metaphor for a sheet of newspaper. The “dominant” story is on the front page while the “less important” information is in the margins.

Feminist models vary with respect to their understanding of the causes of marginalization and ways of changing it (Sinacore & Enns, 2005). Each model stresses certain ideas and de-emphasizes others. By examining different feminist models, some useful tools for understanding and studying masculinities can be identified. This text will include a brief summary of **liberal, cultural, socialist, women-of-color feminism/womanism**, and **radical feminisms**. These are certainly not the only types of feminisms, and the descriptions below are simplistic summaries of these very rich and detailed schools of thought. However, this brief review will assist us as we lay the groundwork for the overarching perspective of this text.

### Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism focuses on the acquisition of and access to **cultural resources**. The term cultural resource is used here to refer to a social tool that is used to enhance one's ability to adapt and live within one's culture. For example, education, a job, healthcare, and the ability to vote and own property could be considered cultural resources. In general, liberal feminists believe that all aspects of our social system (e.g., economic, governmental, educational, vocational) are worthwhile pursuits and that all people should have equal access to them (Enns & Sinacore, 2005). The problem is that women and other marginalized people are often prohibited from these resources or discriminated against within institutions (Enns & Sinacore, 2005; Rosser, 2005).

For example, since the founding of the United States, women have not had a strong presence in Congress in terms of their official representation. In the 110th Congress (2007), women represented approximately 16 percent of the congress (73 in the House and 16 in the Senate) (Amer, 2007). This is the largest proportion in the history of the country, but clearly, as 51 percent of the general population, women are under-represented.

A liberal feminist model is useful in that it helps us to see what cultural resources and institutions women (and others) have been denied and what steps can be taken to address this **gender gap** to make equal access available (Enns & Sinacore, 2005; Rosser, 2005). Liberal feminists don't want to change the overall way in which we live, but rather hope to make cultural resources more accessible to people who have not historically had access to them.

As stated, liberal feminism is concerned with access to cultural resources. While men vary in their access to cultural resources due to other factors about them (individual factors, personal history, class, race, age, sexual orientation, etc.) the question here is whether there are resources denied to them solely as a function of sharing the social identity of men. One cultural resource is *femininity*. In other words, in many cultures, men are often asked to deny and repress human behaviors associated with being feminine (Levant 1996; Levant et al., 2003; Pleck, 1976, 1989). A liberal feminist perspective is employed when researchers in this field try to understand what the particular aspects of femininity *are* in any given culture and then try to understand the adaptive problems associated with denying aspects of oneself that are associated with those characteristics. In a sense, the liberal feminist perspective focuses on understanding the impact of the denial of the right/opportunity to access aspects of femininity in any given culture.

### Cultural Feminism

Cultural feminism, rather than focusing on the rights and opportunities of people, has focused on aspects of gender that have been integrated into the culture. Cultural feminists believe that there are significant differences between genders that make them unique and distinct social groups (Enns & Sinacore, 2005). The difficulty for cultural feminists is that many of the differences associated with women have been undervalued, ignored, or harmed.

For example, women are often viewed as being more emotional than men (Furnham et al., 2004; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Simon & Nath, 2004). Rather than recognizing this relational way of connecting to others as something adaptive, the term 'emotional' often carries with it ideas of irrationality or weakness (Foley, 1993; Hercus, 1999). This gives people the message that when something is more prevalent among women, it is often discussed as a liability (Enns & Sinacore, 2005). Cultural feminists want to better understand the qualities they believe make women unique and work toward positively integrating those qualities into all aspects of culture (Enns & Sinacore, 2005).

Cultural feminism asks us to consider whether (a) there are aspects and characteristics of masculinity that are unique to men, and (b) those aspects are viewed disparagingly by the culture. One of the primary ways that the field of masculinities has explored this question is by

beginning to research and understand the diverse voices of men. In the past, men have been viewed as such a homogeneous group, and it has been difficult to ascertain what unique qualities they carry (Levant, 1996; Levant et al., 2003; Pleck, 1976, 1989). Cultural feminist approaches have assisted us in investigating these qualities and understanding the various ways in which men make sense of themselves as men.

### Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism, unlike liberal and cultural feminism, focuses on economics as a force that ultimately sets the stage for the ways in which people will understand and interact with one another. Socialist feminism sees capitalism as a system that does not hold within it the potential to include women equally. With an emphasis on history and economics, and borrowing from various writers such as Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, and Ché Guevara (Jimenez & Vogel, 2005; Serra, 2005), socialist feminists argue that an economic system based on competition, which ultimately values financial gain over human worth and dignity, cannot foster an egalitarian role between people since by definition it does not seek a form of democratic partnership (Enns & Sinacore, 2005). This inequality will then affect our various roles as a function of gender and have a likely negative impact on women in particular (Serra, 2005). Socialist feminists are also interested in how issues of race, class, and nationality play into economics and help us better understand the marginalization of women and others (Enns & Sinacore, 2005).

For example, when jobs are moved (outsourced) from one country to another country, members of the original country often complain that they are losing work (Newman, 2005). One reason that outsourcing occurs is because companies often can increase profits by hiring workers in some countries with lax labor laws that allow workers to receive wages far below that of the original country (Newman, 2005). Socialist feminists believe that such an economic practice could never be one in which women could gain equality with men, since human interest and value is seen as secondary to financial gain (Sinacore & Enns, 2005). Socialist feminists have focused on these kinds of issues and how they have contributed to our understandings of gender, gender roles and the marginalization of women and others.

Socialist feminism has been helpful in viewing both the barriers that many men have in the world of work and how that interfaces with their

understanding of what it means to be a “man.” Many cultures stress the importance of work as a primary source of identity for men (Johnston & McIvor, 2004; Nonn, 2004). If these same cultures pit men of various backgrounds against one another for sustainable incomes, they not only create difficulties for them financially, but also as “men” since they rely so much on these connections for sources of identity. For example, a recently retired acquaintance of mine told me, “Now that I am no longer providing for my family, I am nothing.” Sadly, many men experience this kind of disconnection once they leave their working worlds. Socialist feminist thinking offers insight into how that kind of psychological experience can develop in a competitive work world where income becomes a primary indicator of manhood, particularly since many men will never have equal access to work that fits this criteria for being “men.”

### Women-of-color Feminism/Womanism

Women-of-color feminisms (or womanist feminism/theory, womanism, Black feminist thought) are similar to socialist feminism in their emphasis on understanding the role of social group membership and economics in women’s lives (Rosser, 2005; Sinacore & Enns, 2005). In particular, the emphasis has been on the role of race and racism and its impact on women of color, identity formation, and marginalization (Morardi, 2005; Rosser, 2005).

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### *Making Connections: Is Machismo Macho?*

Within many Latino communities the use of the term “machismo” has often been a source of controversy. Machismo (or being “macho”) is often associated with being bullying, paternalistic, and violent towards others (Cranford, 2007; Stobbe, 2005). Machismo in some Latin cultures has been described as a type of dominant masculinity in which men control women through various means and justify that power differential through cultural and historical practices (Cranford, 2007; Stobbe, 2005). Men’s norms and ways of being become central and dominant through the machismo behavior of men (Cranford, 2007; Stobbe, 2005).

Some authors, however, have suggested that men can show leadership qualities in their families with caring, respect, and dedication without being paternalistic and sexist. They argue that the desire to protect and provide for one's family can be done in ways that illuminate the importance of family members, rather than demonstrating their inferiority (González-López, 2004). For example, some families may have **sex-role differentiation** in that they expect that different sexes have different roles, but that the importance for each role is equal (González-López, 2004). This is the kind of question womanist thinking helps us to explore. By questioning White norms, investigating cultural meanings, and emphasizing relationships amongst members of a community, womanists help us understand the complex ways in which masculinities are manifested. The way in which people convey the meaning of the term *machismo* may carry very specific cultural cues that say much about the way we think about gender throughout various cultures.

Scholars such as Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins have helped to form some of the major tenets of womanism. Womanism encourages one to (a) understand that for many women, identity with race is more significant than identity with gender; (b) realize that not all women have the same levels of marginalization; (c) value one's own ideas and experiences as sources of knowledge, rather than what is expected by the **cultural norm**; (d) celebrate the **spiritual** and relational components of being a woman; (e) embody a commitment of caring and responsibility to women of color; (f) recognize the various meanings that concepts like freedom, patriarchy, and relatedness can have in different cultures; and (g) continue to value relationships with men (Banks-Wallace, 2000; Barrett & McIntosh, 2005; Carlton-LaNey, 1997; Morardi, 2005; Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992; Sinacore & Enns, 2005).

Womanism has given a voice to women of color who have identified with various feminist models, but have felt marginalized by a dominant voice of White, middle-class women feminists (Barrett & McIntosh, 2005; Sinacore & Enns, 2005). It has provided a vehicle by which women of color can recognize the connection between race and gender and create conversations that serve to value women's experiences and criticize **oppressive** systems without **dehumanizing** men (Banks-Wallace, 2000).

Womanism has also had an influence in the field of masculinities. Womanist thinking has several applications, including the interface between racial and gender identity, the focus on self-empowerment, and the importance of relationships between men and women. In particular, the use of White male norms for studying men in general has come into question. Womanist thought has helped masculinity theorists and researchers to better understand the connections between racial and gender identity and begin to explore diverse men's experiences within various communities from their own perspectives.

### Radical Feminism

The last feminism we will discuss is radical feminism. Radical feminists have made many important contributions in recognizing how our understanding of gender affects all human activities (Enns & Sinacore, 2005; Kaschak, 1992; Rosser, 2005). In fact, we will spend more time and detail on this section, because so many of the themes here will permeate this text.

A major assumption of radical feminists is that gender is at the forefront of all that we do as human beings, and that thinking about gender is the primary way in which humans make sense of the world (Enns & Sinacore, 2005; Kaschak, 1992). Our choices of dress, job, relationship partner, what we eat, how we move, even how we sleep is affected by the ways in which we make sense of gender (Kaschak, 1992; Rosser, 2005), leading to what the noted feminist clinical psychologist Ellyn Kaschak refers to as our **Engendered Lives** (Kaschak, 1992).

In particular, Kaschak points out that our views about gender have been dominated by a **masculinist epistemology**, one that has been dominated by men's values and ideas (Uhlmann & Uhlmann, 2005). She defines masculinist epistemology as "systems of knowledge that take the masculine perspective unself-consciously as if it were truly universal and objective. Despite claims to the contrary, masculine epistemologies are built upon values that promote masculine needs and desires making others invisible" (Kaschak, 1992, p. 11).

For example, prior to the 1970s, most books, research articles, and other information written in the field of psychology were written by men (Kaschak, 1992; Luepnitz, 1988; Prilleltensky, 1994). There were very few critiques of psychology evaluating the impact of a field dominated by men researching men and making claims about *human* behavior (Kaschak, 1992; Luepnitz, 1988, Rosser, 2005). Psychology as

a discipline: (a) often did not include women in their research samples, but suggested they were discussing human behavior; (b) often viewed women as atypical or abnormal when they differed from men (rather than different or unique); and (c) considered men's behavior as normal and their scientific methods as neutral and objective, rather than as models by men for studying men (Kaschak, 1992; Luepnitz, 1988; Rosser, 2005). In this respect, aspects of radical feminism can be considered what is now called a **postmodern feminism**<sup>3</sup> in that it emphasizes that the ways we use to discover what we think are true are **socially constructed**<sup>4</sup> (Sinacore & Enns, 2005). For this reason, radical feminism seems to be a progenitor to what is today referred to as **social constructionism**.

There are many different models for understanding the concept of being socially constructed (Edwards, 1997; Raskin, 2002), but for our purposes here, when we say something is socially constructed, we mean that to understand what is true we have to examine the **cultural/historical context** that exists when the information is gathered. In other words, at any given point of time, we have different meanings for different human experiences. Those meanings are influenced by what is happening, in history and in the culture, who is in charge of describing what is happening and how they go about describing it (Tappan, 2000). For example, if you read information about terrorism in the last hundred years, you may find that the meanings of what terrorism is, who commits it, and what its impact has been, may vary as a function of being written at different time periods, in different cultures, and by different people (Lipton et al., 2003; Nuzzo, 2004).

By questioning the ways in which we examine and understand the world, radical feminists literally demand that we view the world in alternate and **transformative** ways. This is perhaps one of the most powerful contributions of radical feminism: the critical eye of radical feminists extends to everything we do and opens the doors for new

<sup>3</sup> Other terms used are poststructural and postpositivist; it just depends what academic area you are studying (sociology and philosophy generally referring to those two). In psychology you will see both postmodern and constructivist/constructionist/social constructionist used with each term emphasizing different ways of thinking about this general idea.

<sup>4</sup> Construct means to build. So social construction can be thought of as building the truth using the social truths of that particular time and place. Deconstruction is the opposite, which is tearing down something by looking at its social parts.

ways to view the world (Enns & Sinacore, 2005). In fact, as you will see, radical feminism has helped us to look at the concept of gender and masculinities in ways that require us to consider whether traditional ways of thinking about them (e.g. that only two genders exist, that only people born biologically male struggle with masculinity) are in fact, useful in describing the complexity of human experiences relevant to gender.

This radical reconfiguring of *ideas and knowledge* leads to a radical reconfiguring of our *living* our lives. Radical feminists (akin to socialist and womanist feminists) have been at the forefront of questioning the very structure of the systems we live by. Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists believe that the problems that people face will require an active restructuring and revamping of all of our cultural institutions (family, religion, criminal justice system, etc.) (Enns & Sinacore, 2005). Ultimately we may need to radically alter the ways in which we live our lives if we wish to work toward a truly egalitarian world.

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### *Making Connections: Of Course Women Are Depressed*

Researchers in psychology recognize that women are significantly more at risk to be diagnosed with major depression than are men (Bergdahl, Allard, Alex, Lundman, & Gustafson, 2007; Husky, Mazure, Paliwal, & McKee, 2008; Luo & Hing-Luan, 1998). In trying to answer the question "Why are women more depressed than men?" a radical feminist might turn the question on its head, asking, "Why aren't even *more* women depressed than what we are seeing in the statistics?" With rates of violence against women rising (Efetie & Salami, 2007; Erlanger, 2006; Hearn, 2004; Jackson & Petretic-Jackson, 1996), increasing numbers of women and children in poverty (Huang & Pouncy 2005; Shackelford, Weeks-Shackelford, & Schmitt, 2005), and the large proportion of single mothers not receiving child support (Huang & Pouncy, 2005; Shackelford et al., 2005) it's a wonder that the statistics aren't higher.

Radical feminists with knowledge of research on lesbian relationships might also point out that some studies have indicated that lesbian women report the most satisfaction in relationships when compared to gay male and heterosexual couples, suggesting that further analyses of these couplings should be investigated to understand why women are

not as depressed in these relationships (Kurdek, 2004; Rothblum, 2004; Schreurs, 1994). Understanding the unique strengths of these relationships could assist in re-examining the ways in which other couples relate with one another.

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Radical feminism provides a key perspective for our investigation of masculinities. Social constructionist thinking, an important area in masculinities, with its emphasis on history, power, and the investigation of who has the ability to define the world for others, has also been influenced by radical feminism. Much of the critical thinking in this field is influenced directly or indirectly by radical feminist analysis.

### Integration

In summary, what these feminisms have in common is their agreement that women are under-represented in the social world, that they are undervalued, and that their voices and perspectives are not viewed as important as men's. The major areas that these models highlight include how people are impacted socially and psychologically by their (a) access to cultural resources; (b) understanding of what it means to be gendered; (c) class and class identity; and (d) race and racial identity. Ultimately, there is a recognition that in order to evaluate these issues we must pay attention to how we define what we are studying and recognize who is doing the studying and how the researcher's voice might affect the truths that are discovered.

Each feminist model points to different elements that can help us in our exploration of masculinities. Because men are not a monolithic group with similar characteristics and access to cultural resources, they too are affected by the same phenomenon as women. All of the concerns feminists have about women can be applied to men. However, men are not affected in the same way as women, and therefore part of this field's mission is to understand the similarities and differences in the way in which people are affected by these various issues of marginalization.

One significant difference in this regard is the overall disparity in power that men carry as a group in comparison to women (Connell, 1995; Enns & Sinacore, 2005; Kaschak, 1992). This difference in power, both in comparison to women and amongst men, is discussed in the next chapter and helps set the basic contextual stage for our investigation of masculinities.

## Summary

This chapter introduced the reader to the field of masculinities and to many of the basic questions that researchers and scholars are concerned with. Several different types of feminism were introduced and argued to be useful in the studying of masculinities.

The remainder of this text exposes the reader to the core issues within the field of masculinities. These issues include an overview of popular models of masculinities, theories about the origins of masculinities, and an exploration of the “crisis in masculinity” and three perspectives as to the origins of that crisis. This exposure will assist the reader in the investigation of other readings in this field that may provide the ample background to fully appreciate the rich and detailed explorations into the world of men.

## Review and Questions to Ponder

1. What is the difference between studying men and studying masculinity?
2. Why do we use the term masculinities? Can you give an example to explain?
3. What is a construct? Why is masculinity a construct?
4. Can you think of other examples of constructs you have learned about in other classes? What are they?
5. What do we mean by a model? How do they relate to constructs? How do assumptions relate to models?
6. What are the basic interests of feminist models?
7. What does it mean to be marginalized? Can you think of examples of marginalization?
8. What do we mean by dominant culture?
9. What is the basic concern of liberal feminism? What would this model like to see changed about culture?
10. What is the basic concern of cultural feminism? What would this model like to see changed about culture?
11. What is the basic concern of socialist feminism? What would this model like to see changed about culture?
12. What is the basic concern of woman-of-color feminisms? What would this model like to see changed about culture?

13. Do you think it is possible to be macho without being paternalistic? Why or why not?
14. What is the basic concern of radical feminism? What would this model like to see changed about culture?
15. What do we mean by engendered lives? Can you think of examples of this idea?
16. What is a masculinist epistemology?
17. What is heterosexism and how does it relate to feminist models? Can you think of examples of heterosexism?
18. What is postmodern feminism? What do we mean by social construction?
19. What is meant by deconstructing the social and historical context of a situation?
20. Do you agree with any of the concerns of feminist models? Which ones? Do you consider yourself a feminist or womanist?
21. Were you surprised that feminist models are used to study men? Why? What are potential advantages and disadvantages to doing so?
22. What do you think about the argument that women are more depressed than men because they have more difficult social circumstances than men to live with?

