

Finding Common Ground: A Feminist Response to Men's Rights Activism

Jacqueline Allain
Student of History and Caribbean Studies
University of Toronto

Abstract:

The relationship between feminists and men's rights activists (MRAs) is a hostile one. This paper, which traces the MRA movement's origins to the men's liberation movement of the 1960s, demonstrates that it need not be. Putting contemporary men's rights activism in conversation with feminist theory and praxis, this essay explores points of ideological convergence between the two movements, demonstrates the potential for partnership, and suggests further avenues of scholarly research on contemporary men's rights activism. Attempting to better understand MRAs and their potential as feminist allies is vital if we wish to build and sustain a holistic, inclusive feminism that is truly committed to dismantling patriarchal ideology.

Author's Note:

Jacqueline Allain is completing her undergraduate degree in History and Caribbean Studies at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on gender, Atlantic slavery, and theories of social resistance.

Keywords: Men's Rights Activism, Patriarchal Gender Ideology, Feminist Ally,

Introduction

Those familiar with the feminist blogosphere will likely be familiar with the acronym MRA, which stands for men's rights activist. "Men's Rights Activists Don't Deserve the Benefit of the Doubt" (Baker, 2012) and "Rape and Death Threats: What Men's Rights Activists Really Look Like" (Baker, 2013) read the headlines of two recent articles on Jezebel.com, a popular feminist blog. MRAs are the subject of scorn and ridicule and the butts of jokes, like this 2009 Feministe.com headline: "Feminism: Not a Religion. Men's Rights Activists: Still not Getting Laid Much" (Filipovic, 2009).

In academia, feminists and gender studies scholars have been writing about men's rights activism and the men's movement for decades.¹ Today, when feminist writers decry MRAs, they are referring to a loose network of bloggers and Internet activists who post on MRA forums such as those found on Reddit.com, as well as so-called fathers' rights activists who belong to organizations such as Dads Against Discrimination. The MRAs of this type are based primarily in English-speaking western nations and rally around issues such as sexual and domestic violence against men, sexual double standards, and the perceived social destruction wrought by feminism.

Interacting with MRAs is not something most feminists enjoy. In the words of sociologist Robert Menzies (2007), reflecting on the material he encountered on MRA message boards while doing research, "For feminists, pro-feminists, and anyone else with a pain threshold, these men's rights cyber-sites can be arduous territories to negotiate. The seemingly endless torrent of hostility, petulance, propaganda, and downright hate-mongering that cascades from these virtual pages is hard to digest" (p. 82). On the other hand, a cursory glance at one of the largest sites of Internet men's rights activism, the /r/MensRights subreddit reveals considerable similarity between

¹ For example, Kay Leigh Hagan (1992).

feminism and MRA ideology, most notably in their mutual rejection of traditional gender norms.²

MRAs appear to be mostly white, but beyond that, it is difficult to assess their demographic composition. A number of men's rights subreddits recently conducted a survey of their members. Although the Google document containing the survey results has since been removed, its contents were recorded and analyzed by an atheist blogger named Stephanie Zvan (2014). Of the 3,000 Redditors who had responded at the time of Zvan's writing, 98% were white and 98% were male, and 87% fell in the 17-20 age range. 94% identified as atheist and 84% as "strongly conservative." There are obviously issues with this data: the sample was self-selecting, which means it might not be representative of the actual MRA Reddit community. It is also possible that some of the responses were actually from anti-MRA "trolls" (Internet slang for someone being intentionally inflammatory), as the survey seems to confirm the stereotype of MRAs as spoiled young white men with little life experience. That "fathers' rights" issues such as divorce and child custody disputes are such an enormous topic of conversation in subreddits like /r/MensRights, despite the fact that the majority of white males between the ages of 17 and 20 are neither married nor have children, augments this possibility. Finally, even if these data are accurate, there is no reason to assume that the Reddit MRA population is representative of the entire MRA population. Unfortunately, there exist very few additional sources of quantitative information on MRA demography. I will discuss in further detail the difficulties in defining the contemporary MRA movement, both demographically and in terms of ideology, later on in this essay.

This paper's title, "Finding Common Ground," reflects the belief that men's rights activists and feminists have more in common than either may believe. Its intended audience does not include members of the men's rights movement who

² Founded in 2005, Reddit.com is a social networking and content-sharing website. Members, called Redditors, can create and join thematic communities called subreddits and vote on content. The Men's Rights subreddit, /r/MensRights, was founded in 2008 and is moderated by a panel of ten Redditors. As of the time of this writing, well over 100-thousand Redditors subscribe to /r/MensRights. Related subreddits, as indicated on the /r/MensRights homepage, include /r/mensrightslaw, /r/LadyMRAs, /r/MRAActivism, /r/FeMRA, and /r/MensRants.

believe that rape is a made-up crime, or that feminism is an ideology of hate, akin to Nazism, or any number of the more extreme men's rights talking points. Nor does it include feminists who have no interest in examining how patriarchal gender ideology hurts men. The aims of this paper are to explore the historical and ideological intersections between feminist theory and men's rights activism; to address and dispel common MRA charges against feminism; to suggest further avenues of historical and sociological research into men's rights activism; and, above all, to demonstrate the potential for partnership between feminists and those members of the men's rights movement who are genuinely interested in challenging gender norms.

Feminism and the Men's Movement: Theory and History

Even absent of any in-depth analysis of Internet men's rights activism, a quick glance at the /r/MensRights subreddit makes clear that many of the issues raised and arguments made by internet MRAs intersect with feminism. When MRAs criticize the assumption that women make better parents than men or that women cannot commit sexual abuse, what they are really doing is criticizing patriarchal gender ideology, an ideology that feminists also reject. In fact, men's rights activism and feminism share a long, complex, and intertwined past. The following section is a brief outline of some of the main tenets of contemporary feminist ideology, especially where it intersects with men's rights activism, and a historical overview of the men's movement, leading into a description of the type of men's rights activism to which feminists today object.

First, some notes on terminology. In her paper "Theorising Patriarchy" (1989), feminist theorist Sylvia Walby, after discussing the history of the term, defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women" (p. 214). This is similar to feminist theorist and cultural critic bell hooks' definition of patriarchy as "a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to anything and everything deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the

weak" (2004, p. 18). It is important to note that these two definitions' focus on structural and institutional power – net power, if you will – negates the idea that "every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one" (Walby, 1989, p. 214). Indeed, within patriarchal societies, it is possible for women to occupy positions of dominance over men. This point is especially salient when we take into account racial and other forms of inequality, such that it is difficult to claim that a wealthy white female CEO is socially disadvantaged relative to an impoverished black man. When feminists talk about patriarchy, they are talking about widespread behavioral patterns, beliefs, and imagery, as well as modes of production, governance, and social regulation.

I have already used the terms "traditional gender ideology" and "patriarchal gender ideology." This paper uses the two interchangeably. Paraphrasing social psychologists Susan Fiske and Peter Glick, Paul Eastwick et al. (1996) define traditional gender ideology as "a preference for the conventional division of labor between male providers and female homemakers and for the associated patriarchal system that cedes more power and status to the male provider" (p. 604). Patriarchal gender ideology requires that men be strong, dominant, and aggressive – the qualities of a head-of-household, head-of-state, boss, or leader. Gender studies literature makes frequent use of the related term "hegemonic masculinity," developed, refined, and popularized most famously by R.W. Connell, which refers to the form of masculinity most honored within a given time and place. Multiple masculinities (e.g. various racialized and queer masculinities) may exist simultaneously in any social context, but all are subordinate to the hegemonic, normative form (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 842).³ In this context, I consider hegemonic masculinity as that which most fully embodies the patriarchal male gender norms I described.

Feminism is often posited as the belief that men and women should be accorded equal rights, or that men and women are equal in worth, or that women

³ The title of this paper is "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," suggesting, of course, that the concept of hegemonic masculinity has undergone considerable revision since it was first proposed. The definition I give here is Connell's original definition, which I believe is adequate in the context of this paper.

should have choices in life. The latter is most fully manifested in the form of so-called choice feminism, a term coined by Linda Hirschman that has come to mean an apolitical approach to feminism that privileges individual "choice" over a critical analysis of patriarchal inequality (Ferguson, 2010). Although choice and legal equality are part of feminism, the vast majority of feminist theorists would consider such definitions simplistic and lacking. Instead, the definition they offer would be something more like that of bell hooks, who defines feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks, 2004, p. viii). This definition could be expanded to include patriarchy, which is sexist exploitation, oppression, and sexism institutionalized. At its core, feminism is about challenging patriarchy.

This paper uses the term "*contemporary* feminism" in an attempt to acknowledge feminism's long and complicated past—a past far too long and complicated to do justice to here. I do, however, want to make clear that while all strains of feminism since the 1960s and '70s have been united around an opposition to patriarchy, feminism has evolved significantly over the past decades. In the '70s, for example, some feminists chose to break all ties with men, practicing either celibacy or lesbianism. These women were called feminist separatists or lesbian separatists. Today, very few feminists—including those in academia, who bear the brunt of the worst feminist stereotypes—would advocate for completely separating from men as a political act. It is thus prudent to recognize separatist feminism as an important part of feminism's past, while also recognizing that feminist theory and praxis today does not correspond with some of the more extreme factions of 1970s feminists.

My definition of contemporary feminist theory is based on the kind of feminist writing routinely published in left-wing print and online publications like *The Nation*, PolicyMic.com, and *Mother Jones*, as well as *Bitch Magazine*, Feministing.com, *The Feminist Wire*, and other explicitly feminist print and online sources. It is the kind of feminist writing routinely published in academic journals like *Signs*. This kind of feminism—influenced strongly by theorists such as Rebecca Walker (1992), who helped popularize the term "third-wave," and bell hooks—attempts to address women's issues holistically, taking into account the unique forms of sexism

experienced by women of color and women belonging to other marginalized groups (albeit with mixed success).⁴ Following post-structural feminist theorists such as Judith Butler, it rejects simple, binary constructions of gender (men/women, male/female) and the idea of a common or global "sisterhood."

What else do contemporary feminists believe?⁹ In general, contemporary feminist philosophy takes a social constructionist view of gender, rejecting biological determinism (Campbell, 2002, p. 451; Lindenmeyer, 2002, pp. 46-47). The idea that sex and gender are not synonymous concepts is almost universally accepted among contemporary feminists and gender theorists.⁵ Put simply, *sex* refers to the biological differences between men and women (i.e. hormonal, chromosomal, and genital differences) and *gender* to the legal status of someone as male or female and the set of cultural expectations surrounding that status (Lorber and Moore, 2007, p. 5; Rider, 2005, p. 21; Best, 2002, p. 220). As gender scholar Shira Tarrant (2006) puts it, "we might come into this world with a penis or a vagina, but we're not born wanting to fix things with a hammer or carry a purse" (p. 6).

Biological gender essentialism has historically been used to justify gender inequality to the detriment of women. For example, pseudo-scientific theories about female-male brain size differences have been held as "proof" of women's inferior intellect (Heyman and Giles, 2006, p. 295). On the other hand, some gender essentialist theory attributes to women socially desirable traits such as an *innate* orientation toward peace-making and relationship-preservation. In either case, gender essentialism is generally rejected by contemporary feminism because of how easily it can be used to justify the relegation of women's autonomy through benevolent sexism, a form of sexism that, as opposed to more hostile, aggressive forms, "encompasses subjectively positive (for the sexist) attitudes toward women in traditional roles: protective paternalism, idealization of women, and desire for intimate relations" (Glick and Fiske, 1997, p. 119). For example, the idea that women are, by nature, innocent and

⁴ This is called an intersectional approach. See Judy Aulette et al, 2009, p. 5.

⁵ For discussion of a few notable exceptions, see Lindenmeyer, 2002, p. 47; Best, 2002, p. 220; Coltrane, 1994, p. 45. In addition, some poststructural feminists argue that sex, in addition to gender, is constructed.

in need of male protection can be seen as justification for male control and domination. The idea that women are more spiritually "pure" than men can be seen as proof that they are more suited for the domestic sphere (in which, conveniently, work is generally unpaid) than the competitive, rough, masculine-driven public sphere.

Few feminists would argue that there are not some basic male-female sexual differences: male-sexed bodies have penises, female-sexed bodies, vaginas; male-sexed bodies contain more testosterone, female-sexed bodies, more estrogen; male-sexed bodies are generally taller, female-sexed bodies, generally shorter.⁶ Aside from these physical distinctions, however, contemporary feminist theory holds that men and women are essentially more alike than they are different—especially psychologically.⁷ Women are no "purer" than men, no *inherently* kinder or more pro-social. I continue to emphasize the words "innate" and "inherent" to indicate that while contemporary feminists generally reject the notion of a biological basis for female-male behavioral differences, this does not mean that they deny the existence of socially constructed gender differences. In other words, they hold that female-male behavioral differences, while a social reality, can be traced to socialization rather than biology.⁸

The implications of this belief are far-reaching. If men and women are inherently the same, there is no reason that women should not be expected to take on the same responsibilities as men, and men as women. In regard to parenting, this means that men should contribute to the care of offspring, not just by generating an income, but by doing traditional "mothering" activities like playing with, bathing, and putting to bed their kids.⁹ In cases of spousal separation, they should be entitled to the same parental rights as mothers (Silverstein, 1996, pp. 8-9; Levit, 1996, pp. 1074-79).

⁶ It is important to note here, however, that someone with a biologically male body can identify as a woman and someone with a biologically female body as a man. Again, because sex and gender are not synonymous, some women can have penises, some men vaginas.

⁷ A less extreme version of this argument might hold that biological distinctions are accountable for some behavioral differences between men and women (for example, men's higher testosterone levels might be in part responsible for higher male aggression), but that these essential differences are greatly exaggerated and influenced by cultural conditioning, and the link between biology and behavior is not clear-cut. See Mackie, 1983, pp. 76-77.

⁸ This is similar to how many anthropologists hold that "race" is a biologically obsolete concept, but still a social reality that affects people's habitus and lives.

⁹ For example, Silverstein (1996); Ehrsenhaft (1998); and Medzian (1992).

They should not be expected, by virtue of their gender alone, to do women special favors like pay for dinner, buy fancy gifts, defend women's "honor" (which itself is a gendered concept), or hold open doors.

Just as it rejects biological gender essentialism, contemporary feminism rejects compulsory gender roles and traditional gender ideology, which holds that men are (or should be) strong, dominant, and aggressive, and women are (or should be) weak, submissive, and meek. The social and economic costs incurred by women in a patriarchal society are enormous, but there are a few seeming benefits. For example, women are generally treated less harshly than men for certain crimes, such as statutory rape, both legally and socially—socially in the sense that male-victim/female-predator sex crimes are often joked about as instances of men (or underage boys, in the case of statutory rape) "getting lucky." Contemporary mainstream feminists reject this sort of differential treatment on two grounds: it is unethical (obviously), and it perpetuates dangerous ideas about supposedly innate female-male social characteristics. As feminist legal scholar Nancy Levit (1996) argues, "punishing only men for statutory rape reinforces the model of males as aggressors and affords women "protection" while denying them sexual freedom" (p. 1052) which is further detrimental to women because "social acceptance of male aggression may be reinforced by rape laws that presume a woman's consent to intercourse in the absence of her resistance" (p. 1056). Levit's argument is that the American legal system's assumption of male hypersexuality and aggression is detrimental to women as well as men because it upholds gender essentialist ideals that have historically been used to justify female subservience. Reflecting on his education at an evangelical Christian high school, ethicist Patrick D. Hopkins (1998) recalls learning that male hypersexuality meant men were more susceptible to getting "caught up in the moment." It was girls' responsibility, therefore, to "resist physical contact or suggestive behavior that might inflame their suitors" (p. 35). Again, we see how the patriarchy-based assumption of male hypersexuality calls into question men's capacity for self-control. Disparate treatment of men and women for sexual offenses has its roots in this assumption.

Overall, contemporary feminist theory holds that gender is a social construct that gender is a product of socialization, something that is cultivated and learned. It rejects traditional gender ideology, which assumes men to be naturally rough, tough, and sexually aggressive, and women to be passive, caring, and good. And, for the most part, it rejects differential legal and social treatment of men and women based on such ideology. Very few contemporary feminists would argue that women make naturally better parents than men; that it is acceptable for women to sexually and physically harass and insult men; or that women deserve special treatment socially and under the law.

The feminist rejection of gender essentialism and traditional gender norms is intertwined with the ideology of a movement that emerged in the 1960s and '70s: the men's liberation movement. Led by writers such as Joseph H. Pleck, Jack Sawyer, and Jon Snodgrass, men's liberationists brought to light the ways in which traditional gender norms negatively affect men socially and psychologically, an issue that was expanded upon in the 1980s and '90s (and continuing today) by R.W. Connell, Michael Kimmel, and others. As Sawyer put it in 1970, "male liberation calls for men to free themselves of the sex-role stereotypes that limit their ability to be human" (p. 170). By and large, adherents to this strand of the men's movement were and are pro-feminist. As Pleck and Sawyer wrote in *Men and Masculinity* (1974), an anthology that includes an article by Gloria Steinem, "women's liberation also holds incidental benefits for men" by questioning traditional gender norms (p. 2). Men's liberationists understood that women suffer most under patriarchy, but they also recognized that unyielding notions of socially acceptable male/female behavior limit men's options for self-expression. This dual recognition is articulated beautifully by writer and anti-sexual harassment activist Michael Kaufman (1994):

Men enjoy social power and many forms of privilege by virtue of being male. But the way we have set up that world of power causes immense pain, isolation, and alienation not only for women but also for men. This is not to equate men's pain with the systemic and systematic forms of women's

oppression. Rather, it is to say that men's worldly power... comes with a price for us (p. 142).

The price Kaufman refers to includes the inability express emotion, the repression of homosexual desires, and unrealistic expectations of physical strength and financial success. The idea that rigid gender norms negatively affect both men and women is what Kenneth Clatterbaugh (1996) calls the "socialization argument" and formed the basis of the 1970s male liberation movement (pp. 297-99). Today, pro-feminist men's studies scholars – the heirs to the male liberationists of the 1960s and '70s – occupy a prominent place in academia.¹⁰

Patriarchal gender ideology takes a physical as well as emotional toll on men. In *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements* (1997), pro-feminist men's studies scholar Michael Messner describes his father's sudden death from cancer in 1977. "As a high school college and football player in the 1930s and 1940s, then in the navy in World War II, he had been taught that a real man ignores his own pain," Messner writes of his father, a man who "prided himself that he had never let a little cold or flu or a sore back keep him from work." When he began to notice signs that there was something wrong, he ignored them – and by the time he saw a doctor, it was too late. Messner sees his father's story "as paradigmatic of the story of men in general" (pp. 5-6). The masculine ideal men are expected to live up to encourages them to ignore medical warning signs and physical pain, engage in risky behavior, and consume alcohol and tobacco at higher rates than do women. Like Kaufman, Messner is not arguing here that women oppress men or that men suffer more than women, but rather that the patriarchal social expectation of male hardiness and strength has very negative consequences for men.

Obviously, not all strands of the men's movement are profeminist. Today's MRAs certainly are not. I now turn my attention to the ideological roots of the contemporary MRA movement. MRA organizations began appearing in the early

¹⁰ Michael Kimmel, Kenneth Clatterbaugh, Michael Kaufman, Michael Messner, and R.W. Connell are a few of the most famous men's studies scholars.

1970s, with the 1971 Coalition of American Divorce Reform Settlements and the 1973 Men's Rights Association. Sociologist Judith Newton (2005) calls the MRA movement a "spinoff" of the men's liberation movement (p. 190). It was a spinoff in that the sense that both movements were premised on the belief that traditional gender roles hurt men. What distinguished MRAs from male liberationists was their denial of structural inequality between men and women and their attempts to divert blame for their problems away from patriarchy. Herb Goldberg's 1976 *The Hazards of Being Male* was one of the first books to argue that patriarchal gender norms (though he did not see them as patriarchal) hurt men just as much as or more than they hurt women. A more recent example of a prominent MRA writer is Warren Farrell, author of *The Myth of Male Power* (1993). Incredibly, Farrell cites the fact that women shop more than men and the fact that more men than women work outside the domestic sphere as evidence of male persecution. Although Farrell claims to support feminism, his all-but denial of men's historical and present-day economic, social, and political power over women sullies his feminist credentials. Today, Farrell is a hero of the men's rights movement; *The Myth of Male Power* is on the "Suggested Reading" list of the /r/MensRights homepage. Men like Goldberg and Farrell shared with men's liberation activists an ideological rejection of patriarchal gender ideology, but without knowing it. They are the forebears of today's MRA movement.

Sociologist Jocelyn Elise Crowley has written extensively about a loose network of what are known as fathers' rights activists (whom I will call FRAs), whose adherents belong to organizations such as Dads Against Discrimination, the National Congress for Fathers and Children, and the Children's Rights Council. FRAs believe that fathers are discriminated against in divorce proceedings, custodial disputes, and the child support system. Some FRAs want to abolish the child support system, whereas others "demand more moderate adjustments, such as a reworking of the formulas used to calculate the awards, increased tax breaks for paying on time, and the introduction of "accountability systems" (such as debit cards) so that they can verify that all monies are being spent on their children instead of on their former partners" (Crowley, 2009, p. 332). The philosophy behind the FRA movement is valid: equally fit, loving parents

should have equal custodial rights in the case of family breakdown, regardless of gender. However, what many father's rights organizations and activists seem to discredit is the fact that women continue to do the majority of childcare and household labor. That the issue of child custody and alleged discrimination against fathers occupies such a central role in MRA discourse, as I have noted, suggests that FRAs are a subgroup of MRAs.

In the early 1990s, around the time Farrell was working on *The Myth of Male Power*, men across the United States began to go on weekend retreats to connect with other men and get in touch with their primal, masculine energy. Inspired by the work of poet Robert Bly, they believed that American men had become overly domesticated, sensitive, and alienated from their essential "maleness" — the part of men that is adventurous, brave, wild. They formed what is called the mythopoetic men's movement, and their weekend retreats consisted of drumming, chanting, crying, and hugging, and taking part in male bonding rituals (as well as, according to Michael Kimmel, pretending to be animals) (Newton, 2005, p. 139; Kimmel, 1995, p. 2). Mythopoeists, who were mostly middle-aged, white, middle-class, and heterosexual, relied heavily on Jungian psychology and the appropriation of indigenous, non-western mythology and ritual to make the case that it was essential for modern men to break away from their mothers and be "initiated" into manhood (Newton, p. 141; Kimmel and Kaufman, 1995, pp. 18-19, 21, 24, 28-31).

The mythopoetic movement, which has all but died out, was fairly complex. On the one hand, the mythopoeists were not explicitly anti-feminist, and their willingness to be emotional and vulnerable in front of their peers is an obvious break from standard patriarchal gender ideology (Newton, 2005, p. 140). According to Newton, they were "largely liberal," politically (p. 7). On the other hand, there was something deeply conservative about the mythopoetic movement, especially in its essentialist ideas about men and women, the idea of some sort of innate "male" energy (Clatterbaugh, 1995, pp. 49-51; Kimmel and Kaufman, 1995, p. 25). Additionally, Kimmel reports encountering a lot of "undiluted rage against mothers" among mythopoeists, who accused their wives of conspiring to keep them from their kids — an obvious

connection with FRAs (p. 7).

Writing in 1993, Kenneth Clatterbaugh recognized the similarities between mythopoetic discourse and that of men's rights activists such as Farrell, most notably in that both downplayed the existence of men's institutionalized power (Clatterbaugh, pp. 56-57). There were also some differences. For example, both movements offered as evidence of male persecution a list of "wounds" that afflict men. But in keeping with the mythopoetic fascination with mythology, Jungian philosophy, and spirituality, mythopoeists' list of wounds tended to be abstract—the "mother wound" (men emotionally distancing themselves from men), the "father wound" (poor relationships between fathers and sons) (Clatterbaugh, p. 56; Kimmel and Kaufman, pp. 22-27). MRAs, on the other hand, focused their attention on visible, measurable phenomena, such as men's shorter life spans and deaths in combat (both of which can be traced to the expectations placed on men by patriarchal gender ideology, but this, of course, went unnoticed by MRAs) (Clatterbaugh, p. 56).

Furthermore, MRA discourse tended and tends, like feminism, to reject patriarchal notions of gender essentialism. Farrell's *The Myth of Male Power* cites the mandatory draft of males as an example of male persecution. Although Farrell conveniently avoids the fact that men, by and large, are the ones who wage war which was especially true during the Vietnam War, the last time the United States actually made use of the draft—his argument is not entirely absurd. In an ideal world, patriarchal gender ideology—which encourages male violence, positions men as the leaders and protectors of the home and nation, and perpetuates gender essentialist notions of female passivity and male aggression—would not dictate American public policy. Farrell misses the mark by failing to incorporate an analysis of patriarchy and notions of gender essentialism into his argument, but his argument cannot be taken as an endorsement of these things, either. This is in stark contrast with the mythopoeists' habit of excusing or endorsing male aggression à la neo-Jungian archetypes (e.g. the king-protector) and the belief that men are essentially aggressive (Kimmel, p. 5; Clatterbaugh, p. 54).

Judging from what I have read of online MRA discourse, today's MRAs bear little

resemblance to the mythopoeists of the 1990s: they are not spiritual, they are not interested in healing their "mother wounds," and they do not tend to talk about their emotions, except for anger. Indeed, if we are to believe the Reddit data I mentioned before, today's MRAs and the mythopoeists have almost nothing in common except for their whiteness. The reason I have gone into detail about the mythopoeic movement, then, is to suggest that more work needs to be done on exploring the connections — if there are any — between it and the contemporary MRA movement. What has become of those '90s men, with their drum circles and therapy sessions? Even if they do not call themselves "men's rights activists," did their movement influence contemporary men's rights activism at all?

These questions speak to a larger problem in the study of contemporary men's rights activism — namely, that there exists shockingly little information about the movement, both its demographic composition and its ideology. Feminists who make broad statements like "MRAs are just a bunch of white-privileged misogynists" do not even know with any certainty whom they are talking about. Studying the contemporary MRA movement requires analytical creativity and informed supposition.

Men's Rights Activists Today

Because there exists so little scholarly information about the contemporary MRA movement, most of what we know (or think we know) about it is based upon anecdotal evidence and observation. In July 2013, I took a few hundred screenshots of the beginnings of /r/MensRightsActivism subreddit threads and attempted to categorize them thematically.¹¹ This proved difficult, as a huge portion consisted simply of links to fairly value-neutral news articles (e.g. "Single-Fatherhood on the Rise") with no commentary by the poster. Some were stereotypical MRA whining, such as one obviously fabricated story from a man who claimed to have innocently held a door open for a woman at a pizza restaurant, only to be yelled at ("You think I NEED you to hold the door open for me?!") "No ma'am, I was just raised to be polite." "That's what's

¹¹ All of the following reddit content was pulled from /r/MensRightsActivism and subreddits.

wrong with the world today, MEN feel as if women NEED TO HAVE THINGS DONE FOR THEM!"), and complaints about false rape accusations. There was also a lot of discussion of FRA issues and complaints about feminism, but not everything they discussed lacked merit. Many talked about violence against men, especially female-on-male violence; men's higher death rates from drug abuse and job-related casualties; and female-on-male statutory rape. There were also a few surprises, like a question from one poster about whether or not male-only barbershops are unethical because they discriminate against women. To me, this suggests a sincere belief in the righteousness of gender-neutrality. I was also (pleasantly) surprised to find a link to an image of a male washroom with a "changing tables inside" sign, accompanied by the commentary, "As a single dad with a young son on a road trip this was a very welcome sight." Although this poster, as an MRA, was probably unaware that men being more involved in childcare, including the unpleasant parts like changing diapers, is something that feminists have been agitating for for decades, it was heartening to see him take an interest in caring for his son. Almost a year later, perusing through the same subreddit, I continue to encounter the same mix of discussion topics.

The problem is that casually perusing is not a very scientific way of going about determining what kinds of topics interest MRAs. Analysts who are well-versed in sociological research methodology could learn a lot from conducting a well-designed, thorough content analysis, not only of /r/MensRights but also some of the other MRA subreddits, like /r/mensrightslaw, /r/MRAActivism, and /r/MensRants. Of these, /r/MensRights is not only the largest, but also very heavily moderated; posters are not allowed to refer to women as "bitches" or "cunts," for example, or even to make statements like "Women are disgusting and cannot be trusted" (this is an actual example taken from the moderation policy page).

In terms of assessing MRA demography, researchers, instead of relying on open-access surveys, could directly contact posters who have been active MRA subreddit users for over a given period of time. This could potentially weed out a lot of anti-MRA "trolls" who create accounts just to answer the survey. To assess the demography of the MRA movement outside of Reddit, researchers could take a page out of Michael

Kimmel, Jocelyn Crowley, Judith Newton, and others who have researched facets of the men's movement by interviewing members of MRA organizations and attending MRA meetings and forums. This would also be a good way of determining how the topics discussed on MRA subreddits compare or contrast with those in which offline MRA organizations are interested.

Even within the contemporary MRA movement, there appear to be some divisions, or at least degrees of extremism. Men going their own way (MGTOW) are MRAs who have taken MRA anti-woman rhetoric to an extreme. Judging from what I have seen of MGTOW websites, Facebook.com groups, and subreddits, it is fair to say that these men truly hate women. Unfortunately, there exists absolutely no reliable information on MGTOW. There also exists a fairly well-known website called ReturnOfKings.com, whose *raison d'être* is to denounce "sluts" and gay men. Return of Kings is run by a blogger named Roosh V., a self-proclaimed professional pick-up artist and sexist. It is unclear if Roosh V. and the men who frequent Return of Kings consider themselves MGTOW, but their shared hatred of women and belief that women are only valuable as sex objects raises that possibility. Unlike many contemporary MRAs, the men behind Return of Kings specifically condone gender essentialism.

Moderate MRAs, those who reject gender essentialism and misogyny, would do well to actively, vocally distance themselves from MGTOW and the pickup artist-types who align themselves with Return of Kings and other groups like it. Doing so would challenge some of the worst MRA stereotypes and strengthen the credibility of the movement. For our part, feminists should be wary of grouping together all MRAs and ignoring differences of opinion within the movement. It is both unfair and inaccurate to draw no distinction between rabidly misogynistic MRAs and their more moderate counterparts, even if we believe the latter to be misguided, as I do.

The truth is that both MRAs and feminists are guilty of spreading misinformation about each other, sometimes unintentionally. I have attempted to explain the history, demography, and ideology of the contemporary MRA movement in a way that is both sensitive and attentive to nuance. I now turn my attention to

addressing some of the most prominent anti-feminist MRA arguments and misconceptions, and then to exploring the potential for MRA-feminist reconciliation and partnership.

Anti-Feminist Misconceptions and the Potential for Partnership

The idea that women's studies college courses teach students to hate men is a common misconception. Since its introduction into academia in the 1970s, the field of women's studies has undergone many changes. One major change has been an increased attempt to encourage male students to take women's studies courses (Fahs, 2013, p. 559). Furthermore, professors in the field are often very aware of the importance of integrating the studies of masculinity into their curricula, and make active attempts to do so.¹² The addition of "gender" to many women's studies program names and course titles – e.g. The Department of Women and *Gender* Studies, Intro to Women and *Gender* Studies – reflects this growing awareness of how the study of men fits into the study of women. According to Oakland University professor Jo Reger, explaining why the Women's Studies program at Oakland University changed its name to Women and Gender Studies, "We can't just talk about what makes a woman without talking about what makes a man" (Oakland University News Archive, 2008).

Many male college students enrolled in women and gender studies (WGS) programs report being labeled effeminate or gay by their peers, especially by their male peers (Murphy, 2011, pp. 173-75). Not all male students in WGS are gay, but many of them are. According to Michael Murphy, a gay male WGS professor, this is because WGS courses "offer a space that both affirms gay male students' life experience and helps them develop analytical and political tools for personal empowerment" (p. 176). In WGS, gay male students encounter feminist challenges to the gender binary, patriarchal gender norms, and gender essentialism. The appeal of such a framework to young men who do not fit the straight hegemonic masculine ideal is obvious. So long

¹² For example, Gaffney and Manno (2011).

as MRAs consider gay men to be men, academic WGS provides a space for men to explore alternatives to heteropatriarchal masculinity.

WGS holds benefits even for heterosexual male students. Very few men totally live up to the standards of hegemonic masculinity, and as with gay men, WGS introduces them to a framework that challenges those harmful standards. According to one professor, reflecting on the incorporation of masculinity studies into her college's women's studies program, "Rather than simply constructing men as the oppressors, it allows us to explore the varieties of masculine experience, both hegemonic and non-hegemonic. This more complicated view of men is in keeping with Women's Studies attempt to account for the diversity of human experience" (Berila et al., 2005, p. 40).

The myth that WGS college courses teach hatred of men is itself based on a widespread misconception: the idea that feminists hate men. It would be disingenuous to claim that feminism does not contain a number of anti-male strains. This was especially true in the 1960s and '70s. MRAs often cite works like Valerie Solanas's 1967 *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* (S.C.U.M. stands for "Society for Cutting Up Men") as examples of feminist misandry. It is important to keep in mind two things. First, anti-male feminists have always been somewhat on the fringes of the movement. (In the case of Solanas, it should be noted that she acted entirely alone—S.C.U.M. was a movement of one.) Mainstream second-wave feminists such as Gloria Steinem primarily sought to gain rights and equality for women, not to destroy men.

Second, contemporary feminists do not, by and large, advocate for separatism or the rejection of men. This is in large part the result of contributions by black feminists such as those who made up the Combahee River Collective, a black lesbian feminist organization active during the 1970s. According to the authors of the 1977 "Combahee River Collective Statement," "we reject the stance of Lesbian separatism because it is not a viable political analysis or strategy for us. It leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly Black men, women, and children." Black feminists knew that it was untenable to turn their backs on their brothers, fathers, and sons while they suffered under white supremacy. In the words of black feminist Dorothy Roberts (1995, 1998), "We are bound to Black men through the day-to-day struggles of living in

a racist society" (p. 320). Fighting white supremacy would involve solidarity with, not rejection of, men of color.¹³ Contemporary feminism owes its more nuanced understanding of gender relations to feminists of color.

Perhaps the best approach to challenging these two misconceptions—that WGS courses teach students to hate men and feminism is anti-male—is to look at some WGS course syllabi. Doing so gives us a more concrete understanding of contemporary feminist theory and praxis. An informal sample of fifteen introductory WGS course syllabi demonstrates how different typical WGS courses are from the stereotype (see footnote for a description of the sampling methodology used).¹⁴ Of these fifteen syllabi, ten include readings by Audre Lorde and/or bell hooks, both of whose work deals extensively with patriarchy's destructive effects on men. An additional two contain the "Combahee River Collective Statement," which, as we have seen, rejects separatist feminism. Eight include readings by pro-feminist men's studies scholars, including some cited in this paper (specifically, Kimmel, Kaufman, Brod, Messner, and Connell). Eleven contain at least one section devoted to exploring gender as a social construction and gender and sexual variance through time and space, citing poststructural feminist theorists such as Judith Lorber, Anne Fausto-Sterling, and Judith Butler. None contain the writings of Andrea Dworkin, the symbol, however unfairly, of man-hating feminism—and none contain the *S.C.U.M. Manifesto!*

Admittedly, six of the syllabi cite authors who might fairly be described as hostile toward men. I am referring specifically to Adrienne Rich, Catharine MacKinnon, and Shulamith Firestone. However, of those six, each contains readings from at least one of the following: hooks, Lorde, Kimmel, or Kaufman. It is thus difficult to argue that WGS courses assign only work by "anti-male" feminists. Furthermore, assigning a particular text should not be taken as a statement of approval of everything that text

¹³ For a more forceful critique of anti-male feminism, see hooks, "Men: Comrades in Struggle" (2000), pp. 68-70. Here, hooks castigates anti-male feminism as bourgeois and white-supremacist.

¹⁴ To make this selection, I searched "WGS introduction syllabus" in Google and then downloaded fifteen course syllabi from the first eight pages of the search results (there were 777,000 results in total). My only selection criteria were that the syllabi come from North American post-secondary institutions, that they contain a full, week-by-week reading list, and that they pertain to introductory courses that aim to familiarize students with feminist theory and the study of gender (as opposed to courses more specific in focus, e.g. "Chicana Feminism" or "Gender in Early Modern Europe").

contains. It is possible to appreciate feminists like Firestone, Rich, and MacKinnon's contributions to feminist thought without agreeing with them on every front. Even if contemporary feminists generally reject these authors' arguably "anti-male" sentiments, their contributions to feminist theory merit recognition. The suggestion that assigning these authors counts as misandry reflects a misunderstanding of intellectual pursuit.

Ultimately, the majority of MRA complaints that I have encountered can be traced back to the harmful, limiting, and unrealistic standards to which patriarchal gender ideology holds both men and women. This is not to blame everything that is wrong in the world on men and men alone. As bell hooks (2004) so passionately argues, women, too, perpetuate and sustain patriarchy (p. 24). Women, too, buy into patriarchal, gender-essentialist notions about normative male and female behavior. The feminist project challenges us, whatever our gender, to question our role in maintaining this hierarchical system through our actions, words, and beliefs.

It is understandably difficult for MRAs who have been hurt by their ex-partners and unfairly denied custody of their children to move beyond simply demonizing women as a form of protest, but this is necessary in the quest to create a society in which loving, hands-on fatherhood is truly valued. A good place to start would be by joining feminists in the fight for guaranteed parental leave in United States — not just for mothers, but also for fathers. And if MRAs' aim is really to fight for fathers, all fathers, then they must actively incorporate a racial-justice component into their framework and challenge the widespread cultural demonization of black fatherhood. These are just two ways in which the fathers' rights faction of MRAs could become more effective and more credible by partnering with feminists and feminist allies.

An MRA talking point that I have not yet mentioned is the issue of forced or compulsory fatherhood. If a man and a woman conceive a child, the decision to continue with the pregnancy and bring that child into the world is entirely the mother's, at least legally. A man cannot force a woman to carry a fetus against her wishes; in other words, he cannot force her to become a mother. Why, then, ask MRAs, should women be allowed to force fatherhood on men? If a man with no interest in

becoming a parent unintentionally impregnates a woman, why should he be forced to shell out almost two decades' worth of child-support payments? Even some feminists agree that this is unfair. Philosopher Elizabeth Brake, for instance, has argued that "men who impregnate women unintentionally and despite having taken efforts to prevent this outcome" have no moral obligation to support their children (Brake, 2005, p. 55).

I will address this admittedly formidable MRA argument – the argument that compulsory fatherhood is unfair to men – by way of Brake, because her writing on the subject is grounded in a feminist commitment to bodily sovereignty and is sufficiently sophisticated to be taken seriously. There are a few issues with Brake's intervention. First, Brake limits her analysis to the consideration of "the non-resident out-of-wedlock father whose contraceptives failed during a casual sexual encounter" (p. 56). From a purely pragmatic standpoint, it would obviously be difficult to prove in a court of law that one impregnated a woman purely as a result of contraceptive failure. More importantly, she makes the fallacious assumption that law is necessarily grounded in morality, or more precisely, that a moral obligation/non-obligation should directly translate into a legal obligation/non-obligation. But law is based not only on "morality," a construction Brake neglects to explicate or define, but also on considerations of practicality, utility, and social welfare. Considering that "[m]ore than 42% of single mothers with children aged 18 and younger lived in poverty in 2010" (Broussard et al., 2012, p. 190), it hardly needs saying that allowing men to opt-out of child support would result in hordes of children being raised in even more severe conditions of economic deprivation than is currently the case. Thus, even if one accepts that a father is not "morally" obligated to support his unwanted child, the social costs of allowing men to opt out of this legal mandate would be nothing short of disastrous, at least in the contemporary North American context of what Gøsta Esping-Andersen calls the liberal welfare state. In this welfare state model, individuals and families are rendered largely unable to sustain themselves without reliance on the market (low commodification, as Esping-Andersen terms it) and there is a "strong preference for private welfare spending" (Arts and Gelissen, 2010, p. 571). What this means,

ultimately, is that the state allocates little money to welfare spending, leaving individuals to fend for themselves.

This is where Brake's argument has merit. She contends that "the dilemma between male support and female poverty is a false one: it overlooks the real, and perhaps independently required, alternative of significant state support" (p. 67). Instead of forcing low-socioeconomic status men to take on dangerous or undesirable jobs in order to make their monthly child support payments, Brake contends "wider society" has an obligation to care for single mothers' children.¹⁵ In doing so she problematizes the assumption, supported by the liberal welfare model, "that the costs of raising children are justly assigned to the individual parents" (p. 69). Brake's emphasis on collective social responsibility as opposed to individualism is typical of feminist thought. The vast majority of feminists would agree with Brake when she argues for increased public spending on children, alleviating responsibility from individual, often low-income, men. I address in further detail feminism's inextricability with collectivist, left-wing ideology below.

MRAs who take issue with how male rape victims are not seen as real victims, or how female sex offenders are treated more leniently than their male counterparts, would be wise to fight against the gender-essentialist notion of male hypersexuality. One way to do this is to stop perpetuating the myth that women are to blame for their own rapes on the basis that men cannot control their carnal urges. If men always desire sex, then female-on-male statutory rape is only a crime on the books, not a violation of a young man's personal autonomy. After all, what teenage boy would not want sex with an older, more experienced woman? These are the attitudes that result from gender-essentialism, and these are exactly the attitudes that feminists have been battling for decades.

In addition, MRAs do not help their cause by accusing women of "crying rape"

¹⁵ It should be noted that Brake is far from alone among feminists in her sympathy for low-income non-custodial fathers. In an article on the neoliberal welfare state, Canadian feminist political scientist Janine Brodie argues, "the federal government's new child support legislation designed to discipline the so-called deadbeat dad... a long reviled figure in feminist discourse... fails to address the realities of child poverty in Canada. The federal government's own research, for example, indicates that few fathers fit the stereotypical image of the deadbeat dad" (2005: 103).

after regrettable one-night stands, or any of the number of offensive myths used to downplay the urgency of acquaintance rape, especially on college campuses. Before feminists started talking about acquaintance rape and the importance of consent, rape was thought of as a crime confined to dark alleyways. It was feminists who raised awareness of the fact that even seemingly normal, nice men can rape women, and that sex is rape in both the presence of a "no" and the absence of clear consent. If brute force is a necessary condition of rape – if rape is only rape when it involves ripped clothing and bruises to the skin – then female-on-male rape is virtually nonexistent. With the exception of a small minority of cases, women do not rape men in the stereotypical manner that many MRAs seem to think constitutes as the only form of "legitimate" rape, and they never have. Women do not maraud the streets at night wearing ski masks, rip men's clothes off their bodies, and rape them at knifepoint and they never have. Women do not barge into men's houses, tie them up in chairs, and rape them, and they never have. It is only when we understand rape according to its feminist-inspired definition, as any sex resulting from coercion or in the absence of consent, does the potential for female-on-male rape as a numerically significant phenomenon emerge. Instead of fighting feminists, MRAs who care about male rape victims could partner with feminists to raise awareness about consent, boundaries, and ethical sexual conduct. Concern for female victims does not preclude concern for male victims.

There is no reason, ultimately, that moderate MRAs should feel unwelcome in the feminist movement or avoid making strategic partnerships with feminists that further their aims. Feminists do not want men to die in war or dangerous jobs like mining, to suffer from alcoholism and drug addiction, or to face any of the social ills that disproportionately affect men. Early feminists like Shulamith Firestone began their activism in the New Left anti-Vietnam movement. For as long as the modern women's movement has existed, feminists have aligned themselves with workers' unions, supported pacifism and governmental regulation of dangerous industries, and sought to expand social services. Black feminists such as Angela Davis have done tremendous work in bringing attention to the United States government's racist war

on drugs, which has had disastrous effects on the lives of men of color, in particular. Feminism is not just about women; it is a social justice project that seeks to dismantle unequal power relations across class, race, sexual, and gender lines. Feminist concerns concern men, and vice-versa.

Thus far, this paper has focused more on feminism's benefits to men than on how men could benefit the feminist movement. Feminist readers might be wondering, what's in it for us? Why should we seek to convince men's rights activists to join our movement? Why should we seek to recruit more male allies?¹⁶ Admittedly, in discussing the benefits of male participation in feminism, one runs the risk of implying that male participation is necessary for the *legitimization* of the movement. Feminism does not require men to be a movement worth listening to—but by the same token, male participation helps. For instance, according to philosopher James P. Sterba (1998), "there are contexts where men because of their past involvement with sexist practices and institutions can be helpful in exposing and critiquing those same practices and institutions" (p. 299). Sterba uses the example of hardcore pornography (the legality of which was a significant legal debate in the 1990s, with many feminists arguing that it should be banned), claiming that men, as the main consumers of hardcore pornography, were in a unique position to explain to the public how such material warped their sexual tastes. "It is just here," he says, "that men can well serve the cause of feminism by testifying to the destructive impact hardcore pornography has had on their relations with women, and, thereby help demonstrate the necessity for banning it" (p. 301).

Legal debates about pornography aside, there are certainly other areas in which feminist men are uniquely able to speak from personal experience about their past complicity with sexism. For example, men are more likely than women to be exposed to (and take part in) so-called "locker room banter"—chauvinist joking among men, often sexual in nature. A male feminist's reflections on his *personal* experiences with

¹⁶ I should note here that the role of men within the movement is somewhat contentious among feminists. Some (e.g. bell hooks) take no issue with men self-identifying as feminists, and actually encourage it. Others prefer for men to self-identify as profeminist or feminist allies. Either way, it is all but undeniable that male allies bring visibility and recognition to the movement.

this kind of discourse – which is simply obnoxious at its most innocent, and at its worst, violent and deeply misogynistic – is in a better position than most women to use real-life examples when explaining to other men why sexist speech is harmful. The truth is that men respond differently to other men than they do to women. As such, men arguably have a responsibility act as educators toward their peers.¹⁷

Moderate men's rights' activists, because of their understanding of how traditional gender ideology hurts men, have the potential to be particularly useful feminist allies. These are men who have witnessed or experienced direct pain resulting from the pressures exerted on them by hegemonic masculinity – the pressure to not appear weak or effeminate, the pressure to be strong, to be a leader. Unbeknownst to them, they have likely spent more time pondering gender theory than have most other men. If they were to replace their misguided anger at women with a more constructive analytical framework through which to address these issues, they could make excellent feminists.

Concluding Thoughts

As many MRAs as there are who genuinely care about gender equality, there exist in equal numbers MRAs who fundamentally distrust and dislike women. I am referring to men like those who call themselves MGTOW, who see all women as gold-diggers, liars, and cheats, men who believe that male-on-female rape is a non-issue or something that women somehow bring upon themselves. These are men whom no amount of balanced reasoning, social science research, and compassionate discourse will touch. As stated, this paper is not for them.

That said, feminists and MRAs both stand to gain from exploring the intersections between these two movements. Amid all the harsh rhetoric on either side, many feminists and MRAs might not know that the men's rights movement actually grew from of the pro-feminist men's liberation movement of the 1960s and

¹⁷ As bell hooks argues in "Men: Comrades in Struggle" (2000), the making of feminist revolution should not be a "sex-role task," and men must "assume responsibility for actively struggling to end sexist oppression" (p. 68).

'70s. By dismissing MRAs as pathetic misogynists, as many feminists do, feminists alienate potential allies and ignore the real pain men experience under patriarchy. MRAs, on the other hand, need not take feminists' focus on issues that directly affect women's lives, such as, in the United States, access to abortion and contraception, as an indicator that feminists do not care about men.

Influenced by black feminists such as Audre Lorde and poststructuralist feminists like Butler, contemporary feminism recognizes that there is no such thing as a monolithic "female" experience or identity. The same is true of the category "male." As I write this, men of color are being arrested and thrown in jail for minor offenses at much higher rates than their white male counterparts. Impoverished men are falling behind on child support payments that they literally cannot afford to pay. Somewhere, a gay teenager is gritting his teeth while his father casually uses the word "faggot." Somewhere else, a man is beating his son. Feminism compels us to examine how inequality is sustained, and to examine the multiplicity of human experiences; it asks us to not only acknowledge, but to *respect* difference; above all, it asks us to be simultaneously critical and compassionate. In this way, we can allow ourselves to accept that even the most privileged of the privileged—white men—have a diversity of experiences, and that they, too, are hurt by patriarchal gender norms. This is not to equate their pain with more severe forms of oppression, or to suggest that their involvement is *necessary* for feminism's legitimization. Rather, it is to say that they have something to contribute to our sociopolitical project, that they, too, can offer insights on inequality.

References

- Aulette, Judy, Judith Wittner, and Kristin Blakely. (2009). *Gendered Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Arts, Wil A. and John Gelissen. (2010). "Models of the Welfare State." In Francis G. Castles, Stephan Leibfried, Jane Lewis, Herbert Obinger, and Christopher Pierson (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State* (pp. 569-83). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, Katie J.M. (22 April, 2013). "Rape and Death Threats: What Men's Rights Activists Really Look Like." *Jezebel.com*. Retrieved from <http://jezebel.com/rape-and-death-threats-what-mens-rights-activists-rea-476882099>.
- . (10 September, 2012). "Men's Rights Activists Don't Deserve the Benefit of the Doubt." *Jezebel.com*. Retrieved from <http://jezebel.com/5941876/mens-rights-activists-shocked-that-their-misogynistic-posters-are-being-torn-down>.
- Berila, Beth, Jean Keller, Camilla Krone, Jason Laker, and Ozzie Mayers. (2005). "His Story/Her Story: A Dialogue About Including Men and Masculinities in the Women's Studies Curriculum." *Feminist Teacher* 16(1), 34-52.
- Best, Susan. (2002.) "Gender." In Lorraine Code (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* (pp. 220-222). New York and London: Routledge.
- Brake, Elizabeth. (2005). "Fatherhood and Child Support: Do Men Have a Right to Choose?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 22(1), 55-73.
- Brodie, Janine. (2005.) "The Great Undoing: State Formation, Gender Politics, and Social Policy in Canada." In Barbara Crow and Lise Gottell (Eds.), *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*, 3rd Edition (pp. 95-104). Toronto: Pearson.
- Broussard, C. Anne, Alfred L. Joseph, and Marco Thompson. (2012). "Stressors and Coping Strategies Used by Single Mothers Living in Poverty." *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 27(2), 190-204.
- Campbell, Marie L. (2002). "Social constructionism." In Lorraine Code (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories* (pp. 451-452). New York and London: Routledge.

- Clatterbaugh, Kenneth. (1995). "Mythopoetic Foundations and New Age Patriarchy." In Michael S. Kimmel (Ed.) *The Politics of Manhood: Profeminist Men Respond to the Mythopoetic Men's Movement (And the Mythopoetic Leaders Answer)* (pp. 44-63). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- . "Are Men Oppressed?" (1996). In Larry May, Robert Strikwerda, and Patrick D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Rethinking Masculinity: Philosophical Explorations in Light of Feminism*, Second Edition (pp. 289-305). Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- . "Literature of the U.S. Men's Movements." *Signs* 25 (2000): 883-894.
- Coltrane, Scott. (1994). "Theorizing Masculinities in Contemporary Social Science." In Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Eds.), *Theorizing Masculinities* (pp. 39-61). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Connell, R.W. and James D. Messerschmidt. (2005). "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender and Society* 19(6), 829-859.
- Crowley, Jocelyn Elise. (2008). *Defiant Dads: Fathers' Rights Activists in America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- . (2009). "Conflicted Membership: Women in Fathers' Rights Groups." *Sociological Inquiry* 79(3), 328-350.
- Eastwick, Paul W., Alice H. Eagly, Peter Glick, Mary C. Johannesen-Schmidt, Susan T. Fiske, Ashley M. B. Blum, Thomas Eckes, Patricia Freiburger, Li-li Huang, Maria Lameiras Fernández, Anna Maria Manganelli, Jolynn C. X. Pek, Yolanda Rodríguez Castro, Nuray Sakalli-Ugurulu, Iris Six-Materna, and Chiara Volpato. (2006). "Is Traditional Gender Ideology Associated with Sex-Typed Mate Preferences? A Test in Nine Nations." *Sex Roles* 54(9-10), 603-614.
- Ehrensaft, Diane. (1998). "Feminists Fight (for) Fathers." In Mary F. Rogers (Ed.), *Contemporary Feminist Theory: A Text/Reader* (pp. 298-307). United States of America: McGraw-Hill. Originally published in *Socialist Review* 20 (1990).
- Fahs, Breanne. (2013). "Shaving it All Off: Examining Social Norms of Body Hair Among College Men in a Women's Studies Course." *Women's Studies*. 42(5), 559-577.
- Farrell, Warren. (1994). *The Myth of Male Power*. New York: Berkley Books.

- Ferguson, Michael L. (2010). "Choice Feminism and the Fear of Politics." *Symposium* 8(1), 247-253.
- Filipovic, Jill. (27 April, 2009). "Feminism: Not a Religion. Men's Rights Activists: Still Not Getting Laid Much." Feministe.Com. Retrieved from <http://www.feministe.us/blog/archives/2009/04/27/feminism-not-a-religion/>.
- Gaffney, Karen and Andrew J. Manno. (2011). "Navigating the Gender Box: Locating Masculinity in the Intro to Women and Gender Studies Course." *Men and Masculinities* 14, 190-209.
- Glick, Peter and Susan T. Fiske. (1997). "Hostile and Benevolent Sexism: Measuring Ambivalent Sexist Attitudes Toward Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 21(1), 119-135.
- . (2001). "An Ambivalent Alliance: Hostile and Benevolent Sexism as Complementary Justifications." *American Psychologist* 56(2), 109-118.
- Hagan, Kay Leigh. (1992). *Women Respond to the Men's Movement: A Feminist Collection*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press.
- Heyman, Gail D. and Jessica Giles. (2006). "Gender and Psychological Essentialism." *Enfance* 58(3), 293-310.
- hooks, bell. (2000). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- . (2000). *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Press.
- . (2004). *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Hopkins, Patrick D. (1998). "How Feminism Made a Man Out of Me: The Proper Subject of Feminism and the Problem of Men." In Tom Digby (Ed.), *Men Doing Feminism* (pp. 33-56). New York and London: Routledge.
- Kauffman, Michael. (1994). "Men, Feminism, and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power." In Harry Brod and Michael Kauffman (Eds.), *Theorizing Masculinities* (pp. 142-165). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Kimmel, Michael S. (1994). "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." In Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Eds.), *Theorizing Masculinities* (pp. 119-142). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- and Michael Kaufman. (1995). "Weekend Warriors: The New Men's Movement." In Michael S. Kimmel (Ed.), *The Politics of Mahood: Profeminist Men Respond to the Mythopoetic Men's Movement (And the Mythopoetic Leaders Answer)* (pp. 15-43). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Levit, Nancy. (1996). "Feminism for Men: Legal Ideology and the Construction of Maleness." *UCLA Law Review* 43(4), 1037-2113.
- Lindenmeyer, Antje. (2002). "Biological essentialism." In Loraine Code, *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Lorber, Judy and Lisa Jean Moore. (2007). *Gendered Bodies: Feminist Perspectives*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Mackie, Marlene. (1983). *Exploring Gender Relations: A Canadian Perspective*. Toronto: Butterworth and Co.
- Miedzian, Myrian. (1992). "'Father Hunger': Why 'Soup Kitchen' Fathers Are Not Enough." In Kay Leigh Hagan (Ed.), *Women Respond to the Men's Movement* (pp. 127-132). San Francisco: Pandora.
- Menzies, Robert. (2007). "Virtual Backlash: Representations of Men's 'Rights' and Feminist 'Wrongs' in Cyberspace." In Hester Lessard, Dorothy E. Chunn, and Susan B. Boyd (Eds.), *Reaction and Resistance: Feminism, Law, and Social Change* (pp. 76-106). Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.
- Messner, Michael A. (1997). *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Murphy, Michael J. (2011). "You'll Never Be More of a Man: Gay Male Masculinities in Academic Women's Studies." *Men and Masculinities* 14, 173-189.
- Newton, Judith. (2005). *From Panthers to Promise Keepers: Re-Thinking the Men's Movement*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Oakland University News. "Women's Studies Renamed Women and Gender Studies." Friday, April 11, 2008. Retrieved Monday, March 16, 2015. <http://www.oakland.edu/news/?sid=34&nid=4586>.

Pleck, Joseph H. and Jack Sawyer. (1974). *Men and Masculinity*. New York: Prentice Hall Press.

Rider, Elizabeth A. (2005). *Our Voices: Psychology of Women*, Second Edition. Hoboken: Wiley and Sons.

Roberts, Dorothy E. (1998). "Racism and Patriarchy in the Meaning of Motherhood." In Mary F. Rogers (Ed.), *Contemporary Feminist Theory: A Text/Reader* (pp. 308-324). United States of America: McGraw-Hill. Originally published in Martha Albertson Fineman and Isabel Karpin (Eds.), *Mothers in Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

Sawyer, Jack. (1974). "On Male Liberation." In Joseph H. Pleck and Jack Sawyer *Men and Masculinity* (pp. 170-73). New York: Prentice Hall Press. Originally published in 1970.

Silverstein, Louise B. (1996). "Fathering is a Feminist Issue." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 20(1), 3-37.

Sterba, James P. (1998). "Is Feminism Good For Men and Are Men Good For Feminism?" In Tom Digby (Ed.), *Men Doing Feminism* (pp. 291-304). New York and London: Routledge.

Tarrant, Shira. (2009). *Men and Feminism*. Berkley: Seal Press.

Walby, Sylvia. (1989). "Theorising Patriarchy." *Sociology* 23(2), 213-234.

Walker, Rebecca. (1992, Jan/Feb). "Becoming the Third Wave." *Ms.* 11(2), 39-41.

Zvan, Stephanie. (14 April, 2014). "But How Do You Know the MRAs are Atheists?" *freethoughtblogs.com*. Retrieved from <http://freethoughtblogs.com/almostdiamonds/2014/04/13/but-how-do-you-know-the-mras-are-atheists/>.

Syllabi

GSRJ 101: Gender, Knowledge, Sex and Power. Fall 2012. Professor Almas Zakiuddin. University of British Columbia.
<http://wgs.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2012/11/GRSJ-101-Zakiuddin-2012W-T1.pdf>.

WGS 100: Introduction to Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Fall 2012. Professor Irene

Browne. Emory University.

<http://sociology.emory.edu/home/assets/documents/profiles-documents/browne-wgs100.pdf>.

WGS 101: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies. Maymester 2013. Professor Ashley Taylor. Syracuse University.

<http://ashleystaylor.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/wgs-101-maymester-syllabus.pdf>.

WGS 115: Introduction to Gender Studies. Spring 2012. Professor Kate Linder. Suffolk University.

<https://www.academia.edu/1747411/>

[Syllabus WGS 115 Introduction to Gender Studies Spring 2012.](#)

WGS 120A: Introduction to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Fall 2012. Professor Jean L. Potuchek. Gettysburg College.

<http://public.gettysburg.edu/~jpotuche/WS120/syllabus.pdf>.

WGS 200: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies: Gender in a Transnational World. Spring 2013. Professor Deborah Cohler. San Francisco State University.

<http://online.sfsu.edu/dcohler/2013%20Spring/200%20syllabus%20Spring%202013.pdf>.

WGS 201: Introduction to Women's Studies. Fall 2013. Professor Dorothy Woodman. University of Alberta.

<http://www.csl.ualberta.ca/en/~~/media/Community%20Service%20Learning/Documents/Syllabi%202013/WGS201A02F2013Woodman.pdf>.

WGS 353: Feminist Theory. Spring 2009. Professor Allison Hobgood. Willamette University.

http://www.willamette.edu/cla/wgs/expectations/femtheory/WGS_353syllabi.pdf.

WGS 390 Foundations I: Introduction to WGS: From the Practical to the Critical to the Theoretical, with Praxis. Fall 2004. University of Texas at Austin.

<http://www.utexas.edu/courses/arens/wgs1/wgs1syll.html>.

WGS 2010: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies. Fall 2013. Professor Shobha Hamal Gurung. Southern Utah University.

<http://www.suu.edu/faculty/gurung/pdf/WGS2010.pdf>.

WGS 2500: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies. Fall 2010. Professor Heather Ondercin. Louisiana State University.

<http://heatherondercin.weebly.com/uploads/4/3/6/2/4362530/>

[intro_wgs_syllabus_fall2010.pdf](#).

WGS/ES 191: Women, Gender Identity, and Ethnicity. Professor Myra Ferrell-Womochil.
Northern Arizona University.

<http://nau.edu/uploadedFiles/Academic/SBS/WGS/Forms/WGS%20191%20Ferell-Womochil.doc>

WGST 120: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies. Spring 2008. Professor Shawn Maurer. College of the Holy Cross.

http://academics.holycross.edu/files/cbl/cbl_wgst120.pdf.

WS 001: An Introduction to Women's Studies. Spring 2005. Natalie Jolly. Pennsylvania State University.

<http://www.nataliejolly.com/ws001/documents/syllabus.pdf>.

WS 105: Introduction to Women's Studies. Fall 2005. Linda Martín Alcoff. Hunter College.

<http://www.alcoff.com/content/syl101.html>.

WST 200: Introduction to Women's Studies. Spring 2007. Professor Heather D. Harris.
Northern Arizona University.

<http://nau.edu/SBS/WGS/Degrees-Programs/Syllabi/>.