ISSUE 4



Do the New Sex Roles Burden Women More Than Men?

YES: Jeff Grabmeier, from "The Burden Women Bear: Why They Suffer More Distress Than Men," *USA Today Magazine* (July 1995)

NO: Susan Faludi, from *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (William Morrow and Company, 1999)

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Editor and author Jeff Grabmeier presents evidence showing that women experience more stress than men and then analyzes why.

NO: Author Susan Faludi argues that men have been socialized into a sex role that cannot be successfully fulfilled due to current conditions.

The publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (W. W. Norton, 1963) is generally thought of as launching the modern women's movement, and since that time significant changes have occurred in American society. Occupations and professions, schools, clubs, associations, and governmental positions that were by tradition or law previously reserved for men only are now open to women. Women are found in increasing numbers among lawyers, judges, physicians, and elected officials. In 1981 President Ronald Reagan appointed the first woman, Sandra Day O'Connor, to the Supreme Court. In 1983 the first American woman astronaut, Sally Ride, was included in the crew of a space shuttle, and women have been on more recent space shuttle missions, as well. The service academies have accepted women since 1976, and women in the military participated in the U.S. invasion of Panama in December 1989 and in the Persian Gulf War in 1990. Elizabeth Watson became the first woman to head a big-city police department when the mayor of Houston appointed her as chief of police in January 1990.

These sorts of changes—quantifiable and highly publicized—may signal a change in women's roles. Women now engage in occupations that were previously exclusive to men, and can pursue the necessary training and education required to do so. Paula Span, in "It's a Girl's World," *The Washington Post Magazine* (June 22, 1997), quotes her daughter as saying, "Most of my girlfriends

and I feel like we could do anything.... Being female isn't a restriction." Now most women of working age are either in school or the labor force, even those with children. As a result, the problem for women today has less to do with occupational exclusion than with the stress of inclusion.

But what about men today? To the extent that sex bias remains they are the advantaged sex. However, do they really have it made? Some would argue that they do not. Men may experience less stress as Jeff Grabmeier, author of the first selection, asserts, but they die younger. In fact, between the ages of 15 and 24, when sex roles take full hold, the death rate for men is over three times the death rate for women. Furthermore, if death by heart disease is likely to be related to stress, it should be noted that men die of heart disease at almost twice the age-adjusted death rate as women. One reason may be that men who work full time on average spend substantially more time working and commuting than women who work full time.

Neither stress data nor death-rate data can tell us the extent that sex roles affect the differential rates. Biological differences also play a role and the extent of this role is not clear. At this point, therefore, the discussion should focus on what burdens sex roles create for women and men. Current sex roles for women give them primary responsibility for household and child care so they end up with a second work shift if they choose to have a career as well as a family. According to Grabmeier, women are not too happy about this. He states that, based on his interviews with women, "well over half the women expressed anger, hostility, and resentment toward their husbands or partners for failing to share child care and household responsibilities." The aggravation is due in large part to differential sex role changes. Women's roles have changed due to the women's movement, the increasing financial need for two paychecks, and the opportunities of an expanding white-collar economy. However, the sex roles for men have not changed very much. Men's sex role problem can be seen as two-sided. One side of the problem is that men are still socialized to conform to masculine sex roles but are not given real opportunities to fulfill these roles in today's society. This is why Susan Faludi, in her selection, states that men are made to feel like failures. The other side of the problem is that men experience expectations from women to be more feminine and to increasingly perform what many men think of as women's tasks. On the one side they are failures in their own eyes and on the other side they are failures in women's eyes.

In the following selection, Grabmeier argues that women suffer a greater burden than men and uses data on stress to support his conclusions. He discusses the biological reasons for this, but emphasizes that roles for women have changed dramatically without a commensurate change in the traditional dominant roles for men. Women often blame themselves for their problems, which worsens them, according to Grabmeier. Faludi counters that men, particularly working-class men, are frustrated by a world for which their socialization has not prepared them. In combination with mortality and disease statistics, Faludi's analysis supports the conclusion that men are more burdened by modern sex roles than women.

Jeff Grabmeier

YES

The Burden Women Bear: Why They Suffer More Distress Than Men

Who suffers more in life, men or women? This was a great issue to bring up around the office coffee machine or at cocktail parties because it not only made for lively conversation, it also was one of those questions that couldn't be settled simply by calling the reference desk at the local library.

Recently, though, evidence is growing that women, in fact, do suffer more than men. Blame it on biology, the stress of combining parenthood and career, living in a male-centered society, or all of the above. A study at Ohio State University by sociologists John Mirowsky and Catherine Ross shows that females experience symptoms of psychological distress—including sadness, anger, anxiety, malaise, and physical aches and pains—about 30% more often than males. Their work complements earlier research that found women about twice as likely as men to experience major clinical depression.

"Women genuinely suffered more distress than men by all the measures in our study," Mirowsky indicates. He and Ross interviewed 1,282 women and 749 men aged 18 to 90 and asked them on how many of the last seven days they had experienced various emotions. In each case, women reported more days with symptoms of distress than men. Don't assume women feel more of everything than men, however. The female participants experienced happiness 3.3% less often than the males.

In the past, assertions about women's surplus of suffering have been dismissed because they were thought to be more emotional than men. In other words, females simply complained more than males, who hid their pain behind a stoic facade. Mirowsky and Ross examined that possibility and found that women did indeed express their emotions more than men. About 68% of the males in the study agreed or strongly agreed that they kept their emotions to themselves, compared to 50% of the females who responded similarly. Even after the researchers took these differences into account, women still showed more signs of distress than men. "Women do express their emotions more, but that doesn't mean they aren't truly more depressed," Mirowsky maintains.

There is no simple explanation for why women suffer more distress than men. Most experts believe a combination of factors, including biological differences, puts females at greater risk for some psychological troubles. Scientists

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have discovered that imbalances of certain neurotransmitters in the brain—particularly norepinepherine and serotonin—are related to depression. Low levels of serotonin may lead to depression, anxiety, anger, eating disorders, and impulsive behavior, points out Henry Nasrallah, chairperson of psychiatry. "We don't know why, but women may have less stable brain systems for regulating these neurotransmitters. Female hormones are believed to play a role in the regulation of neurotransmitters that affect mood and that may explain why females are more likely to experience clinical depression. Fluctuations in hormone levels, for example, have been associated with the well-known premenstrual syndrome, which afflicts some women."

Just how much of a role biology plays in women's distress remains unclear. "There is usually an interplay between biological, psychological, and social factors," says Nasrallah. "Clearly there are biological factors that contribute a great deal to behavior and mood in men and women."

Blaming biology for distress can be a two-edged sword. It can help to mobilize medical resources and make physicians take such problems seriously, but also may take the focus off social factors that contribute to the situation.

This two-edged sword is painfully apparent for those with a uniquely female form of distress—postpartum depression. Women suffering from this syndrome have formed national interest groups seeking, in part, to get more medical attention for their problems, notes Verta Taylor, a professor of sociology who has studied their cause. However, these women walk a fine line between looking for medical solutions and pushing for their partners to provide more help in caring for children.

For a book she is writing, Taylor interviewed more than 100 women who said they suffered emotional problems—ranging from "baby blues" to clinical depression—after the birth or adoption of a baby. This illness, which afflicts more than three-quarters of new mothers, may last weeks or, as one woman told Taylor, it "didn't end until [my son] left home for college."

Taylor indicates that the question of whether postpartum depression has biological roots is a hotly debated topic. She found that women physicians who suffered from it were more likely than male doctors to believe that the disorder is the result of a deficiency in the hormone progesterone. Accordingly, women physicians were more likely to advocate progesterone therapy to treat the biochemical basis of the illness.

Nasrallah says most medical professionals believe that postpartum depression is an illness with biochemical causes that must be treated with antidepressants. However, the less serious postpartum blues usually can be treated with rest, family support, and reassurance.

Even women who believe their postpartum depression has a biochemical aspect don't blame their condition simply on hormonal imbalances, Taylor points out. They echo the grievances of many working mothers—with and without postpartum depression—who complain of not getting enough support from husbands and partners. "A majority of the women I interviewed saw their excessive worry and irritability as the inevitable result of trying to combine and balance the demands of a 'second shift' of child care, housework, and a marriage with a paid job. Well over half the women expressed anger, hostility, and

resentment toward their husbands or partners for failing to share child care and household responsibilities."

The problem, according to history professor Susan Hartmann, is that women now have more opportunities outside the home, but still do most of the household chores. "The old norms haven't changed that much. Women are still expected to take care of the home and children. But a majority of women also have taken on the responsibility of work. They've added new roles and responsibilities without significant changes in their old ones."

Although men sometimes may help out, there usually isn't a true sharing of household and child care responsibilities in American society. When men care for their children, for instance, it often is seen as "babysitting." When women do it, that simply is part of being a mother.

There is ample evidence that women still shoulder most of the responsibility of caring for kids, housework, and day-to-day chores. Margaret Mietus Sanik, an associate professor of family resource management, conducts studies of time use in families. She has found that, in couples with a new child, mothers spend about 4.6 hours per day in infant care, compared to about 1.3 for fathers. New mothers also lose more of their leisure time—about 3.8 hours a day—than their husbands, who give up approximately one hour. The result is that women often feel overworked and underappreciated.

A recent U.S. government survey of 250,000 working women found that stress was the most mentioned problem by respondents. The number-one issue females would like to talk about with Pres. Clinton is their inability to balance work and family, the survey found.

With the often overwhelming demands of juggling a career and family, it is no wonder that employed women suffer more depression than men. That doesn't mean that full-time homemakers have it better; in fact, research suggests they actually have higher levels of psychological distress than employed women. While working women can derive satisfaction from multiple roles at home and in the workplace, stay-at-home moms have only their homemaker role, Mirowsky indicates. They may feel isolated and out of step with the rest of society because parenting apparently is not highly valued in American culture.

Moreover, whether they want to work or not, housewives are economically dependent on their husbands, which is a powerful cause of distress. "In our culture, economic independence gives you status in the eyes of the community and a sense of security and self-worth," Mirowsky explains. "Housewives don't have that economic security. What we have found is that women are psychologically better off if they are employed."

In her studies of postpartum depression, Taylor has found that society's expectations of mothers also can put a suffocating burden on women. It is expected that a new mother will be happy, overjoyed even, and more than willing to put her baby's needs above her own. "But motherhood is often difficult, and women can find that their feelings are out of sync with societal expectations. They may feel as though their negative feelings are proof that they're not being a good mother, which compounds their feelings of distress, depression, anger, anxiety, and guilt."

If the stress of work and caring for children contributes to women's higher levels of distress, what about single, childless females? According to Mirowsky, they show less evidence of distress than other women, but more than men. That is because females face more than just role overload, she maintains. Women in the U.S. are paid about 75% of what men receive, are more likely to live in poverty, face a greater threat of physical and sexual abuse, and live in a culture that often promotes near-unattainable ideals for physical perfection. "Women just face a lot of problems and obstacles that men don't have to deal with. I'm surprised women don't feel more distress."

Psychological Strategies

Adding to the situation is the fact that women tend to use psychological strategies that amplify and prolong their distress. Psychologists have found that, when females are faced with problems, they are more likely than males to think continually about troubling issues. They also are more apt to blame themselves. The result is that women can be caught in a cycle of worry and depression instead of working to find a way out. Men, on the other hand, tend to take action in dealing with problems. They are more likely to place the blame elsewhere and find activities such as sports or hobbies to distract them.

All of this ruminating about their troubles leads women to more than just depression. One of the key findings about women's distress is the amount of anger they feel, Mirowsky and Ross discovered. The stereotype has been that women get depressed and men get angry, but their study revealed that the female subjects actually experienced anger about 29% more often than the males. "Anger is depression's companion—not its substitute," Mirowsky notes.

The anger gap actually was larger than the difference in depression. The researchers found that women were more angry and anxious than men who were equally depressed. Females in the study also were more likely to express their anger through yelling at others. "We thought this was particularly interesting because yelling is crossing the line between an emotion and an action," Mirowsky says. "Our interpretation is that women are yelling at their children more often than their husbands do."

While women are at home getting angry and depressed, maybe men are handling their distress another way—by drinking alcohol and taking drugs. Research has shown that males are more likely than females to abuse alcohol and drugs, but Mirowsky doesn't think that explains the distress gap. "In one sense, if alcohol and drugs really did help eliminate distress, then our findings would make sense—it would explain why men feel less distressed than women. In actuality, there's no evidence that alcohol or drugs help people, or men in particular, feel better." One study, for instance, found that alcoholism and drug abuse increase the odds of a major depressive episode more than fourfold. "Alcohol and drug use probably produces more distress than it prevents," Mirowsky claims.

No matter how you look at the evidence, he suggests, it seems clear that women really do suffer more psychological distress. Is there anything that can be done about it? There is not much females can change concerning their biology, although serious depression often can be treated with anti-depressant

drugs. Many of the problems require fundamental changes in how government, business, and society treat women. Taylor says they want their concerns taken seriously. Because females traditionally have been seen as emotional, their problems haven't been given much weight. "Whatever causes higher rates of distress in women, it's not treated. If women feel it and suffer from it, then it should be seen as real."

One thing they are doing is organizing to make their voices heard. Some groups, such as the National Organization for Women, are well-known for their efforts to improve the lot of females. Taylor notes that women with postpartum depression have organized two national groups to present their issues to the public and the medical community. Their efforts, while specifically for the benefit of those with postpartum depression, really involve issues of concern to many females, she states. "The leaders of these groups argue all the time in their speeches that we need men to get more involved in parenting. Women are under this tremendous strain because they are almost solely responsible for parenting. Men have to assume a larger role, and that's a societal problem that requires changing how we structure gender roles."

Working women face special problems that need to be addressed by business and government, experts say. A recent survey by the U.S. government of 250,000 working women has put the spotlight on some of the issues women face, such as lack of adequate child care and unequal pay with men. "I think that more and more businesses are trying to recognize the needs of women in the workforce, yet the progress has been slow," Hartmann points out. "The situation for working women may get incrementally better, but I don't see any major improvements soon."

Social change is always slow and uneven, Mirowsky feels, but it is necessary if the distress gap is to be eased. "People may debate whether there's a difference in the quality of life for men and women in the United States. The evidence, however, suggests the quality of life is poorer for many women, and it's something that needs to be addressed."



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Susan Faludi

Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man

The American Century Versus the Century of the Common Man

... [A]s the nation wobbled toward the millennium, its pulse-takers seemed to agree that a domestic apocalypse was under way: American manhood was under siege....

If so many concurred in the existence of a male crisis, consensus collapsed as soon as anyone asked the question: Why? Not that there was a shortage of responses. Everyone proposed a favorite whipping boy—or, more often, whipping girl—and blame-seekers on all sides went after their selected culprits with righteous and bitter relish.

As a feminist and a journalist, I began investigating this crisis where you might expect a feminist journalist to begin: at the weekly meetings of a domestic-violence group.... What did I expect to divine about the broader male condition by monitoring a weekly counseling session for batterers?... I can see now that I was operating from an assumption both underexamined and dubious: that the male crisis in America was caused by something men were *doing* unrelated to something being done to them, and that its cure was surely to be found in figuring out how to get men to *stop* whatever it was. I had my own favorite whipping boy, suspecting that the crisis of masculinity was caused by masculinity on the rampage. If male violence was the quintessential expression of masculinity run amok, out of control and trying to control everything in its path, then a domestic-violence therapy group must be at the very heart of this particular darkness.

... The two counselors who ran the group, which was called Alternatives to Violence, worked hard to make "control" a central issue. Each new member would be asked to describe to the group what he had done to a woman, a request that was generally met with sullen reluctance, vague references to "the incident," and invariably the disclaimer "I was out of control." The counselors would then expend much energy showing him how he had, in fact, been in control the entire time. He had chosen his fists, not a knife; he had hit her in the stomach, not the face; he had stopped before landing a permanently injurious blow, and so forth. One session was devoted to reviewing "The Power and

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Control Wheel," a mimeographed chart that enumerated the myriad ways men could victimize their mates. No doubt the moment of physical contact for these men had grown out of a desire for supreme control fueled by a need to dominate. I cannot conceive of a circumstance that would exonerate such violence. By making the abusive spouse take responsibility for his actions, the counselors were pursuing a worthy goal. But the logic behind the violence still remained elusive.

A serviceman who had turned to nightclub bouncer jobs and pastry catering after his military base shut down seemed to confirm the counselors' position one evening shortly before his "graduation" from the group. "I denied it before," he said of the night he pummeled his girlfriend, who had also worked on the base. As he spoke he studied his massive, callused hands, lying uselessly on his lap. "I thought I'd blacked out. But looking back at that night when I beat her with an open hand, I didn't black out. I was feeling good. I was in power, I was strong, I was in control. I felt like a *man.*" But what struck me most strongly was what he said next: that moment of control had been the only one in his recent life. "That feeling of power," he said, "didn't last long. Only until they put the cuffs on. Then I was feeling again like I was no man at all."

He was typical in this regard. The men I got to know in the group had without exception lost their compass in the world. They had lost or were losing jobs, homes, cars, families. They had been labeled outlaws but felt like castoffs. Their strongest desire was to be dutiful and to belong, to adhere with precision to the roles society had set out for them as men. In this respect, they were prototypical modern wife beaters, who, demographic research suggests, are commonly ill equipped to fulfill the requirements of expected stereotypical sex roles, men who are socially isolated, afflicted with a sense of ineffectuality, and have nothing but the gender rule book to fall back on....

There was something almost absurd about these men struggling, week after week, to recognize themselves as dominators when they were so clearly dominated, done in by the world. "That 'wheel' is misnamed," a laid-off engineer ruefully told the counselors. "It should be called the Powerlessness and Out-of-Control Wheel." The men had probably felt in control when they beat their wives, but their everyday experience was of feeling controlled—a feeling they had no way of expressing because to reveal it was less than masculine, would make each of them, in fact, "no man at all." For such men, the desire to be in charge was what they felt they must do to survive in a nation that *expected* them to dominate....

More than a quarter century ago, women began to suspect in their own lives "a problem with no name." Even the most fortunate woman in postwar, suburban America, maneuvering her gleaming Hoovermatic across an expansive rec room, sensed that she'd been had. Eventually, this suspicion would be expressed in books—most notably Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*—that traced this uneasiness back to its source: the cultural forces of the mass media, advertising, pop psychology, and all the other "helpful" advice industries. Women began to free themselves from the box in which they were trapped by feeling their way along its contours, figuring out how it had been constructed around them, how it was shaped and how it shaped them, how their reflec-

tions on its mirrored walls distorted who they were or might be. Women were able to take action, paradoxically, by understanding how they were acted upon. "Women have been largely man-made," Eva Figes wrote in 1970 in *Patriarchal Attitudes.* What had been made by others women themselves could unmake. Once their problems could be traced to external forces generated by a male society and culture, they could see them more clearly and so challenge them.

Men feel the contours of a box, too, but they are told that box is of their own manufacture, designed to their specifications. Who are they to complain? The box is there to showcase the man, not to confine him. After all, didn't he build it—and can't he destroy it if he pleases, if he is a *man*? For men to say they feel boxed in is regarded not as laudable political protest but as childish and indecent whining. How dare the kings complain about their castles?

Women's basic grievances are seen as essentially reasonable; even the most blustery antifeminist these days is quick to say that, of course, he favors equal pay and equal opportunity. What women are challenging is something that everyone can see. Men's grievances, by contrast, seem hyperbolic, almost hysterical; so many men seem to be doing battle with phantoms and witches that exist only in their own overheated imaginations. Women see men as guarding the fort, so they don't see how the culture of the fort shapes men. Men don't see how they are influenced by the culture either; in fact, they prefer not to. If they did, they would have to let go of the illusion of control....

The very paradigm of modern masculinity—that it is all about being the master of your universe—prevents men from thinking their way out of their dilemma, from taking active political steps to resolve their crisis. If they are the makers of history, not the subjects of historical forces, then how can they rise up?

... Yet clearly masculinity is shaped by society. Anyone wondering how mutable it is need only look at how differently it is expressed under the Taliban in Kabul or on the streets of Paris. Witness men walking with their arms wrapped around each other in Istanbul or observe the Mexican immigrant to Los Angeles whose manhood is so linked to supporting a family that any job, even a busboy's, holds a masculine pride. As anthropologist David D. Gilmore demonstrated in *Manhood in the Making,* his comprehensive cross-cultural survey of masculine ideals, manliness has been expressed as laboring-class loyalty in Spain, as diligence and discipline in Japan, as dependence on life outside the home in the company of men in Cyprus, as gift-giving among Sikhs, as the restraint of temper and the expression of "creative energy" among the Gisu of Uganda, and as entirely without significance to the Tahitians. "Manliness is a symbolic script," Gilmore concluded, "a cultural construct, endlessly variable and not always necessary."

It should be self-evident that ideas of manhood vary and are contingent on the times and the culture. Despite that, contemporary discussion about what bedevils men fixes almost exclusively on the psychological and the biological....

Cause Without a Rebel

A question that has plagued feminists like myself is the nature of male resistance to female change. Why are so many men so disturbed by the prospect of women's independence? Why do so many men seem to begrudge it, resent it, fear it, fight it with an unholy passion? The question launched my inquiry. But in the end, much to my surprise, it was not the question that most compelled me. It is not the question, finally, that drives this [selection]. Because the more I explored the predicament of postwar men, the more familiar it seemed to me. The more I consider what men have lost—a useful role in public life, a way of earning a decent and reliable living, appreciation in the home, respectful treatment in the culture—the more it seems that men of the late twentieth century are falling into a status oddly similar to that of women at mid-century. The fifties housewife, stripped of her connections to a wider world and invited to fill the void with shopping and the ornamental display of her ultrafeminity, could be said to have morphed into the nineties man, stripped of his connections to a wider world and invited to fill the void with consumption and a gym-bred display of his ultra-masculinity. The empty compensations of a "feminine mystique" are transforming into the empty compensations of a masculine mystique; with a gentlemen's cigar club no more satisfying than a ladies' bake-off, the Nike Air Jordan no more meaningful than the Dior New Look.

And so my question changed. Instead of wondering why men resist women's struggle for a freer and healthier life, I began to wonder why men refrain from engaging in their own struggle. Why, despite a crescendo of random tantrums, have they offered no methodical, reasoned response to their predicament? Given the untenable and insulting nature of the demands placed on men to prove themselves in our culture, why don't men revolt?

Like many women, I was drawn to feminism out of a desire to challenge the silence of my sex. It has come to seem to me that, under all the rantings of men seeking to drown out the female voice, theirs is as resounding a silence. Why haven't men responded to the series of betrayals in their own lives—to the failures of their fathers to make good on their promises—with something coequal to feminism? When the frontier that their fathers offered them proved to be a wasteland, when the enemy their fathers sent them to crush turned out often to be women and children trembling in thatched huts, when the institutions their fathers claimed would buoy them downsized them, when the women their fathers said wanted their support got their own jobs, when the whole deal turned out to be a crock and it was clear that they had been thoroughly stiffed, why did the sons do nothing?

The feminine mystique's collapse a generation earlier was not just a crisis but a historic opportunity for women. Women responded to their "problem with no name" by naming it and founding a political movement, by beginning the process of freeing themselves. Why haven't men done the same? This seems to me to be the real question that lurks behind the "masculinity crisis" facing American society: not that men are fighting against women's liberation, but that they have refused to mobilize for their own—or their society's—liberation.

Not that traditional male roles are endangered, but that men themselves are in danger of not acting.

Many in the women's movement and in the mass media complain that men just "don't want to give up the reins of power." But that would seem to have little applicability to the situations of most men, who individually feel not the reins of power in their hands but its bit in their mouths. What's more likely is that they are clinging to a phantom status. A number of men I interviewed, as they argued for the importance of having a male head of the household, tellingly demoted that to an honorary post: it's important, they would say, that every home have a "figurehead." But even the natural reluctance to give up a position of putative superiority, no matter how compromised, is not enough to explain a deeper male silence.

To understand why men are so reluctant to break with the codes of manhood sanctioned in their childhood, perhaps we need to understand how strong the social constraints on them are. It's not just women who are bombarded by cultural messages about appropriate gender behavior. In the past half century, Madison Avenue, Hollywood, and the mass media have operated relentlessly on men, too. The level of mockery, suspicion, and animosity directed at men who step out of line is profound, and men respond profoundly—with acquiescence. But that is not a wholly satisfying explanation either, for haven't women, the object of such commercial and political manipulation, kicked over these traces successfully?

If men do not respond, then maybe it is because their society has proposed no route for them to venture down. Surely the culture has not offered an alternative vision of manhood. No one has: not the so-called men's movement, which clings to its dusted-off copies of *Grimms' Fairy Tales* and its caveman clichés; not conservative or liberal political leaders who call for a remilitarized model of manhood with work camps and schools run by former generals; not the Promise Keepers or Nation of Islam ministers, whose programs of male contrition and resurrection are fantasies of past fantasies; not a gay culture, which, as it gets increasingly absorbed into the larger commercial culture, becomes increasingly muted in its challenge of masculine roles; not even the women's movement, which clamors for men to change but has yet to conceptualize that change. But then, did feminists wait upon men to craft their revolution for them? Didn't the women's movement make its own way, without any assistance —no, with much resistance—from the dominant culture? So why can't men act? The ultimate answer has deep ramifications not only for men but for feminists. Eventually I came to believe that, far from being antagonists, they were each poised at this hour to be vital in the other's advance. But that answer came at the end. First I had to begin....

My travels led me to a final question: Why don't contemporary men rise up in protest against their betrayal? If they have experienced so many of the same injuries as women, the same humiliations, why don't they challenge the culture as women did? Why can't men seem to act?

The stock answers that have been offered to explain men's reluctance to break out of stereotypical male models don't suffice. Men aren't simply refusing to "give up the reins of power," as some feminists have argued. The reins

have already slipped from most of their hands, anyway.... While the pressures on men to imagine themselves in power and in control of their emotions are impediment to male revolt, a more fundamental obstacle overshadows them. If men have feared to tread where women have rushed in, then maybe that's because women have had it easier in one very simple regard: women could frame their struggle as a battle against men....

Because the women who engaged in the feminist campaigns of the seventies were fighting the face of "male domination," they were able to take advantage of a ready-made model for revolt. To wage their battle, they could unfurl a well-worn map and follow a reliable strategy. Ironically, it was a male strategy—feminists grabbed hold of the blueprint for the American male paradigm and made good use of it. They had at the ready all the elements required to make that paradigm work. They had a clearly defined oppressive enemy: the "patriarchy." They had a real frontier to conquer and clear for other women: all those patriarchal institutions, both the old ones that still rebuffed women, like the U.S. Congress or U.S. Steel, and the new ones that tried to remold women, like Madison Avenue or the glamour and media-pimp kingdoms of Bert Parks and Hugh Hefner. Feminists also had their own army of "brothers": sisterhood. Each GI Jane who participated in this struggle felt she was useful. Whether she was distributing leaflets or working in a women's-health clinic, whether she was lobbying legislators to pass a child-care bill or tossing her bottles of Clairol in a "freedom trash can," she was part of a greater glory, the advancement of her entire sex. Many women whose lives were touched by feminism felt in some way that they had reclaimed an essential usefulness; together, they had charged the barricades that kept each of them from a fruitful, thriving life. Women had discovered a good fight, and a flight path to adult womanhood. Traveling along with trajectory of feminism, each "small step" for a woman would add up finally to a giant leap for womankind, not to mention humankind.

The male paradigm of confrontation, in which an enemy could be identified, contested, and defeated, was endlessly transferable. It proved useful as well to activists in the civil-rights movement and the antiwar movement, the gay-rights movement and the environmental movement. It was, in fact, the fundamental organizing principle of virtually every concerted countercultural campaign of the last half century. Yet it could launch no "men's movement." Herein lies the bedeviling paradox, and the source of male inaction: the model women have used to revolt is the exact one men not only can't use but are trapped in. The solution for women has proved the problem for men.

The male paradigm is peculiarly unsuited to mounting a challenge to men's predicament. Men have no clearly defined enemy who is oppressing them. How can men be oppressed when the culture has already identified them as the oppressors, and when they see themselves that way? As one man wrote plaintively to Promise Keepers, "I'm like a kite with a broken string, but I'm also holding the tail." In an attempt to employ the old paradigm, men have invented antagonists to make their problems visible, but with the passage of time, these culprits—scheming feminists, affirmative-action proponents, job-grabbing illegal aliens, the wife of a president—have come to seem increasingly unconvincing as explanations for their situation. Defeating such paper tigers offers

no sense of victory. Nor do men have a clear frontier on which to challenge their intangible enemies. What new realms should they be gaining—the media, entertainment, and image-making institutions of corporate America? But these are institutions, they are told, that are already run by men; how can men invade their own territory?...

Social responsibility is not the special province of masculinity; it's the lifelong work of all citizens in a community where people are knit together by meaningful and mutual concerns. But if husbanding a society is not the exclusive calling of "husbands," all the better for men's future. Because as men struggle to free themselves from their crisis, their task is not, in the end, to figure out how to be masculine—rather, their masculinity lies in figuring out how to be human. The men who worked at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard didn't come there and learn their crafts as riggers, welders, and boilermakers to *be* masculine; they were seeking something worthwhile to *do*. Their sense of their own manhood flowed out of their utility in a society, not the other way around. Conceiving of masculinity as something to *be* turns manliness into a detachable entity, at which point it instantly becomes ornamental, and about as innately "masculine" as fake eyelashes are inherently "feminine." Michael Bernhardt was one man who came to understand this in his difficult years after he returned from Vietnam. "All these years I was trying to be all these stereotypes" of manhood, he said, "and what was the use?... I'm beginning to think now of not even defining it anymore. I'm beginning to think now just in terms of people." From this discovery follow others, like the knowledge that he no longer has to live by the "scorecard" his nation handed him. He can begin to conceive of other ways of being "human," and hence, of being a man.

And so with the mystery of men's nonrebellion comes the glimmer of an opening, an opportunity for men to forge a rebellion commensurate with women's and, in the course of it, to create a new paradigm for human progress that will open doors for both sexes. That was, and continues to be, feminism's dream, to create a freer, more humane world. Feminists have pursued it, particularly in the last two centuries, with great determination and passion. In the end, though, it will remain a dream without the strength and courage of men who are today faced with a historic opportunity: to learn to wage a battle against no enemy, to own a frontier of human liberty, to act in the service of a brotherhood that includes us all.