



SOCIAL STUDIES OF GENDER

———— A Next Wave Reader ————

19th EDITION

CHRISTINE V. WOOD

Social Studies of Gender



Social Studies of Gender

A NEXT WAVE READER

First Edition

CHRISTINE V. WOOD



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Chapter 10

LEVERAGING PRIVILEGE: INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS TO MOTIVATE AND ENGAGE MEN IN ANTI-VIOLENCE WORK

CHRISTOPHER HALL, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND EDUCATION

Leveraging men’s privilege to encourage respect and nonviolence in relationships and interactions with women needs increased attention. Exploration in this chapter includes considering how “man up” and “real men” campaigns problematically use patriarchy in attempting to stop patriarchy; discussion of intersectional oppression work, including primary components of oppression theory; an outline of counterpoints to oppression theory that involve leveraging the power, privilege, and prejudice inherent in men into negotiating access to other men, increasing introspection on personal privilege, and humanizing women.

Introduction

Exploring ways of motivating and engaging men in ending violence against women has long been a focus within domestic violence work, gender studies, and community-based programming. Various tactics have been used and often exhibit some success based on subjective (and some objective) measurements on participant impact (Leek, 2015), but they also have several challenges within their implementation.

Some of these challenges include the financial stability of programming and the ability to provide services, measuring success, dealing with trauma issues, and the cultural prevalence of patriarchy, even in efforts to reduce violence. **Patriarchy** is the historical collection of power and status given to men, which creates higher value for men over women, diminishes women’s lives and contributions, and sets up gender roles that lead men to believe they deserve certain services and treatment from women. This chapter will consider historical challenges with efforts to engage men and analyze potential counterpoints that may help to encourage men toward change.

Christopher Hall, “Leveraging Privilege: Intersectional Analysis to Motivate and Engage Men Toward Anti-Violence Work,” *Social Studies of Gender: A Next Wave Reader*, ed. Christine V. Wood. Copyright © 2021 by Cognella, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Challenges With Patriarchal Engagement of Men

Efforts to engage men in eradicating violence against women have used various tactics to reach men's attention and interest. For example, "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" began as a fund-raiser in 2001 for Frank Baird's local rape crisis center. Baird asked men in his community to wear high-heeled shoes and walk for a mile. The program was intended to raise men's awareness of women's experiences; the funds raised would assist the rape crisis center. The organization's website describes the activity as such:

There is an old saying: "You can't really understand another person's experience until you've walked a mile in their shoes." Walk a Mile in Her Shoes® asks men to literally walk one mile in women's high-heeled shoes. It's not easy walking in these shoes, but it's fun and it gets the community to talk about something that's really difficult to talk about: gender relations and men's sexualized violence against women.

Although well-intentioned, critics of these types of approaches warn that they may "strengthen gender stereotypes and inequality" (Bridges, 2010). Is asking men to don women's shoes a reinforcement of gender stereotypes, or is it a chance for men to experience a particular aspect of (some) women's lives? Gender critics ask, more pointedly,

... by theatrically disrupting a sexualized gender binary, does men's drag undercut male privilege, or does it simply caricature the oppressive aspects of women's subordination (like the physical debilitation of wearing high heels), thus reinforcing the bodily and social superiority of men? (Messner, Greenberg, & Peretz, 2015, pp. 128–129)

The answer is likely "both/and," which raises a dilemma of how to engage men. Moreover, these types of programs reinforce stereotypes about men, specifically that most men are heterosexual and maintain simplified ideas about women.

Any concrete effort to engage and motivate men toward behavioral change must contend with the societal prevalence of heterosexism and homophobia. **Heterosexism** is the implicit belief that most or all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is the only kind of normal sexuality. **Homophobia** is the fear of nonheterosexual people, which may manifest as fear that one might not be heterosexual or that others might think that one is not heterosexual. Because men often express masculinity by exhibiting homophobic attitudes, efforts to stop violence against women must be mindful of these culturally embedded fears. At the same time, efforts to engage heterosexual men in treating women with more dignity and respect have often included jokes and attacks on LGBTQ+ people in an attempt to create a "fun" or "welcoming" atmosphere. These kinds of tactics work against nonviolence efforts by shifting behavior towards the superficial recognition of the difficulty of wearing high-heeled shoes, but it also reinforces the deeper association of high heels with femininity and thus a loss of heterosexual masculinity. This latter effect has troubling implications for the safety and dignity of LGBTQ communities.

Samantha Escobar, a critic of the Walk A Mile in Her Shoes events, states,

I'm frustrated that they use pathetically stupid humor, alienate the [transgender] community and compare clumsily wandering around in high heels to the bemusement of a general community with, say, a single moment of what it's like to experience violent or threatening behaviors of a sexual nature ... I think it is wonderful that these men feel it's important to talk about sexual violence, but we need to do it in a serious way because it's a serious topic with serious implications, culturally and individually. The cause is good, the intention is good, [but] the efforts are misdirected (Escobar, 2013).

As Escobar notes, the humor directed toward men wearing women's shoes is particularly problematic, due to how the humor comes at the expense of LGBTQ people who may engage in non-normative gender performance. The sociologist CJ Pascoe has touched on this dynamic in her dissection of what she calls "fag discourse." **Fag discourse** is "the interactional process through which boys name and repudiate [the] abjected identity" of the "fag" (Pascoe, 2001 p. 333). She writes,

Becoming a fag has as much to do with failing at the masculine tasks of competence, heterosexual prowess and strength ... as it does with a sexual identity. This fluidity of the fag identity is what makes the specter of the fag such a powerful disciplinary mechanism. It is fluid enough that boys police most of their behaviors out of fear of having the fag identity permanently adhere and definitive enough so that boys recognize a fag behavior and strive to avoid it. (Pascoe, 2005, p. 30)

In other words, boys tend to call each other "fag" to reinforce their own masculinity and distance themselves from the label. It is not *only* a term used to denigrate a gay male's sexual identity. It may be directed toward other heterosexual boys to insult their performance of masculinity and, most often, to allow the speaker to retain his sense of masculinity.

While the exercise of men walking in high-heeled shoes turns into a spectacle that can assist in raising funds for various social justice causes, it also leads men to understand women's experiences through a narrow and superficial view. It ignores accounts of men performing in drag throughout history, including in the 10th century as a part of horsemanship or in the 17th and 18th centuries as signs of nobility and status. It also ignores another aspect of gender history: how male fashion designers transformed high heels into a feminine fashion statement (Pitakwongroj & Nutchant, 2012) and effectively transformed its meaning.

Another effort to engage men uses specific kinds of phrasing as encouragement for men in efforts to reduce violence against women but does so without reducing the currency of this language in patriarchal culture. For example, men may tell each other to "man up" by opposing violence against women in an effort to appropriate a term that has been used in hypermasculine contexts. The problem is that the term is still widely associated with masculine prowess, and its appropriation has been unsuccessful. The term "man up" originally developed from the term "cowboy up" as a synonym for "toughen up." Through association with cowboy culture and, later, American football, "man up" is just

as often used to describe men's need to be stronger, better, and more resilient (Zimmer, 2010) as it is to describe a man who opposes violence against women.

The "Man Up Campaign" began in 2009 as an organization to stop violence against women and work toward gender equality. It has grown over the years to include several countries and youth voices in its work. Its stated purpose reads,

Our call to action challenges each of us to "man up" and declare that violence against women and girls must end. In order to break the cycle of trauma unabated violence against women and girls bestows on individuals, families, communities and societies, Man Up Campaign was created to give young people a voice in developing models of change that truly address this issue. (Sullivan, *n.d.*).

Media messaging designed to engage men can fall into another category of defining "real men" and what they are or are not. Human trafficking is an issue that has been gaining increased attention throughout the world, and media campaigns have been devised in attempts to curb sex slavery. One specific campaign used male celebrities in advertisements and public service announcements to plead that "real men don't buy girls." The Demi and Ashton Foundation funded production of several videos to use this messaging and when speaking to the project, "[Ashton] Kutcher explains that the 'Real Men Don't Buy Girls Campaign' contains a message he hopes people are willing to pass around; one that specifically addresses the male psyche, while also being entertaining and informative" (Kavner, 2017).

This oversimplification of masculinity creates a binary understanding of what it means to "be a man" and attempts to use peer pressure to stop sexual harms toward girls and women. As Kutcher explains, "address(ing) the male psyche" in this case ends up creating a *strawman* (a logical fallacy that misrepresents another side to make it easier to attack), a monster, not a man, who purchases underage girls for sex. Steele and Shores (2014) criticized the "Real Men Don't Buy Girls" campaign, stating that "the divorcing of 'real' behaviours and the behaviours of the 'Real' men of the campaign uneasily places fiction and reality side by side" (425). As they further describe, "The clips promote that some people are inherently more 'real' than others; a worldview that needlessly results in the objectification of bodies, particularly the women in the clips" (426). The Kutcher campaign fails to disrupt the cultural view of women as sex objects. Furthermore, it positions men who engage in sex slavery as distant monsters, offering access to a "real man" who does not engage in sex trafficking but may engage in other forms of dehumanizing behavior toward women.

By reinforcing a simplified, and flattened, binary of femininity and masculinity, these types of efforts may help prevent some concrete forms of gendered violence (e.g., domestic violence or human trafficking), while failing to disrupt others. Pushing men into a "status quo" of masculinity denies the variability of messages men and women receive about gender role training and places expert status onto the person or people who are conducting the messaging. Defining masculinity is an important aspect of looking at potential harms of patriarchal engagement strategies with men, particularly when balancing toxic and healthy masculinities.

The scholar R. Connell (1995) speaks to the idea of **hegemonic masculinity**, wherein men maintain a dominant position throughout cultures, and this domination manifests in both covert and overt ways within society. Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that men have total control over women and children. The “man of the castle” descriptor is an overt practice of men being the head of household, which may mean the man is the sole financial earner, makes final decisions over parenting issues, instructs female partners on how to behave and what tasks/chores to complete, and enforces a belief that the family revolves around him and his needs.

Behavior based on hegemonic masculinity can also be subtle. Workplace systems that reward men over women, politics involving men making decisions on women’s health without women’s input, excuses that are made for men who hurt women (and victim-blaming behavior toward women hurt by men), favoritism of sons over daughters, family surname choices, assumptions made by businesses that men make financial decisions in a household, and several other examples of a hegemonic masculinity-based culture lead to women’s experience of being discounted or ignored by men (Acker, 1990).

In analyzing and critiquing Connell’s work, Demetriou (2001) discusses how hegemonic masculinities are not only about men’s domination over women (external hegemonic masculinities) but also domination over subordinate masculinities (internal hegemonic masculinities) (p. 341). If applying this analysis to the use of “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes,” “Man Up” engagement strategies, and “Real Men” approaches, it becomes clear that while several of these reject external hegemonic masculinities, they inherently support internal hegemonic masculinities and attempt to leverage men’s entitlement and hierarchy over subordinate masculinities. They work to shame men into change, use ideas of increased status or rewards for certain behavior, and healthy masculinities become less important than finding out which men are lesser than.

With these ways of motivating and engaging men, the emphasis seems to be on doing just what seems to work. Using patriarchal approaches is not inherently necessary to draw men into conversations or work toward change. It, however, can be difficult to see other potential tools without considering intersectional approaches to masculinity.

Overview of Intersectional Oppression Theory

By analyzing intersectional oppression theory, it is possible to consider alternative methods of working toward healthy masculinities and ending violence against women. **Intersectionality** is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to explain how women of color experience discrimination differently from white women. She contended that black women have historically been ignored in analyses of race and racism, which has focused on black men, and that black women have also been ignored in analyses of sex and sexism, which has focused on white women (Crenshaw, 1989).

Crenshaw saw a need to look at axes of oppression that are present in an individual’s life to understand how they uniquely experience the intersections of harm, discrimination, and abuse. Her work has been extrapolated to consider the various intersections that individuals experience in their lives. Just as women experience life differently based on the intersection of race, men do as well.

Working to engage men requires that these intersections be considered, as working with a group of heterosexual men will be different than working with a group of non-heterosexual men, which will be different from working with men of a specific racial or ethnic group. Lumping “all men” together for engagement strategies and using patriarchal methods to pressure men into different behavior is not effective for long-term cultural change due to the variability in how men experience gender roles and gender socialization in their lives.

Oppression is a concept that identifies layers of harmful behavior toward groups of people. Iris Young outlined the “Five Faces of Oppression” in 1990, describing the categories of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. She states, “In its traditional usage, oppression means the exercise of tyranny by a ruling group” (Young, 1990, p. 5). Men have historically exercised tyranny—*power*—over women in these categories.

Men have **exploited** women to expect them to conduct household chores, raise children, and grant sexual favors, which demonstrate Young’s claim that “oppression occurs through a steady process of the transfer of the results of the labor of one social group to benefit another (Young, 1990, p. 14).” While there have been social changes to promote gender equality and address the oppression of women, exploitation remains in assumptions about gender roles, pressures girls and women face to maintain certain behavior, and men’s ability and willingness to stereotype women. Young further states,

Women undergo specific forms of gender exploitation in which their energies and power are expended, often unnoticed and unacknowledged, usually to benefit men by releasing them for more important and creative work, enhancing their status or the environment around them, or providing them with sexual or emotional service. (Young, 1990, p. 16)

Marginalization of women by men occurs in overt and covert ways, including in the assumptions and preference of men within certain fields of work. For example, patients often assume women are nurses and doctors are men, while women face conditions in medical school that diminish their accomplishments and contributions to their field. Discrimination and assumptions within this field also exist, as Herbst recounts her experiences of male physicians’ “bro talk” toward her during her residency (Herbst, 2016). Women’s experiences illustrate the marginalization women face within the workforce, even within positions of wealth and power. This marginalization occurs at such a level that an Internet search on the topic reveals thousands of firsthand accounts, detailed analysis within industries, and books and articles.

Young describes **powerlessness** in terms of labor and capital. While much of her description relies on Marxist analysis, or criticism of the ruling classes, she describes powerlessness more generally as “exposure to disrespectful treatment due to the status one occupies” (Young, 1990, p. 58). The objectification of women, seen as sexual objects of male desire, is a constant challenge in confronting sexism. Women are often powerless to avoid objectification, with young girls facing restrictions on choice of their clothing

due to rules that categorize girls and women's bodies as "distractions." Suzannah Weiss describes ways that dress codes perpetuate rape culture:

By policing how girls dress in an attempt to divert boys' attention from them, schools are holding girls responsible for how boys view them and even how they do in school. When schools talk about how "distracting" girls' outfits are, they're absolving boys of responsibility for doing their duties as a student regardless of their surroundings. The image above, taken from a seminary, takes this victim-blaming a step further by holding women responsible for unwanted touching they might experience at school. (Weiss, 2017)

Patriarchy involves a **cultural imperialism** that normalizes men as leaders, as being in control, as having power over women. If patriarchy is a pervasive force throughout culture, are there methods of leveraging male privilege toward change? Since oppressive behavior is composed of layers, these layers can be analyzed to find utility in oppressors engaging and changing other oppressors.

Access as a Counterpoint to Power

Power involves the ability to compel others' behaviors and to change oneself within the terms one decides. Power works differently depending on the forms of oppression. For example, with wealth (financial class) one can use personally held resources (money, prestige, credit, possessions) to improve a situation in favor of self or to control other people. In the layer of race, people who are white and of European descent are viewed as "normal" and regarded as neutral in society. This "neutrality" is often invisible as an aspect of power, but when considered in comparison to people who are not white, it is more easily recognized. People who are nonwhite are viewed as threats, and stereotypes are made on the individual based on assumptions about the group the person represents. This can lead to racial profiling, suspicions of theft and crime, assumptions of inability to speak English, and preemptive hostility. In this layer of power, neutrality is an advantage that lends the individual white person the ability to operate without interference or negative assumption from others.

Within the layer of gender, men have a similar ability to be viewed as "neutral" when compared to women. Men are assumed to be income earners, leaders, and heads of households, dominant over others, and decision makers. This is a huge degree of power that allows men to make decisions about their lives in ways that women do not have access to. Women are assumed to be mothers, subordinates, submissive to men in their lives, incapable or uncomfortable in making decisions, and weaker than men. These stereotypes diminish women's experiences and raise the importance of men's perspectives.

Much of the power men have over women is enforced by societal status quos, stereotypes, and the invisibility of women's perspectives. One approach to ending violence against women and girls requires men to *access* their social power to empower, support, and work with women to make their perspectives visible and important. Within public messaging, use of media, and intervention in groups and with individual men, there is a

need to understand the access men have with other men to inflict thinking about privilege and entitlement. The term “inflict” is used intentionally in this analysis to reflect on how men, as a default, do not need to consider the impact of status quo male gender roles or behavior toward women. To “inflict” thinking means to impose something unwelcome and to create discomfort within the status quo of thought and behavior. Men need to work toward change in behavior, to shift perspectives they have that make women invisible, and to consider how to use personal power to address violence and harm using individual and community-based methods.

The White Ribbon Campaign is a group that began to engage men in recognizing violence against women in the aftermath of a misogynistic attack at a college campus in London, Ontario. A gunman expressly murdered women, making his intent clear at the time of the massacre and stating in his suicide note, “I have decided to send the feminists who have always ruined my life to their Maker (Thériault, 2017).” The White Ribbon Campaign brings men together to discuss the words behind a pledge to end violence against women and girls, wear a white ribbon to show they would work to make the pledge authentic in their own lives, and publicly acknowledge the men joining in ceremonies (White Ribbon Campaign, n.d.). While the individual pledges might have an element of peer pressure, this campaign offers a strategy to increase access to men. Once access is gained, it is up to the person using his power to influence further change; access is merely “one foot in the door.”

Another example of using access as a tactic involves the organization Resource Generation. Their statement reflects their purpose, to,

... organize a multi-racial constituency of young people with inherited, earned, or future wealth who are committed to working for a just world. The broader Resource Generation community includes people of all ages and class backgrounds who support the role that young people with wealth play in social change. Our cross-class allies participate as board members, trainers, and organizational partners. (Resource Generation, 2017)

Laura Wernick interviewed several members of Resource Generation to determine how their approach actually worked. She found,

Resource Generation’s role, as interview participants see it, is to supportively challenge young people with wealth to effect socially just change by leveraging their resources (specifically, money, access, and knowledge) in a responsible and strategic way. (Wernick, 2012, p. 331)

The ability to access others with resources is a critical step toward changing dynamics of oppression, and, according to Wernick,

the group argues that young adults who possess wealth cannot confront class power and privilege unless they recognize wealth’s intersecting relationships with and participation in such other institutions of domination as racism, sexism, and heterosexism ... Resource Generation asserts that movements to foster social justice should be led by marginalized communities. The role of people with

power, privilege, and wealth is to support these movements, but this does not mean that people with wealth do not engage as full participants in the movements. (Wernick, 2012, p. 331)

Men have power in several ways due to the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity. The dynamics that Resource Generation works to build have a similar application as working with men to address the oppression of women. Men can support women in their work to gain empowerment, equality, and agency, and they can also engage as full participants in these movements. The challenge is that oppressor classes, like men, can use their power to dominate women, take control of activities within efforts to work against sexism, and become blind to women's experience of them. Men can instead work to recognize their power, to access it, and influence others who otherwise blindly accept the advantages of their masculinity.

Introspection as a Counterpoint to Privilege

Privilege is essentially about history, patterns, and an accumulation of power. Much like power itself, privilege is not earned and is instead one of the features of oppression. Unfortunately, privilege is often difficult to recognize in oneself and others. Intersectional layers can also complicate this dynamic of oppression, as an individual may have a history of power on one layer and a history of oppression in another.

Consider how homophobia and heterosexism fit within the dynamic of privilege. Someone who is heterosexual ("straight") has power in the United States of America's culture and society. We know this because being straight is considered the "normal" default (neutral state). Someone who is straight can choose to show public affection toward a member of the opposite sex (which assumes only two possible sexes) and such displays are nonevents. Someone who is straight can choose to formalize their relationship in marriage, and there are no additional barriers to this process. The history within most countries around the world has included the ability of straight couples to choose relationships as they please (although not necessarily an automatic right for nonwhite, poor, or enslaved people). This is a privilege and an inherent support of the power straight people enjoy.

Another example may include considering the dynamics of *ableism*, which can include the oppression of people with physical or mental disabilities by people who are able-bodied and able-minded. People who are able-bodied can easily overlook the power inherent in that position. As able-bodied, an individual can navigate stairs, manage physical tasks pain-free, use tools without assistance or adaptation, read signs and instructions without alternate means, and perform numerous other physical tasks. Advantages provide power—the ability to make decisions, the ability to have choice—and with ableism, often those choices are taken for granted.

As an able-minded person, an individual does not need medication for mental stability, does not have to manage thought patterns or mood swings to the extent of being able to function within society, does not need additional supportive care for everyday tasks, and, in general, can operate in life without disturbance of mental and emotional

ability. However, if a person with disabilities does not “look” disabled, an able-bodied individual could easily become oppressive and start to believe he or she is being harmed by a disabled person who protests to oppressive comments, attitudes, or behaviors. In these cases, resistance of someone who is oppressed is seen incorrectly as oppressive behavior, and often, this is focused on a layer that is not applicable in the moment.

To leverage privilege, people with that privilege need to work consistently to have **introspection**. Personal insight into the history of one’s personal power can help to mitigate use of that power in ways that cause harm. Domestic violence intervention offers broad-based insight into personal power and privilege, although the focus is often on individuals who have committed domestic violence (or related) crimes. While there are several models of intervention, and several curricula available for intervention, a foundational characteristic of these programs are working with individuals who have chosen violent, abusive, and overall hurtful behavior as a pattern toward an intimate partner to gain insight into their belief systems and patterns of coercive control.

While these programs operate mostly as an extension of the criminal justice system, best practices within these programs involve community coordinated responses. For example, a core aspect of the Duluth Abuse Intervention Programs (commonly referred to as the “Duluth Model”) is in working to instill awareness and response throughout an entire community about the destructive use of “power and control.” This involves meetings with various groups, agencies, and individuals to create a common understanding of what counts as violence and working to ensure safety and support for those victimized by abusive intimate partners (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, n.d.).

Much of this work requires introspection of individuals within systems of power, which adds to the complexity of intersectional analysis. **Systemic (or institutional) classism** considers how hierarchy creates systems of power that favor the position and status of certain people over others. It is compared to individual (or personal) classism, which focuses on an individual person’s wealth, education, or prestige in relation to others possessing more or less.

An example of complexities within community coordination and introspection could involve attempts to educate a court system on the intricate dynamics of domestic violence. If a district court judge, who has a high degree of positional power, is unable to recognize the patterns of coercive control that might lead a victim/survivor of domestic violence to defend the person abusing him or her, then the blindness of that judge toward the experience of the victim/survivor might be hostile and harmful. That judge would need to have introspection into personal beliefs and experiences that might be negatively affecting his or her ability to provide justice, protection, and safety for that victim/survivor. A community coordinated response could offer information, training, and reports to that judge to work toward a more comprehensive understanding of domestic violence.

Specifically working with men to stop violence against women can involve strategies such as those used with Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR) and the National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS), both of which employ introspection as a core component of their approaches. MCSR guides men toward introspection, by

treat[ing] and engag[ing] men as potential allies rather than assaulters by embracing their full range of emotion and strength and using both to help men recognize alternatives to violence and healthy attitudes toward their female counterparts. (Marlam, 2017)

NOMAS works to build introspection in a similar fashion, by working to give the average man a platform to express himself at his most vulnerable state, by analyzing and eradicating the institutionalized margins within which masculinity exists. The “traditional” role of a man has always been to appear strong and collected, and to suppress his emotions because to showcase your feelings is “inherently feminine.” These gender norms are damaging not only to men, but to women as well, because just as a woman is capable of being detached and harsh, a man can be sensitive and caring. (Marlam, 2017)

Humanization as a Counterpoint to Prejudice

Prejudice is a belief about a person based on something that individual represents or a group they appear to belong to. Prejudice strengthens power and makes privilege more invisible. When people speak to oppression, it is often prejudice that is highlighted and condemned. However, prejudice is a part of being human—we all have stereotypes in how we experience others, and sometimes these stereotypes are correct; sometimes they have some relevance, but mostly they are incorrect and often entirely inaccurate.

Understanding prejudice can be challenging primarily because it requires insight into personal patterns of thinking, willingness to admit to being wrong, and an ability to separate out prejudicial thinking from perceptions of right/wrong and good/bad. Holding onto prejudice against others easily builds into **entitlement**, the idea of personal superiority over others, the idea of others being inherently inferior, or a belief that one deserves certain treatment from others. Since oppression is intersectional, this means someone can have entitlement in one layer in their life and view others negatively, while still experiencing harm from others who have power over them.

In 2013, Oprah Winfrey visited a shop in Zurich, Switzerland, and claimed when she asked to see a handbag valued at \$38,000, she was denied, with the store clerk claiming she could not afford it. In considering prejudice in Ms. Winfrey’s story, it must be noted that she has a large fortune and could have easily afforded the purse. Due to this store clerk being a white citizen of Switzerland, and the privilege inherent in that status,¹ the clerk had the power of nationality and race and could easily have prejudice against Ms. Winfrey.

Parsing out the presence of prejudice on both sides is complicated, as it shows that in relationship to each other, both Ms. Winfrey and the store clerk have advantages in that interchange: Ms. Winfrey due to her wealth and the store clerk due to race. **Kyriarchy** is the exploration of the lens through which individuals view those with less power than they have. In Ms. Winfrey’s case, her financial class power is the lens through which she has the most advantage. In the store clerk’s case, at least during this incident, she has

the most power through being a white citizen—particularly in a culture and state that has dynamics of xenophobia and oppression toward foreign nationals. Her prejudice would be through that lens and secondarily through the lens of race.

The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB) is an anti-racist organization that trains groups and individual students on understanding racism and its overlap with class. They take a humanist approach to their educational material, tapping into humanization of racism by asking participants, “Why are people poor?” Participants in trainings often jump to individual responsibilities for being poor, such as “buying unnecessary things,” or “criminal activity,” or “not finishing school,” or other reasons that look at a person’s individual choices. This activity draws out prejudices people have against poor people, and PISAB shifts the discussion to looking at environmental factors by asking, for example, “Where are the check cashing businesses located?” Or, “Where does public transportation end or not go to?” Or, “Where are churches and religious organizations concentrated within communities?” Each of these questions is used to consider how stereotypes about class often overlap into stereotypes about race and how the systematic choices of people in power disinvest in poor people and impoverished neighborhoods.

People are **humanized** by being considered as individuals separate from, but possibly still linked to, certain groups of other human beings. Motivating and engaging men to end violence against women requires that process to happen in a similar way as it does in anti-racist work. Asking men, “What do you do in the morning before leaving your home to prevent yourself from being raped?” seems like a ludicrous question to men, primarily because men do not worry about being raped. That sense of comfort prevents men from understanding the reality that women face with the threat of being raped or sexually assaulted.

Similarly, understanding environmental factors that shape men’s experience is important. Societies create gender norms, some of which are toxic and destructive, some of which are respectful and healthy. Each individual ultimately chooses which narrative to apply to his or her life, and there are consequences and rewards involved in following certain narratives, depending on who in your life offers support, what groups you associate with, and how you develop your values and meaning in life. Men need to humanize themselves, understand the damage patriarchy causes them, and become increasingly aware of ways in which patriarchy benefits them and harms women and girls.

Women also are influenced by gender norms, and work by Paul Kivel and the Oakland Men’s Project discuss the counterpoint to “Act Like a Man,” by considering “Act Like a Lady.” Women are held to certain standards, which pressure girls to be submissive, to act in ways that please men and boys, and to be “less than.” Working to stop sexist behavior and violence toward women and girls also requires dialog about these realities and how they create entitlement for men over women (Kivel, n.d.).

Several groups, individuals, and media, including Jackson Katz, Tony Porter, Michael Kimmel, *A Call to Men*, *Miss Representation*, *The Skin We Live In*, *Guyland*, and others exist to question cultural influences on sex and gender. These resources tend to consider ways that men objectify women. Objectification is a method of dehumanizing

others and making others into representatives of groups rather than individuals. For men objectifying women, it is about seeing women as sexual objects, as servants and providers, and limiting their value to services they provide to men rather than the value in their humanity. A common cry to men to stop violence against women and girls is to “think—what if this woman was your daughter, your wife, your aunt, your mother, your grandmother?” Despite the intentions of this approach, it places women and girls into the category of possessions, rather humans entitled to respect and dignity. This is another example of using one version of patriarchy (“men should protect women”) to stop another version of patriarchy (“men shouldn’t hurt women who remind them of the women they protect”).

Conclusion

The three potential leveraging tools (access, introspection, and humanization) often overlap, but each may be used in unique contexts. Working to end oppressive behavior is challenging on every level, particularly because those with power tend to want to keep their power and advantages intact. Using people’s power—like applying patriarchal principles to anti-violence work—to try and end advantages over others is not effective for long-term change. At best, such tactics will have short-term results, where people with advantage (men) will feel superior to other men due to their increased awareness of sexism. However, if we want to work toward longer-term results, and we want to make changes that are authentic and further respect, health, and equality, we need to use different tactics: tactics of engagement, of leveraging, or recognizing that power is not necessarily earned as much as it consists of the status of history and how advantages are distributed within a society.

In analyzing oppression, specifically sexism, it is important to understand historically why men have power over women, why the history of this power has continued over time, and why women are dehumanized and stereotyped to further the advantages of men over women. In gaining this understanding, we can truly begin to see methods of accessing this power, teaching men how to influence other men, and guiding introspection into the advantages of privilege. So, too, can other oppressor classes be leveraged to make change in our society from our individual beliefs, to our local communities, to our nations, and to our world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter discusses how several methods of engaging men are problematic. What are the problems mentioned, and are there additional challenges that might build from such engagement strategies?
2. While focusing on cisgender heterosexual masculinity, analysis of nonbinary and non-straight masculinities is important when developing strategies to engage

men. What are nonbinary masculinities, and how might engagement strategies be different, and how might they be inclusive for men who are not cisgender?

3. Describe the concept of intersectionality by identifying places in your life where you hold privilege and places in your life where you do not. Discuss how those layers interact during your day-to-day life.
4. Choose a category of oppression and outline each of Iris Young's faces of oppression (exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence) that exist for that category.
5. Consider your answers to question 4 and outline possible methods of people within an oppressor class engaging others in that oppressor class by using access, introspection, and humanization.

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Note

1. Analyzing racial power varies by country, but in an analysis by the United Nations Human Rights Council (2007), the author noted "deep rooted cultural resistance within Swiss society against the multiculturalisation process and the growing prevalence of racist and xenophobic stance in political programmes and discourses contribute to a certain 'dynamic of racism and xenophobia in Switzerland.'"

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