
“In one survey, women and men were asked what they were most afraid of. Women responded that they were most afraid of being raped and murdered. Men responded that they were most afraid of being laughed at.” (p. 21)

INTRODUCTION

A man in his twenties approaches the bar. He wears a brown collared shirt. He has a full head of hair. He looks like a normal guy. The room is bustling. A woman is visible in the corner, nursing a bottle of beer. Is she single? This looks like the perfect place for a guy like this.

The young man appears puzzled for a moment. He addresses the bartender, “Can I get a light beer?”

The bartender, a stunning redhead in a tank top, answers him without hesitation, “Sure. Do you care how it tastes?”

A faint smirk lighting up his face, he replies, “No, I don’t care how it tastes.”

He’s just a no frills kind of guy, or so it seems. He glances at the woman next to him and lifts his eyebrows to acknowledge her. The bartender’s sculpted countenance suddenly sours, “Ok. Well when you start caring, just take off your skirt and I’ll give you a Miller Lite.” Our young hero is dumbstruck, and, after glancing at the brandless beer that he now holds and the woman at the bar, he beats a hasty retreat. The man is wearing a frilly mini-skirt, the kind of skirt that a teenage girl might wear. Several attractive young female patrons are now in focus and they briefly size him up and look away. He stops and looks longingly back at the bar. He has no retort. He’s no man. He might as well be invisible.

“Man Up,” the gravelly voiceover reminds us, “because if you’re drinking a light beer without great pilsner taste, you’re missing the point of drinking beer.”

Another young man in a similarly crowded bar. He’s wearing an oxford cloth shirt. Perhaps he just got off work. He looks respectable. He hesitates for a moment, and then, his cadence all confidence, “A light beer, please.”

The bartender’s slender figure is highlighted by a tank top and brown hair. Dangling earrings frame her face. A simple and respectful question: does he care how it tastes? No, he doesn’t care how it tastes. He brushes off the query as if nothing were on the line.

“Ok,” she says, her face curling into a condescending smirk, “well, when you start caring, put down your purse and I’ll give you a Miller Lite.” The bartender and an attractive woman at the bar both examine a bag hanging over the man’s shoulder. It looks like it’s made out of white leather—exactly the kind of bag that a woman would carry.

The man, unfazed, “It’s a carry-all.” The bartender says that it isn’t. The attractive woman at the bar turns to her friend (Are they both single? On the prowl?). They size up the confused young man and laugh.

The man’s humiliation is redoubled when he returns to a table full of his friends. They agree to watch his purse while he goes to purchase the correct beer. “It’s a carry-all,” he insists.

They all laugh at him.

The previous examples are drawn from Miller Lite’s recent “Man Up” advertising campaign. The formula is straightforward: a young man orders a beer in a crowded bar and claims that he does not care about taste. A conventionally attractive female bartender proceeds to ridicule the man for having a piece of clothing or an accessory typically associated with a woman. Other women at the bar then observe and laugh at the man. The advertisement usually ends with the man once again being humiliated by a table full of his friends—always all men. The central notion is that the subject does not understand how to act like a “real man.” Women and men both remind him of this by mocking him. He is redeemable; he usually decides to buy the correct beer in the end and sometimes he even appears without the accessory.

This advertising campaign provides a basic framework for analyzing how masculinity is constructed and enforced. “Manning up” appears to mean avoiding certain behaviors, such as dressing like a woman. There are also undercurrents of heteronormativity: the bartender is always female and the young man is always humiliated in front of other women as well. One message seems to be that women only want a man who “acts like a man.” A man who acts like a woman can be either ridiculed or ignored. Additionally, there is an emphasis on impressing other men: the subject’s friends immediately mock his non-conforming behavior. His reaction is usually a mix of defensiveness and shame. He did not intend to behave in an unmanly fashion. His mistake is appropriately punished. In the “Man Up” world, masculinity is performed by eschewing markers of femininity and appearing heterosexual. Social pressure and insecurity

2. Other examples of misguided men: a man wearing his girlfriend’s jeans, a man wearing bronzer, and a “momma’s boy.” The red-blooded male viewer may feel a hot, wet stinging on his face after witnessing all of this. He reassures himself that it must be allergy season. He grunts a stoic grunt, as all strong men do.

3. MAN UP (Miller Light Commercial broadcast April 2010).
about being humiliated in public are paramount to enforcing this behavior.

The casual use of gender stereotypes to sell beer is not uncharted territory. But the “Man Up” campaign does provide a clear, if somewhat exaggerated, elucidation of how social structures reinforce male gender identity and what the stakes are for men—humiliation and disempowerment being chief among them. Should feminists bat an eye at these issues? Feminist scholars and activists, busy fighting against inequalities in our social, legal, and political systems, may consider the issue of male gender construction out of their purview. After all, feminists have long fought against the tendency of scholarship to treat man as the essential, “the Subject,” and women as “the Other.” Masculinities scholars might argue that the seeming centrality of masculinity in scholarship and the certainty with which it is portrayed indicate that it often escapes examination. Additionally, the obstinacy of male gender identity has proved a consistent obstacle to social change. The study of masculinities, also called male studies, argues for the urgency of understanding men as gendered beings in addressing larger social issues. Professor Nancy E. Dowd argues that this understanding can also serve as a key ingredient in feminist scholarship and social activism that will benefit both women and men.

In The Man Question: Male Subordination and Privilege, Dowd provides a forceful argument for why feminists should be concerned with the study of male gender identity—men as men. This is important to the continuing project of anti-essentialism, which recognizes that other axes of subordination such as race and class can cause individuals to be disproportionately and differently affected by social structures (pp. 1-2). Although “maleness” includes privileges experienced by all men, it can also be a burden and is by no means a uniform experience (pp. 4-5). An enriched understanding of how male gender and privilege is constructed and sustained is not only essential to deconstructing that privilege, but also to fostering collaboration across gender lines in that process: “Women’s subordination and men’s subordination are intertwined in the system of male privilege.” (p. 5) The next step in asking “the woman question,” then, is to explore “the man question.”

**Theory**

The first section of The Man Question provides a theoretical overview of masculinities studies and describes how its key insights could supplement femini-
ist jurisprudence. Dowd begins by discussing how men have traditionally been essentialized in feminist analyses, which often regard them primarily as members of a privileged class or as holders of power and dispensers of subordination (p. 13). Dowd gives a thorough, concise review of disparate strands of male gender identity scholarship (pp. 25-45). She illuminates some common themes and introduces most of the central figures. This section is an excellent starting point for readers unfamiliar with this area of scholarship. Dowd’s review comes with some qualifications and she provides unflinching criticisms about trends in the scholarship, including the tendency to essentialize women as a group and the nominal attention paid to race and sexual orientation in formulating alternative masculinities (pp. 53-56). These cautionary observations illustrate that masculinities studies run up against similar limitations to those experienced by feminist scholars and that a closer working relationship between scholars in those fields would be symbiotic.

The theory section is intended to establish the development of masculinities studies and its relationship to feminist discourse. The portion of the book dealing with “traditional” feminist accounts is cursory (pp. 15-17). Skeptical readers will need to turn to outside sources to confirm or deny Dowd’s contentions about the role of male gender in feminist analysis. The author’s overview of masculinities studies is not similarly sparse: it is meticulously researched and written. Arguably, the bibliography is the book’s strongest contribution. Readers interested in learning more about masculinities studies could use it as an effective starting point. The fourth chapter—“Toward a New Theory of Feminist Jurisprudence”—condenses the lessons of masculinities studies into thirteen specific themes and outlines seven ways that these insights can be incorporated to enrich feminist analysis (pp. 57-71).

Although the theory portion of the book is nicely written and tightly argued, its repetitiveness can undermine its readability. Similar points are raised repeatedly, particularly the themes of masculinities studies, which are rehashed, ad nauseam, in three consecutive chapters. The second and third chapters (“Men, Masculinities, and Feminist Theory” and “Masculinities Theory and Practice”) are required reading for those interested in an overview of masculinities studies, while readers already familiar with this field may want to begin with the fourth chapter, where Dowd neatly summarizes her arguments. Those who favor a crisp academic style will not be disappointed, while less academically-inclined readers may be left scratching their heads.

6. By way of example: there is little that distinguishes “Development of Masculinities Scholarship” (pp. 17-21 in Chapter 2) from “Overview of Masculinities Theory” (pp. 25-28 in Chapter 3) or “Challenges” (pp. 21-23 in Chapter 2) from “Critique and Concerns” (pp. 53-56 in Chapter 3). It is unclear why these subjects could not be dealt with in a single section. The degree to which these opening chapters seem unaware of each other may indicate a combination of various academic articles with jagged edges that have been insufficiently pared down by editing.

7. In fairness to the author, there is nothing excessively confusing about her style, and the intended audience appears to be an academic one. In that context, the style is clear and con-
bility issues, Dowd is largely successful in establishing the credibility and urgen-
cy of her contentions.

One of Dowd’s central premises is that feminist accounts often fail to treat
men as gendered beings. Men have been viewed through an “essentialist, uni-
versal, undifferentiated” lens (p. 13). One reason for this is historical: the logical
place for feminist analysis to begin was with the perspectives of women and a
focus on the numerous inequalities they face (p.13). The other is epistemologi-
cal: critical examinations and challenges of a complex system of patriarchy tend
to define men only by “power and dominance, how it is conferred and rein-
forced, how it operates” without much discussion of how men experience this
system or how to strategize with men (p. 13). “In models of equality, men are
rendered as essentially powerful so that achieving women’s equality is measured
against an essentialist view of men.” (p. 16) Dowd is not so much criticizing
these approaches as pointing out gaps that could be enriched with a more
nuanced approach. She highlights three approaches to men that have rarely been
included in feminist discourse: examining how men not only benefit from the
gender system but are also disadvantaged by it, how men relate to women and
what aspects of those relationships block collaboration, and how male hierar-
chies differentiate between men (p. 14). Recognizing and incorporating an anal-
ysis of men as gendered beings provides not only a better account of how male
privilege is structured but also how that privilege can be harmful for men (p. 14).
Feminists should incorporate these approaches to aid in the project of “dis-
mantl[ing] privilege and power” and to foster collaboration with men in that
process (p. 17).

Dowd argues that it is critical for feminists to understand how masculinity
is constructed and sustained. Masculinities studies, by examining men as ge-
nered beings, can fill this gap in feminist accounts. The definition of what is
meant by “masculinity” is not entirely clear from her discussion but there are
some fundamental ideas that shape the scholarship. Masculinity is a social, not
biological, construction that is performative, diverse, and not limited to males
(pp. 25-27). Scholars are divided as to whether or not there is a hegemonic mas-
culinity that predominates (p. 26). Masculinity scholars mainly gravitate toward
“identity and practice, in the sense of exposing what masculinities are and how
they function and are felt.” (p. 26) As Dowd astutely notes, this approach puts
the entire field dangerously close to a type of narcissism that ignores feminist

8. This probably reflects some ambiguity within the scholarship. Since masculinities scholars
take the position that masculinities are multifarious and fluid, this makes a degree of sense.

On the other hand, as Dowd makes clear, masculinity is a performative social construct.

9. See pp. 53-54 for a critique of this approach.
concerns and tends to essentialize women (pp. 3, 54-56). The focus on male identity is also a reflection of the different position of men in society. In this sense, masculinities studies “do[es] not offer a parallel or balance [to feminism] but rather offers something else.” (p. 7) The scholarship is often less explicitly concerned with actively working to change social structures that privilege men. The impetus to grand social and political projects is not as strong as it is for many feminist scholars and activists.  

Masculinity revolves around male relationships with other males as well as relationships with women. As the “Man Up” campaign indicates, men must be concerned with acting masculine in front of both men and women. While women may experience social pressures to remain confined to their gender, maleness is “something never attained but rather something that must be proved on a daily basis.” (p. 28)11 This distinction does not imply that women do not face pressures to be “feminine,” but for men this pressure is uniquely tied to power and hierarchy between males and is more central to gender identity.12 The defining experience of being male is “being constantly evaluated and tested,” particularly by other men (p. 28). This leads to an interesting paradox: while men are empowered as a group, they often feel powerless and highly insecure as individuals.13 Hegemonic masculinity is driven by negative definitions of manhood: “[I]t is critical not to be a woman and not to be gay.” (p. 26) The “Man Up” commercials reflect this structure of constantly proving and reinforcing masculinity: a man is humiliated for dressing like a woman on one occasion—he has flunked the test of masculinity.

Dowd divides masculinities studies into two broad categories: psychological and social theories. The psychological theories generally revolve around the instability of identity and the difficulties experienced by men in attempting to achieve prescribed gender roles. The sociological theories tend to focus on how masculinity is constructed and reinforced by social structures. The problematic aspects of social and psychological maleness such as violence, toughness, and showing off are particularly linked with crime (pp. 33-34). Messerschmidt, a psychologist who studies masculinity, calls crime “a resource, when other resources are unavailable, for accomplishing masculinity.” (p. 33) Dowd also establishes some elements that are missing in many of these accounts of masculin-ity (pp.45-56). She argues that approaches that focus on alternative or subversive masculinities, such as critical race theory and queer theory, need to be placed

10. Dowd elaborates some ways in which the stakes of gender identity are quite high for men when applied to pressing social issues. The four “application” chapters of her book provide several such examples.

11. “It is easy to be a woman: it is a constant struggle to be a man.” (p. 28); Masculinities scholar Dan Kindlon calls masculinity “The Big Impossible” (p. 41) (quoting DAN KINDLON ET AL., Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys 78 (1999)).

12. The book does not make explicit why or how it is “easy to be a woman” and why women are not also in a constant state of proving that they are “feminine” enough.

13. “Men as a group are in power (when compared with women), but do not feel powerful.” (p. 30) (quoting MICHAEL S. KIMMEL, THE GENDERED SOCIETY 100 (2004)).
closer to the center of masculinities studies (p. 45). These theories may be particularly useful for feminists because they expose hierarchies within masculinities and how men garner both privilege and disadvantage from constructions of gender (pp. 45-52).

While Dowd recognizes the importance of masculinities studies, she also highlights significant challenges in this field and tendencies that may be a barrier to future collaboration. The first challenge is the tendency of scholars (masculinities scholars and feminists alike) to treat gender analysis as a zero-sum game (p. 21). There is a tendency in masculinities scholarship to focus exclusively on the needs of men while rendering women invisible (p. 21). Masculinities scholars must remember the “asymmetry” of men’s position as a group compared with women and maintain an awareness of women’s inequalities as well as the privileged position of men (p. 22). There is also the danger of masculinities studies providing nominal cover for anti-feminist or anti-female backlash (pp. 22).

Additionally, prominent masculinities scholars like R.W. Connell and Michael S. Kimmel recognize that the discipline must follow in the steps of feminism by promoting antessentialism (moving beyond a western-oriented conception of hegemonic masculinity) and exploring collaboration with other fields (pp. 22-23). These issues are a cause for “caution but not rejection,” and Dowd believes that feminists could be vital contributors to the development of masculinities scholarship (p. 56).

**Masculinities Studies Applied: Boys**

Having established the central concerns of masculinities studies and how they can enrich the feminist approach, Dowd uses the remainder of *The Man Question* to illustrate how this approach can be applied to pressing social and legal issues. First, she discusses boys in the education and juvenile justice systems. While the struggles of boys in the education system have recently been a hot topic, she contends that the interactions between gender and the structure of the system are often overlooked or only superficially analyzed (p. 73). The problems facing boys and those facing girls in the education system should be viewed as interrelated, and their solutions cannot be treated as a zero-sum game. The juvenile justice system, which has a predominately male population, is another context in which male gender identity is formed and reinforced (pp. 73-74). Dowd highlights the harm to boys and girls resulting from “a gendered core” within the system (p. 87). She also points to how other axes of privilege and subordination are at play in this setting, particularly race (pp. 8, 10, 73-74, 90-91). By examining the lives of boys and girls, the reader sees how male privilege is constructed at an early age and witnesses the adverse impact gendered structures can have—whether implicit like in education, or explicit, like in juvenile

14. “[B]oys can be the focus, and should be the focus, of gender equality efforts in addition to girls, rather than as rivals for an equality constructed as being a choice between one or the other.” (p. 74)
The structure and culture of school life create obstacles to tearing down traditional hegemonic masculinity. Commentators have cited the “crisis” of an education system that they claim is failing boys (pp. 76-83). According to Dowd, the tendency to treat the problems of boys and girls separately (sometimes in a zero-sum fashion) is the most problematic outcome of this “crisis” in education. Recent data shows that, among other things, boys generally have lower grades, higher dropout rates, a greater frequency of learning and behavioral problems, and higher incidence of completed suicide, and higher rates of violence, both as victims and perpetrators (p. 76). The pervasive mantra that “boys will be boys” serves to dismiss these trends as biologically pre-ordained (pp. 78-79).

Dowd points to structures that create obstacles for boys in school: strict “gender policing,” the importance of appearing cool by not working hard, and the value placed on violence in social hierarchies (pp. 79-80). Still, many masculinities scholars caution against a singular focus on boys that would only serve to “reinscription privilege” by ignoring the real issues faced by girl students. The unique set of problems faced by boys must be connected with those of girls. “[S]uch an approach does not mean seeing gender-specific problems as equal but rather seeing them as connected and intersectional.” (p. 83) The structures that negatively affect boys also affect girls—an obvious but important example is in the role of violence in social hierarchies among boys.

Dowd advocates de-essentializing these problems even further and treats them as primarily related to race and class, rather than gender. Many of the problems often cited in “crisis” literature are “strongly raced and classed.” (p. 83) Questions of race and class are equal, if not more significant than questions of gender (p. 85). Dowd’s analysis illustrates how the challenge of improving schools for both girls and boys is fraught with complex interactions of networks of power and privilege extending beyond gender. School desegregation provides one interesting historical example of how these issues can interrelate (p. 81). One strategy of resistance to desegregation was the adoption of “Jane Crow” laws, which created single-sex schools to keep black boys away from white girls (p. 81). These laws were intended to discourage miscegenation (p. 81).

Applying a both/and, rather than a zero-sum, gender analysis and treating boys as gendered subjects is also critical to improving the juvenile justice system. The juvenile justice system presents a different set of issues than education because it is predominately male. Eighty-five percent of youths in residential placement are boys, and boys spend twice as long in residential placements on

15. “Framing equity as attending to boys and girls, rather than taking an either/or approach grounded in a simplistic binary view of gender, is part of an analysis that links the construction of masculinity to the overall gender order and the impossibility of attending to gender by focusing only on boys or on girls.” (p. 81)
16. For example, Dowd cites a study that shows that traditional views of masculinity are often reinforced by mentoring programs that solely focus on boys (p. 80).
average (p. 87). The population of girls in the system has been on the rise in recent years, and this has catalyzed efforts to provide gender-specific programs for them, but not for boys (p. 93). Research on gender identity and male juvenile offenders suggests a strong tendency to reinforce dominant forms of masculinity within the corrective justice system (pp. 95-100). These studies reveal that the criminal acts committed by boys are often “expressions of hegemonic masculinity,” and “the system deals with them in a way that reinforces that masculinity” by sustaining the notion that males are naturally violent (p. 95, 97). This vision of masculinity affects not only how men experience their own gender but also how women are taught to regard men (p. 97). Additionally, LGBT youth are harassed and marginalized, both by other offenders and the system as a whole. Rehabilitation is often interpreted in terms of the same dominant conception of masculinity that drives boys to offend in the first place (p. 95). The system is designed to reinforce, rather than challenge, those expressions of masculinity (p. 95). Perhaps the most far-reaching consequence for those in and out of the system is how this system reinforces that idea that “boys will be boys”—that boys are biologically driven to violence and domination (pp. 96-97).

Dowd’s account ends with a description of the case of Lionel Tate, the youngest American ever sentenced to life without parole. Tate’s treatment during his trial and, ultimately, the influence of his imprisonment on him illustrate the significance of race and gender in his case (pp. 98-100). In 1999, Tate, a twelve-year-old African American boy, accidentally killed his younger cousin while attempting to perform wrestling moves (p. 98). He was sentenced to life in prison at the age of fourteen, but the sentence was eventually reduced by an appeals court (p. 98). He appeared to have had significant family issues, but counseling was never offered to him before or after the incident (p. 99). A year after his reduced sentence ended, he was charged with robbing a pizza man at gunpoint, in violation of his parole, and given 30 years in prison (p. 99). According to Dowd, this case illustrates how, for a young African American male like Tate, “the system is designed not to save him but to send him deeper in.” (p. 99) She claims that his race and gender encumbered him with “the presumption of dangerousness.” (p. 99)

**Masculinities Studies Applied: Men**

After detailing the significance of some masculinity norms in boy culture, *The Man Question* shifts its focus to contexts in which masculinity shapes and defines adult men. Dowd begins with a discussion of fatherhood. Masculinities

---

17. This disparity is partly due to the severity of the crimes. Boys are more likely than girls to commit violent crimes (p. 88). In 2006, boys constituted seventy percent of arrests and seventy-five percent of prosecutions. Girls were disproportionately arrested for status offenses and were treated more harshly than boys who committed similar offenses (p. 88).

18. Dowd notes that this pattern of harassment usually means that boys in the juvenile justice system will not declare themselves as gay or transgender (p. 96). This makes the real impact of these policies and practices difficult to measure.
analysis provides a context for dissecting “economic and cultural barriers to involved, egalitarian fatherhood.” (p. 101) Foremost among those barriers is the interaction between traditional ideas of the male role at work and in the home (p. 101). The structure and culture of work “not only benefit men but also barricade them at work instead of balancing work and family.” (p. 101) Feminists will recognize these as issues that also saliently affect women.

Fatherhood is an example of how men are affected by what Dowd calls “privilege with a price.” (p. 105) Cultural norms of fatherhood often prevent men from having caring relationships with their children and cause men to view their familial role as mainly limited to the role of economic provider. Studies show that men have less nurturing relationships with their children than women do and that men are more often absent from their child’s life altogether (pp. 106-110). The solution to these problems is not straightforward. Recent movements to increase father involvement have tended to “masculinize” care, which reconstructs hegemonic masculinity within families under the guise of nurturing fatherhood (pp. 112-115). A recent study focusing on “involved fathers” in Norway revealed the implications of “masculinizing” care (pp. 112-113). While the fathers spent more time playing and interacting with their children, this participation was still more discretionary than the mother’s role, and the men often did the “active” things (p. 113). Consequently, men were seen as largely in control of their role and usually did not participate in housework as part of their parenting (p. 113). Both of these results suggest that men continue to play more “instrumental” roles (discipline, protection, helping children to develop independence, etc.), while women play more “expressive” roles (caregiving, companionship, emotional development, etc.) (p. 113). Recent state policies in the U.S. and Europe have placed an emphasis on the father’s role as breadwinner and are primarily concerned with forcing fathers to support their children economically (pp. 115-119). Even the Swedish model\textsuperscript{19}, which Dowd calls “the strongest existing model of supporting male care,” has not challenged core concepts of traditional masculinity, including the household division of labor and gendered inequalities in the labor market (pp. 118-119). There is also a significant danger of treating fathers as the “answer” to various social issues and thereby implying that women would be incapable of filling the same roles (p. 112-123). Feminism infused with a masculinities analysis could generate “a more liberatory, fluid concept of fatherhood” that would put parents on an equal plane (pp. 122-123).

In contrast to the explicitly male domain of fatherhood, male victims are often peripheral to conversations about sexual abuse (p. 102). Dowd’s coverage of this topic, with help from Ted Shaw, “explores the invisibility of men as sex-

\textsuperscript{19} The Swedish model has two main components: compulsory paternity (every child has a father) and mandatory joint custody (which is flexible, rather than always being 50-50). This amounts to a state incentive intended to generate more participatory fathering and greater gender equality (p. 118). This policy also provides a strong incentive for both parents to share these responsibilities by conditioning receipt of the maximum number of months of parental leave on both parents taking some portion of the leave.
ual victims and the implications of this invisibility.” (p. 102) Her discussion implies that a more complete acknowledgment of these victims would not only directly benefit them but would also help in the project of deconstructing hegemonic masculinity.

Although estimates vary, men make up a significant portion of the victims of sexual abuse (pp. 125-130). Child sexual abuse has not been treated as a significant issue until recently. Dowd traces legal (children considered property of the family) and psychological (psychoanalytic interpretations that dismissed accounts of abuse) reasons for the lack of awareness around this issue (pp. 131-132). Although recent efforts by feminists have been successful in generating legislative and judicial remedies, these remedies largely ignore male victims (pp. 134-135). The texts of many U.S. laws concerning sexual abuse and statutory rape are specifically gendered to protect women. (p. 135) This gendering carries over into enforcement, where nearly all of the victims in prosecuted cases are female (p. 135). Male victims of childhood sexual abuse experience symptoms in adulthood similar to those experienced by female victims, such as depression, anxiety, and guilt (pp. 135-136). However, male victims are far more likely to “act out” in response to those symptoms by engaging in aggressive, risky, or even criminal behaviors (p. 136). Male victims are particularly impacted by “the dilemma of disclosure”—reporting the abuse—and often act out in response (p. 136).

Feminists could uniquely contribute to masculinities scholars who wrestle with this issue. One feminist analysis of female sexual abuse by males emphasizes the role of power and subordination and the lasting effect of the power dynamic on victims (pp. 137-139). Dowd draws a similar analogy to male victims, who are taught “the importance of domination, lest you be dominated.” (p. 137) This example provides a clear illustration of how the issues of treating victims and offenders are often intertwined. A recognition of males as victims of sexual abuse will not only benefit those victims but also undermine traditional constructions of masculinity (p. 139).

CONCLUSION

This book represents a significant first step in buttressing the feminist repertoire with insights from masculinities scholarship. It also illustrates that feminists can make valuable suggestions to masculinities scholars to help shape this burgeoning field. Dowd makes a convincing case that feminist projects will benefit from a deeper knowledge of how male gender identity shapes and is shaped by experiences of privilege, power, and insecurity. The purpose of masculinities studies is not to show that men are victims of their gender but rather to expose how and why male gender identity can present a strong obstacle to social change. Masculinities scholarship and feminism could both benefit from this col-

---

20. Dowd makes it clear that there is very little consistent data in this area but that all of the studies do show a significant minority of male victims.
laboration but only with the realization that they deal with separate issues that are interrelated. This may also help feminists who are interested in getting men involved and invested in overturning traditional conceptions of gender and distributions of privilege. Dowd also makes a strong case that feminists should care about “manning up” and other vestiges of male gender identity, because recognition can ultimately expand and enrich the project of antiessentialism and further feminist social and political goals.

While all of this sounds good in theory, actual collaboration between these disciplines may prove more difficult in practice. Dowd provides an effective case that seemingly “male” problems and problems experienced by women are inextricably connected. However, any reader who picks up The Man Question hoping to see how “feminism infused with masculinities analysis” actually works will be mildly disappointed. Dowd only spends a few paragraphs at the end of each chapter describing how feminists could incorporate these ideas. This suggests that incorporating a masculinities analysis may not significantly change the feminist approach. However, there is real value in being conscious of these issues even if the basic positions remain largely unchanged. The book is effective in pointing to an underdeveloped area of collaboration and raising some possible strategies, and feminist scholars may well find some compelling answers when they ask “the man question.”

Jon Guss