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**THE**  
**WAR**  
**ON**  
**MEN**

**BY SUZANNE VENKER**

# THE WAR ON MEN

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The wound that unifies all men is the wound of their disposability.

– WARREN FARRELL



# THE WAR ON MEN

**M**ARY-LOUISE PARKER admits to liking things that are “psychologically dangerous.” The *Weeds* actress never married, but she has two children—one from a previous relationship and one who is adopted. When a man once asked her if her being a mom meant the two of them would not be able to go out alone together very much, Parker replied, “Yes, that’s exactly what it means. It means you come fourth – ’cause it’s my kids, my job, and my family.”<sup>1</sup>

Welcome to twenty-first-century America.

In the span of a few short decades, this nation has managed to demote its men from respected providers and protectors of the family to superfluous buffoons. “Name a sitcom from 1970 forward that depicts a strong, responsible, intelligent father figure. Fathers in sitcoms are good-hearted, but they are also depicted as immature, dumb, lazy and incompetent. Do we seriously believe this drumbeat of messages has no impact?” writes *New York Times* reader Allan Bird.<sup>2</sup>

It has major impact. Today’s sitcoms, *and* commercials, routinely paint a portrait of the idiot husband whose wife is smarter and more capable than he. Ward Cleaver is long gone. So is Cliff Huxtable, *The Cosby Show’s* enlightened but successful father of five. In their place is The New Dad: unemployed, unaware, and thoroughly emasculated.

What on earth happened?

Gender equality advocates, a.k.a. feminists, insist they have it all figured out. American women, they say, have taken their rightful place in

society—the one that’s been denied them for centuries—and men have become slackers. They don’t have good jobs, and they spend all their time playing video games.

Well, maybe so. But the obsession with video games, as well as the proliferation of Internet pornography and rise of the “man cave,” make sense when you think about it. Men are burning off the testosterone America rejects.

Women’s role in society has changed dramatically, no question. And this does alter the dynamics between men and women—on that point feminists and I would agree. But female ambition, in and of itself, isn’t threatening to men. “Men know women are powerful, and we don’t mind that one bit. It empowers us that you’re empowered,” writes clinical psychiatrist Paul Dobransky, M.D. “Unless, that is, you disempower us in order to feel empowered.”<sup>3</sup>

And there it is.

## FEMALE POWER

What I have to say in the pages that follow may sound blasphemous. But it’s comments like Mary-Louise Parker’s that are blasphemous. This type of male bashing, which almost always falls under the radar, is par for the course in modern America. At a Los Angeles press conference to promote the film *The Switch*, Jennifer Aniston said women are realizing more and more “that you don’t have to settle, you don’t have to fiddle with a man to have that child.”<sup>4</sup>

Fiddle?

If you’re tempted to dismiss such comments as Hollywood drivel, consider these remarks by other high-profile females:

Author and journalist Natalie Angier begins an article in *The New York Times* by writing, “Women may not find this surprising, but one of the most persistent and frustrating problems in evolutionary biology is the male. Specifically. . . why doesn’t he just go away?”<sup>5</sup>

In a CNN interview with Maureen Dowd about her 2005 book, *Are Men Necessary?*, Dowd says, “Now that women don’t need men to reproduce and refinance, the question is, will we keep you around?”

And the answer is, ‘You know, we need you in the way we need ice cream—you’ll be more ornamental.’<sup>6</sup>

Lisa Belkin, a blogger for *The New York Times*, wrote, “We are standing at a moment in time when the role of gender is shifting seismically. At this moment an argument can be made for two separate narrative threads—the first is the retreat of men as this becomes a woman’s world.”<sup>7</sup>

In an article in *The Atlantic* entitled “Are Fathers Necessary?” author Pamela Paul wrote, “The bad news for Dad is that despite common perception, there’s nothing objectively essential about his contribution.”<sup>8</sup>

“You come fourth.” “Fiddle with a man.” “Go away.” “Will we keep you around?” *Imagine* if such statements were made about women. Impossible! Just for grins, let’s see what that would look like.

Author and journalist Nat Angier begins an article in *The New York Times* by writing, “Men may not find this surprising, but one of the most persistent and frustrating problems in evolutionary biology is the female. Specifically. . . why doesn’t she just go away?”

In a CNN interview with Mike Dowd about his 2005 book, *Are Women Necessary?* Dowd says, “Now that men don’t need women, the question is, will we keep you around? And the answer is, ‘You know, we need you in the way we need ice cream—you’ll be more ornamental.

Liam Belkin, a blogger for *The New York Times*, wrote, “We are standing at a moment in time when the role of gender is shifting seismically. At this moment an argument can be made for two separate narrative threads—the first is the retreat of women as this becomes a man’s world.”

In an article in *The Atlantic* entitled, “Are Mothers Necessary?” author Patrick Paul wrote, “The bad news for Mom is that despite common perception, there’s nothing objectively essential about her contribution.”

Changes things, doesn’t it?

Lest you think I’m exaggerating my case, or making much ado about nothing, consider this. In November 2009, Maria Shriver—along

with the Center for American Progress—produced an exhaustive, four-hundred-page document titled *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything*. In it, Shriver and company claim we are no longer living in a man's world.

“As we move into this phase we're calling a woman's nation, women can turn their pivotal role as wage earners, as consumers, as bosses, as opinion-shapers, as co-equal partners in whatever we do into a potent force for change. Emergent economic power gives women a new seat at the table—at the head of the table.”<sup>9</sup>

Three years later, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg echoed these sentiments. In November 2012, in response to a question about what would constitute an acceptable number of female Supreme Court justices, Justice Ginsburg answered, “Now the perception is, yes, women are here to stay. And when I'm sometimes asked when will there be enough and I say when there are nine, people are shocked.”<sup>10</sup>

With such overwhelming evidence of female power, how can anyone—no matter what their political persuasion—believe there's a war on women? We have it backwards. *Men* are the ones under attack.

To a large segment of the population, the idea that men can be victims at all is preposterous. “Everyone” knows there's more work to be done for women to achieve so-called equality. “Everyone” knows the patriarchy is alive and well. That is the message of the feminist elite.

Americans have been had. Feminism isn't about equal rights, nor is it about providing women with choices. I don't care how pretty feminists package their agenda—the mission is clear.

Feminism is a war on men.

## THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Over the last four decades, America has witnessed a profound change in marriage and gender relations. To some degree, it was inevitable. Women today live longer lives than ever and simultaneously have fewer children. As a result, they pursue independence in a way that was previously unimaginable. In addition, technological advances and an economic boom (recent years notwithstanding) have changed the way people live, work, and communicate.

But of all the changes that have occurred, it is feminism—with its relentless talk of hapless housewives, female empowerment, and gender role reversal—that has severed the bond between the sexes, pitting men and women against one another.

Gender relations have never been more tenuous. According to Pew Research Center, the share of women ages eighteen to thirty-four that say having a successful marriage is one of the most important things in their lives has risen nine percentage points since 1997— from 28 percent to 37 percent.

For men, the opposite occurred. The share voicing this opinion has *dropped*, from 35 percent to 29 percent.

To be fair, there are many reasons love has become so elusive. Rampant materialism certainly plays a role, as do the decline in religion and the rise of a one-click culture—none of which foster the patience and sacrifice that is a staple of lasting love. They also make it difficult for young people to see beyond tomorrow, which is imperative for making good decisions.

But the most significant phenomenon to rupture marriage was the sexual revolution. Millions of Americans have been deceived by the notion that progress for women requires “liberation”—not just from the home and all its supposed restrictions but from *being female*. Being a woman, said feminists, is like being handicapped.

To end this supposed injustice, women (and eventually, men) were sold a script about sex and gender roles that was predicated on two main ideas: that women are victims of a patriarchy and therefore lack basic civil rights, and that there are no real differences between women and men other than their private parts. And even those can be changed.

To achieve gender equality, say feminists, all we have to do is raise children differently—you know: give girls trucks and boys dolls, that sort of thing—and promote different cultural messages. That’s what the sexual revolution was all about. It taught women (and eventually, men) that women can, and should, have sex like a man: without getting attached.

And with that one singular idea, everything changed.

There is simply no question that the reluctance of today’s men to commit to marriage is a result of the sexual revolution. Before the 1970s, it took marriage—or at least a long-term, monogamous relationship—

before sex was available to men.

Human nature doesn't change. Generally speaking, it takes The Chase, or the desire and effort to win a girl's heart, for a man to get serious about her. When women make themselves so readily available, for me then the thrill of the chase is gone.

Men just aren't programmed to commit the way women are. It's not that they *can't* or don't want to commit; it's that they need some incentive. Similarly, women aren't programmed for one-night stands.

As Lena Dunham of the hit HBO series *Girls* told Frank Bruni of *The New York Times*, "I heard so many of my friends saying, 'Why can't I have sex and feel nothing?' It was amazing: that this was the new goal. There's a biological reason why women feel about sex the way *they* do and why men feel about sex the way they do. It's not as simple as divesting yourself of your gender roles."<sup>11</sup>

Indeed it isn't. But divesting America of traditional gender roles is what the sexual revolution is all about. That was supposed to make the sexes equal.

The modern notion of equality doesn't raise women's status. It lowers it by cheapening women's value to men. Equality does not mean sameness. Yet this absurd idea has been so far-reaching men and women are now considered separate entities. Living alone, earning a paycheck, and choosing sex over love is considered empowering—superior, even—to the sacrifices and rewards of marriage and family life.

Hanna Rosin, author of *The End of Men and the Rise of Women*, describes the new ethos this way: "Thanks to the sexual revolution, [women] can have relationships—and maybe some drama—through their twenties and early thirties and not get tied down with a husband and babies. If the price is a little more heartache, so be it. These days women have a lot more important things on their horizon."<sup>12</sup>

Ms. Rosin is wrong. The price of the sexual revolution is not "a little more heartache." It's a boatload. For most women, at their core, nothing is more important than finding Mr. Right. Nothing.

The saddest part of this misguided worldview is that it hasn't made women any happier. In fact, it has done just the opposite. According to a 2007 report from the National Bureau of Economic Research, "As women have gained more freedom, more education, and more power, they have become less happy."<sup>13</sup>

It's time to say what no one else will: *the sexual revolution was a disaster*. Gender relations are dependent on men being men and women being women. But because of one very significant social movement, any reference to masculinity and femininity is met with skepticism or outright derision. Post-feminist America thinks males and females are virtually identical.

We've become genderless.

## A NEW WORLD ORDER

Over the past few years, women have been asking where all the good men have gone. They wonder whether chivalry is dead or why men are trailing behind on college campuses and in the marketplace. The answer is obvious. For decades women have been telling men they can do everything themselves, thank you very much. Women can open their own doors, pay for their own dinner, have sex without commitment, pay their own mortgage, even have their own children.

Men heard the message loud and clear. "We don't need you," it said. And they've responded. As Steve Harvey aptly wrote in *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*: "If you've got your own money, your own car, your own house, a Brinks alarm system, a pistol, and a guard dog, and you're practically shouting from the rooftops that you don't need a man to provide for you or protect you, then we will see no need to keep coming around. What in the world do you need us for if you have all of that?"<sup>14</sup>

The push for so-called gender equality (the modern catchphrase for "women's rights") sounds so right and fair you wonder who could be against it. That's the thing about feminist ideas: on the surface, they sound innocuous. And they speak to young people's sensibilities. After all, the underlying theme of all feminist ideas is that women are victims—and young people always think they're victims.

But gender equality isn't about equality at all. It's about creating a new world order. It's about upending human nature, as if this were possible, and making the sexes interchangeable. It's about the workplace (not to mention our schools and sports teams) becoming half female, and about at-home parents becoming half male.

To subscribe to this version of equality, however, one must believe the work involved in raising children and taking care of the home is a lesser

life. Why level the playing field if each role is equally valuable?

Before the sexual revolution, that's how people viewed traditional gender roles: as equally valuable. In fact, many would argue women were *superior* to men. It's hard to argue that women were oppressed in a nation in which men were expected to stand up when a lady entered the room, or insisted men die to spare women life. The events of the Titanic proved this in spades.

As for gender roles, many people feel that nurturing a human being from infancy to adulthood out of sheer duty and love is inherently nobler than working a day job. That's how many of our fathers and grandfathers viewed our mothers and grandmothers. American men were never holding women down in mass force. They were respectful and in awe of women.

Does this sound spurious? If so, that's because the culture in which you were raised convinced you men have the better deal. You've been taught to believe your fathers and grandfathers led exciting lives in the workplace, while your mothers and grandmothers were "stuck" at home with the kids.

It's time for this fictitious view of the traditional family to die.

Just because feminists insist the 1950s was a miserable time for women doesn't make it so. I'm sure some women were miserable—but no more or less miserable than some women are today (though their reasons surely differ). The truth is, the nuclear family worked very well for a very long time for very many people. With the help of their friends in Hollywood, feminists simply focused on those for whom it did not work and put a spin on the entire institution.

At heart, feminists believe that taking care of children is beneath them as educated women. Put another way: they're elitist. That's why you hear knee-jerk reactions about full-time motherhood from women like Hillary Clinton, who once said disparagingly that she could have stayed home and "baked cookies."<sup>15</sup> Or from Hilary Rosen, who just last year claimed Ann Romney "has never worked a day in her life."<sup>16</sup>

These women place *no value* on motherhood. Money and power is how they define success. As Hanna Rosin told fellow feminist Lisa Belkin of *The Huffington Post*, "Either partner can be the breadwinner for a while, then they can switch places, so everyone gets a shot—theoretically—at satisfaction."<sup>17</sup>

Don't misunderstand: I have no problem with husbands and wives

switching things up – she works, he stays home. It’s the underlying value system feminists hold dear that has undermined the family. They’ve helped to convince an entire nation that money + accolades = satisfaction.

Ergo, mothering = dissatisfaction.

I cannot tell you how many forty- and fifty-something women I know, or I’ve read about in my research, or who’ve contacted me personally to say this negative attitude toward motherhood, or just nurturing in general, affected them deeply. The relentless status degradation of motherhood, the insistence that this work is pointless or unsatisfying, has literally ruined lives.

Take Jane, whose feminist mother raised her to be a hard-core career woman. As a result of her upbringing, Jane got two degrees from prestigious universities and became a high-level marketing manager of a Fortune 500 company. But when she had the first of her three children, her priorities changed. She wanted to be with her babies.

Jane’s mother was unsupportive of her choice to opt out of the workforce, even temporarily. This lack of support was devastating to Jane, who to this day feels that the years at home with her children were the most satisfying of her life.

Another example is Lynne, who rejected motherhood and instead became highly successful in the media world. It wasn’t until she was older and met her second husband that Lynne realized work wasn’t enough. So she and her husband adopted a baby girl, and that experience changed everything. The emotion that envelops Lynne today when she thinks about the feminist script she absorbed is heart-wrenching. And so unnecessary!

Then there’s Rebecca Walker, daughter of Alice Walker, author of *The Color Purple*, who told the truth about feminism in an article entitled “How My Mother’s Fanatical Views Tore Us Apart”:

As a child, I . . . yearned for a traditional mother. . . . I grew up believing that children are millstones around your neck, and the idea that motherhood can make you happy is a complete fairytale. . . . When I hit my 20s, . . . I could feel my biological clock ticking, but I felt if I listened to it, I would be betraying my mother and all she had taught me . . . In fact, having a child has been the most rewarding experience of my life. . . . My only regret is that I discovered the joys of motherhood so late—I have been trying for a second child, but so far with no luck.<sup>18</sup>

You see, underlying the feminist worldview is a profound lack of respect for marriage and motherhood. It takes raising a family with a husband you love to embrace this side of life. And that's what feminists lack.

Any serious study of feminism reveals startling truths and commonalities among its leaders. The most obvious is the fact that these women were, or are, either unmarried or unhappily married. In addition, most had dysfunctional childhoods that were fraught with abuse and neglect.

Indeed, much of what's happened with gender relations in this country is the result of an influential movement that was focused on unhappy, disgruntled women. Gloria Steinem has talked extensively about growing up with her mother, who suffered a nervous breakdown that left her delusional. "I didn't understand the degree to which my response has been magnetized by things that had happened to me before—and I think that realization came out of being depressed."<sup>19</sup>

Betty Friedan, who's been credited with launching the modern feminist movement, was emotionally unwell also. She talked at length (before her death) about her mother who, she said, "dominated her husband and made her children's life slightly miserable."<sup>20</sup> Friedan then walked in to a miserable marriage herself when she married Carl Friedan, who eventually left her and went on the record to say Betty was perpetually discontent and prone to violent outbursts.

(This is a common theme of most feminist leaders. Virginia Woolf, one of Hollywood's most admired feminist heroines, suffered mental breakdowns and eventually killed herself. Honestly, the list goes on and on.)

Rather than try to cope with her personal problems, Friedan lashed out. In *The Feminine Mystique*, she argued that a woman's devotion to her husband and children is a sacrifice of such magnitude that it inevitably stunts her growth as an individual. Raising children, she said, is a thankless pursuit that doesn't allow women to use their intelligence in a manner that benefits society.

Betty Friedan had no appreciation for the economic advantage to any society when men and women form families and take on the brunt of the responsibility for childrearing. Friedan craved validation and was unable to make the sacrifices most parents do. She couldn't understand how people could give so much of themselves. To feminists, sacrifice is a dirty word.

And so, Friedan and her cohorts started a revolution to help *themselves* feel better about their plight. They sold the notion that American women are oppressed—and that society must intervene to change this fact. “I believe feminism is an experiment, and all experiments need to be assessed on their results. Then, when you see huge mistakes have been paid, you need to make alterations,” wrote Rebecca Walker.<sup>21</sup>

The feminist stories the world has absorbed, whether in books or movies, highlight the minority of women who are, or were, miserable at home. To be sure, it makes for great entertainment. But perspective is sorely needed. If we want to get it right, we would do better as a society to highlight the women who’ve been successful in life and love.

### POWER REDEFINED

Once upon a time, a woman’s goal in life was to land a husband and have his children. The recent Pew study shows this desire hasn’t changed. What *has* changed is the culture. Raised to “never depend on a man,” women are now groomed for a life at the office rather than for a life at home. They’re taught to focus solely on their careers and leave no space for marriage and motherhood. The implication is clear: becoming a wife and mother isn’t nearly as satisfying, or as smart, as pursuing a career.

Except that it is.

Women who were raised to believe they don’t need a man to be happy, or to never depend on a man, or to value career over motherhood, have been set up to fail. If you’ve been raised to believe that becoming a wife will crush your identity as a strong, independent woman, it will be very difficult to be successful in love.

Consider these comments on *The Huffington Post* by singer/songwriter Rachel Fine about her upcoming nuptials:

I don’t know why, but I’ve always identified strongly as a very independent woman. I’ve always thrived in a man’s world, and to do that, you almost have to shut off your girlie side. I’m starting to think there may be a whole generation of chicks like me who grew up with “Free to Be . . . You and Me” on repeat and are now having a tough time embracing their inner girlie-ness.

The idea of excelling at any type of domestic-type activity always had a Taming of the Shrew vibe to me. As if cooking my man a pot roast would somehow invite the destruction of my inner being via a 50-foot Godzilla version of Donna Reed. And, seriously, this underlying belief system has been in place since kindergarten.<sup>22</sup>

Ms. Fine is not alone. Millions of women have been raised with this same attitude, and it's undermining their happiness. By myopically pursuing a career, by assuming a job is more satisfying than one's relationships, women lose the best part of themselves.

What got lost in the caricature of the 1950s housewife is the fact that she was *powerful*, not powerless. Even when husbands bring home the bacon, most wives rule the roost. Our mothers and grandmothers had almost sole authority over how their children were raised and how the house was run. They also spent their husbands' paychecks and made most household decisions. In many cases, Dad felt like an outsider!

This is a new twist to an old debate. That's because women like Betty Friedan assured women that housewives live "in comfortable concentration camps."<sup>23</sup> The only way to end the madness, they said, is for women to stop taking care of their children and depending on men to do so. Instead, women should pursue careers and pay *other* women (which invariably means less educated women) to care for their children. Real power, said feminists, comes in the form of a paycheck.

Today, many Americans believe that if women aren't contributing to their families financially, they're not doing anything valuable. As blogger Kate Fridkis wrote, "In the world I live in, 'making something of yourself' means your career. In my mom's world, it means your family."<sup>24</sup> This colossal shift in attitude is the reason women feel they need to keep up with, or compete, with men. The assumption is that those who make money have all the power.

Money is power, yes; but it's only one kind. Wives have tremendous power. Heck, women have power without doing much of anything at all! Just being female is powerful. Try this on for size: the next time you walk past a group of men, note how they stop what they're doing to look at you when you walk by. You don't even have to be beautiful—it's your femininity they smell. *That's* power.

Men, by nature, want to love women and please them. When treated

with respect and admiration, a good man will go out of his way to care for you and make you happy. How can that possibly be oppressive? It's just the opposite.

It's true that if wives have no education or work experience, they will be at a disadvantage *if they marry the wrong guy*. It's also true that women in the past were more susceptible to this set of circumstances. But feminists taught that most women or *the average woman* in those days fell into this camp.

They didn't then, and they certainly don't now.

Yes, there are bad husbands and fathers in the world. But there are also bad wives and mothers. The feminist meme of men bad/women good is just that: a meme. They belabor this idea by focusing exclusively on marriages in which husbands are abusive or philanderers. Naturally, this instills fear in women. And through fear, feminists are able to convince people that if it weren't for them, American women would be enslaved.

That's absurd. Life in the old days wasn't perfect, by any means. But it was no more or less perfect than it is today. Women have made progress in the public sphere, yes. But it has come at a huge expense. "Since the 1970s, in the outside world, women have made dramatic strides in their access to and advancement in well-paid and traditionally male occupations," writes author and professor Steven E. Rhoads. "But in their intimate world, [women's] desire for sex with emotional involvement and leading to permanence is much more difficult to achieve than it used to be."<sup>25</sup>

Women's progress has also come at men's expense. To reiterate Dr. Dobransky's point: empowerment for women isn't progress at all *if it disempowers men*. And it has. In the past, men were respected and valued. Today, they are not.

There were two things men could count in the past on to bolster their self-worth, or value, to society: their income, which was essential for women to raise children; and their masculine nature, which was sorely needed.

Indeed, for centuries masculinity was revered and desired by women and society. What women are looking for in a man today isn't clear, no doubt because women themselves are confused. "Often women express a desire that they want what has been traditionally called the 'Alan Alda man'—someone who's sensitive who will key into their feelings, listen,

and not be overly masculine,” wrote Anna North in BuzzFeed.<sup>26</sup>

But, she adds, women also want Marlboro Man: the rough, tough, strong and mean guy. They want to be in a relationship “with a man who is clear, strong, kind, knows where he is going, can stand up when confronted and can make a woman feel protected and safe.”<sup>27</sup>

This is confusing to men. Moreover, all they ever hear is that women are strong and independent and don’t need a man. How could that possibly be enticing to a man who’s looking to love a woman and take care of her?

Men also get the message that women are going to be breadwinners along with the men, that as mothers they expect to juggle full-time work and kids. Since women have become more traditionally masculine, then, men must become more feminine. “The feminization of fathers is rampant. And women have played no small part in this transformation,” wrote Aisha Sultan in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.<sup>28</sup>

In her article, Ms. Sultan quotes Kathleen Gerson, professor of sociology at New York University and author of *The Unfinished Revolution: How a New Generation is Reshaping Family, Work, and Gender in America*. Gerson says women say they want “sensitive men who will be equal partners at home rather than just economic providers.”<sup>29</sup>

That’s all well and good. But men (and women, for that matter) who are financially well off pay a huge price in the long hours they must devote to their jobs. So becoming an equal partner at home inevitably means being less ambitious at work, and thus less rich. This becomes a problem of a different sort since college-educated women want partners who make at least as much money as they do, preferably more.

Women can’t have it both ways. They have to choose what’s most important to them. When looking for a husband, what do you want? An equal partner? Or a rich husband? It is a rare and lucky woman who finds both in one man. Women have asked men to become more involved on the home front, and men did. And now that they have, women complain that there are no good men left.

How can men win?

## THE FEMINIZATION OF THE AMERICAN MALE

The feminization of men begins in kindergarten. Surrounded mostly by women, curriculum and activities usually revolve around girls and girls' interests. Assigned stories are in subjects girls like, such as fairy tales, rather than subjects boys like—such as adventure and battles.

First-grade boys are also roughly nine months behind girls in coordination, yet the emphasis in this grade is on sitting still at a desk. Many schools have eliminated recess, which does not bode well for boys. They are active by nature and need to run around; and when they can't sit still, teachers and administrators often wrongly attribute this to ADHD.

"Boys learn to subdue their more spirited, intrepid behavior in school, their male instincts of competition and individualism quashed in the interest of what's best for girls as they walk like lemmings over the edge of the radical feminist cliff by the time they reach high school," wrote schoolteacher and *Bulletin* oped contributor Jane Gilvary in "Skinny Jeans, John Wayne, and the Feminization of America."<sup>30</sup>

Many experts believe developmentally inappropriate expectations and practices are causing normal boy behavior to be wrongly labeled as misbehavior, and normal learning patterns to be mislabeled as learning disabilities. The result is that many boys become frustrated and discouraged by school in the early grades. "Boys learn early that they belong to the 'bad' sex and their female counterparts to the 'good,'" writes Kathleen Parker in *Save the Males*.<sup>31</sup>

When boys grow up to become college men, they face the perils of Title IX. Title IX is a controversial section of the Education Amendments of 1972, which is a simple, straightforward federal law requiring that schools and colleges receiving federal funds not discriminate "on the basis of sex."

The Department of Education wrote the regulation that Title IX compliance must be demonstrated in one of three ways. One of those ways, labeled "proportionality," became a powerful weapon in the hands of feminist bureaucrats. Beginning with Jimmy Carter's Department of Education, Title IX has been aggressively used to abolish college men's sports—such as wrestling

Enrollment in college academic courses is now approaching 60 per-

cent women to 40 percent men, so the proportionality test means athletic teams must enforce this same ratio. This is an absurd rule since men are more interested than women in participating in competitive sports. Indeed, it's typical for colleges to have difficulty finding enough women to meet their quota targets.

Demanding equal participation in college sports, or any sports, is decidedly unfair to men. It's a clear case of anti-male bias; but in powerful circles, it's considered reasonable for women to try and level the playing field. Even if the playing field doesn't need leveling.

Modern-day television partakes in the feminization of males as well. In the popular sitcom *Friends*, Ross and Rachel represent the quintessential modern couple. In the past, it'd be the woman who wants to get married and settle down while the man gets cold feet. In *Friends*, Ross is the one who, after finally "landing" Rachel, fantasizes about their future together. He wants to leave the city and move to the suburbs. He wants to have two children, a boy and a girl, and even peruses a book of baby names.

When Rachel gets wind of Ross's plans, she goes ballistic. She says she doesn't want to be pressured to settle down. Instead, she wants to live in the moment. Bearing down on the entire episode is the 1950s housewife meme: that becoming a wife and settling down will mark the end of a woman's life.

Ironic, isn't it? That's what men used to think.

## SEX DIFFERENCES 101

With so much focus on girls and women, it's not surprising we know so little about men and how they differ from women. "As women, we may love men, live with men, and bear sons, but we have yet to understand men and boys," wrote neuropsychiatrist Louann Brizendine in *The Male Brain*.<sup>32</sup>

We will never end the battle of the sexes until we understand, *and accept*, the fundamental differences between women and men.

Fortunately, the research on this subject has exploded—particularly in the area of brain differences. Here's what we know. The female brain secretes more serotonin than the male brain. Serotonin is important because it relates directly to impulse control. Men are far more likely to drink and drive, for example. They're also more prone to suicide.

The female body is also steeped in oxytocin and estrogen, two chemicals that together produce an environment ripe for attachment. Oxytocin, known primarily as the female reproductive hormone, is particularly relevant. It's the chemical that keeps women from being able to have sex without strings attached.

When a woman has sexual contact of any kind, it's an emotional experience, whether she intends it to be or not. The moment touch occurs, oxytocin gets released and the attachment process begins. That's why the movie *He's Just Not That Into You* wasn't titled *She's Just Not That Into You*. It just doesn't happen the same way for men. Call it unfair, but there it is.

Females also have an accelerated occipital lobe. This allows their brains to take in more sensory data than boys—which, if you think about the way men and women communicate, makes sense. Women love to analyze things to death, whereas men just want the final conclusion of all that rumination.

Males secrete a lot of serotonin, too. That particular neurotransmitter is the reason my son would find any inanimate object when he was little and pretend it had the power to kill. Parents don't *teach* their little girls to be “into” babies (or weddings, for that matter), nor do they *teach* their little boys to be “into” guns, as society suggests. These desires are hardwired.

Finally, there's a part of the brain called the hippocampus. Its main job is memory storage, and it is much larger in females than it is in males. Michael Gurian wrote about this in his books *The Wonder of Girls* and *The Wonder of Boys*. He used an example of a young boy and a young girl being asked by their parents to do three things around the house: clean up their rooms, take out the garbage, and wipe the table.

He said that more often than not, we will see the young girl complete the tasks with less reminding than the boy would need and that this has a lot to do with the hippocampal memory. Men are linear in their thinking. Generally speaking, they can only focus on one thing at a time.

Unfortunately, Americans have been conditioned to believe that the reason women do more housework and childcare is because their chauvinistic husbands expect them to—and that unless men start pulling their weight at home, women will never achieve equality. But most men don't expect women to do all the work at home. They just *don't care* whether or not the laundry gets done or the beds get made. That's a critical distinction.

Finally, there's sex. Sex takes up a lot of space in the male brain. The best illustration I can offer about the difference between men and women when it comes to sex is this: How many men do you know who'd be offended if a woman told him she'd like to use his body for sex? Not many, I imagine. Now turn that around. If a man told a woman he'd like to use her body for sex, it would be grounds for sexual harassment.

Apples and oranges.

## THE CONFLICT

I honestly believe one of the greatest problems facing young women is that they have no road map, or role models, for how to pursue what most of them want deep down: to be a wife and mother, but to also have an independent life. Modern women have been raised to think husbands and children don't offer enough in terms of satisfaction, which in turn causes women to think negatively about marriage and motherhood. They then place all their eggs in one basket—a job—only to find out down the road that work isn't satisfying all on its own. They want more.

That plenty of women figured out how to be both independent and family oriented, even before the feminist movement came along, sounds positively wrong. But it isn't. Americans just haven't heard about such women. The women we see and hear from the most are career-driven. Maybe, somewhere along the line, they become wives and mothers, too. Or maybe they don't. Either way, that part of their world remains hidden.

There really are women out there who've "had it all" without sacrificing one or the other. Take Carolyn Graglia, lawyer and mother of three grown children. She graduated from the same law school as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Ruth Ginsburg is a staunch feminist who's been carrying that torch for decades, insisting women in her day were treated as second-class citizens.

But Graglia's experience proves otherwise. "From the time I was in junior high school, when I decided to become a lawyer, until I ceased working in order to raise a family, I received unstinting encouragement and support. Teachers and counselors in high school and college energetically assisted in my efforts without ever questioning the suitability of my aspirations."<sup>33</sup>

In a C-Span interview, Graglia debunks feminist myths and explains the way things *really* were in the 1950s. “There have always been women who don’t want to marry and don’t want to have children. And they have usually pursued careers, or they may have joined religious orders. Then there are other women who have always wanted to pursue a career, even though they had children, and they always have done so...”<sup>34</sup>

Graglia was quick to add that her female friends who were housewives and mothers in no way resembled the caricature Friedan presented in *The Feminine Mystique*. They were perfectly content with their lives at home and did not feel as if they had “no other option” besides motherhood. That was simply the choice they made.

Some will be tempted to say that’s just the experience of one woman. But it’s not. It’s the experience of one woman who took the time to write about it. There were plenty of other Carolyn Graglias—like my own mother, for example, who had a fifteen-year career selling stocks in the 1950s and 60s.

Midge Decter’s experience also differs sharply from the stories feminists tell. Now eight-four, Decter had no problem finding employment as a young woman in the 1950s: she first worked as an editor, and later at CBS Records, and then at *Harper* magazine. Like Graglia, Decter’s memory of her years at home bears no resemblance to Friedan’s version.

“I happened to know a lot of women, and they didn’t seem either depressed or oppressed to me. Some went back to work when their children were old enough; some became active in local civic organizations; and some got interested in politics. Living in the suburbs was the result of a decision, rather than the imposition of a sexist society.”<sup>35</sup>

These experiences represent just a sampling of the ways in which women—in the past as well as today—have “had it all.” And they belie the message taught by the culture. Hollywood, for example, loves to belabor the 1950s housewife theme. Consider the following exchange between two characters in *Mona Lisa Smile*. Katherine Watson (played by Julia Roberts) is the feminist heroine who arrives at Wellesley College, a girls’ school, to shake up America’s traditional ways.

One of the characters, Joan (played by Julia Stiles) becomes engaged to her boyfriend at the same time she’s accepted early to Yale Law School. After much consideration, she decides to turn down Yale’s offer because

her fiancé has a job waiting for him in another city. This decision upsets Katherine, who insists Joan can get married and still go to law school. So Katherine finds a school closer to where Joan and her fiancé will be living—and insists Joan apply. But Joan declines.

JOAN: It was my choice, not to go. He would have supported it.

KATHERINE: But you don't have to choose!

JOAN: No, I have to. I want a home, I want a family! That's not something I'll sacrifice.

KATHERINE: No one's asking you to sacrifice that, Joan. I just want you to understand that you can do both.

JOAN: Do you think I'll wake up one morning and regret not being a lawyer?

KATHERINE: Yes, I'm afraid that you will.

JOAN: Not as much as I'd regret not having a family, not being there to raise them. I know exactly what I'm doing, and it doesn't make me any less smart. This must seem terrible to you.

Katherine: I didn't say that.

JOAN: Sure you did. You always do. You stand in class and tell us to look beyond the image, but you don't. To you a housewife is someone who sold her soul for a center hall colonial. She has no depth, no intellect, no interests . . . This is what I want.

KATHERINE: Congratulations. Be happy.<sup>36</sup>

The conflict highlighted in this film—motherhood vs. career—is the most talked about, the most debated, and the most controversial issue that continues to plague women everywhere. Based on the media's coverage of the issue, you'd think modern women are the only group to experience the work/family dilemma. They're not.

There's nothing new about the conflict between motherhood and

the rest of life; it's a perennial. It will never go away for one reason. As a mother, if you're not there to take care of your children most of their waking hours, you are going to feel bad about it. That's the way women are made. By the same token, if you genuinely never do anything *but* be a wife and mother, you'll probably feel a little antsy. The good news is that most women find something to do independent of their life at home, even if it's not what they imagined it to be.

It's true that in the 1950s many women felt they *had* to choose between children and career—and for good reason. Birth control was not a surefire thing, for one thing. And technology hadn't advanced enough to offer women the gift of time. The reason modern women have a better shot at “having it all” isn't because feminists made it happen. Life simply changed. Technological advances, along with The Pill, did more for the work/family conflict than ten boatloads of feminists could ever hope to do.

The effects of The Pill are obvious: safe, reliable birth control means those who want smaller families can have them. And fewer children means more time for women to focus on other things they want to do. The effects of technology are also obvious: they made life at home less taxing. Laborsaving devices, the mechanization of housework, and the tech boom—via electricity, the sewing machine, the frozen food process, the automobile, the washing machine and dryer, the dishwasher, the vacuum cleaner, computers, and the Internet—allowed women, generation by generation, to turn their attention away from the home and onto the marketplace.

I'm not suggesting women in the past never experienced discrimination. What I *am* saying is that whatever sexism they did encounter wasn't a result of a patriarchal conspiracy designed to keep women in their place. Life was simply different back then, for a lot of reasons—few of which were sinister in nature. That some men were cads in those days, or treated women disrespectfully or even unfairly, doesn't—or shouldn't—make men *in general* the enemy.

## THE WAR ON MEN

At the root of the war on men is fear—fear that marriage isn't a solid investment. I believe that's one of the reasons women look to their jobs as their major source of fulfillment. As products of the divorce generation, today's young people have few models for how to make marriage work. The office, in comparison, feels easy. The marketplace we can control; our relationships we can't. Or so we think.

And then, of course, women have the added burden of being raised in a culture that insists women don't need men. This attitude creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. By entering marriage with this cloud of negativity, women get exactly what they expect: not much.

It sounds too simple (or perhaps too good) to be true, but you'd be surprised how a simple change in attitude can change one's life. Women *must* start thinking about their futures differently than the way they were taught to think. If they plan to get married and have children, they should spend more time preparing for that part of their lives. They should assume husbands and children *will* be their primary identity, even if they work outside the home.

In other words, pursue a career, but keep it in check. Say to yourself, "I'm fine by myself, but I'm better with you," and your shot at love will improve exponentially.

It's time for women to put down their swords. There's no reason marriage and motherhood, even in its traditional form, can't work for the modern world. Standing in women's way aren't outdated attitudes and government policies, as feminists claim. Standing in the way is that anything "traditional" is considered backward, as though everything that used to work no longer does. That's just ridiculous.

Change for change's sake is foolish. We love to think of ourselves as forward thinking, as though all change is good. But it's not. The obesity rate has tripled in the last forty years. Should we not look back at what we did before to see what we can do better?

Today it's considered a boon for women not to marry at all, even if they want children. "The world as we've known it for a very long time—one in which a woman's value was tied to her role as a wife—is ending, right in front of us. It is now standard for a woman to spend years on her

own, learning, working, earning, socializing, having sex, and yes, having babies in the manner she—and she alone—sees fit. We are living through the invention of independent female adulthood,” wrote Rebecca Traister in *Marie Claire*.<sup>37</sup>

I ask you: Is this progress?

Messages like these are ad hominem attacks on men. They dismiss what men have to offer and make for a dysfunctional society all the way around. And our consumerist culture plays no small part in this effort. We’ve come to believe we need *things* when what we lack is purpose and a sense of place. At the end of the day, if we do it right, family is the one thing we can count on.

We are always replaceable at work, but we are never replaceable at home. That’s no small thing.

Too many people are searching for meaning outside the home rather than in it. They’re placing too much stock in what they think a job or career can offer. That was the problem with the feminist premise. It insisted the Breadwinner gets the better end of the deal. That’s just not true.

Raising a family and pursuing a career are two different tasks, to be sure. But they’re designed to work in tandem to produce one result: a family. That doesn’t mean men can’t ever change a diaper or that mothers can’t ever hold a job. But it does mean each gender brings something unique to the table, and we should honor that fact.

Marriage isn’t a competition about who has it better or worse. If you’re already thinking about how to make your marriage “equal,” you’re going about it all wrong. Gender equality means nothing. Men and women are already equal. Equal, but different.

Feminism didn’t just change Americans’ understanding of sex and gender roles. *It changed the very meaning of life.* It took the spotlight off what matters—relationships and family—and put it where it doesn’t belong: on money, power and fame.

It altered who we are as a people.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

The war on men wasn’t initiated by the modern generation of women. The fault lies with the culture in which they were raised and

with the previous generation of women that taught their daughters to be skeptical of men and marriage. Women today get the message that empowerment means:

- being single and sexually active
- never depending on a man
- focusing exclusively on a career
- being a single mom, or having a child on your own

Not only do these messages undermine women's happiness, they result in antisocial behavior among men. America needs men to feel empowered as husbands and fathers, and that's the *last* thing modern men feel. That's why they're retreating from marriage. As reader Hugh Kendrick asks (rhetorically, I believe) in the *New York Times*: "I wonder if the lack of marriageable men has resulted from a redefinition of men into something they're not?"

Of course it has. A person's gender plays directly into how they navigate the world. Men are programmed to make women happy and take a back seat at home. Now that women rule the workplace in addition to the home, men have nowhere to go. They've become passive. It's easy for men to be aggressive with other men, but when women are involved in that negotiation the dynamic changes. Men are designed to go easy on women. They want to love women, not compete with them.

To end the war on men, Americans must channel a time when our values were in sync with what the heart wants and how society does best. That's why love and family, not sex and independence, should once again become the goal. We have to stop clamoring for something we already have—and have had for quite some time: equality. And we have to adopt the mantra "equal, but different." Say it to yourself over and over until it sticks.

The truth is, men and women have been equally blessed with amazing and unique qualities that each bring to the table. Isn't it time we stopped fussing about who brought what and simply enjoy the feast?

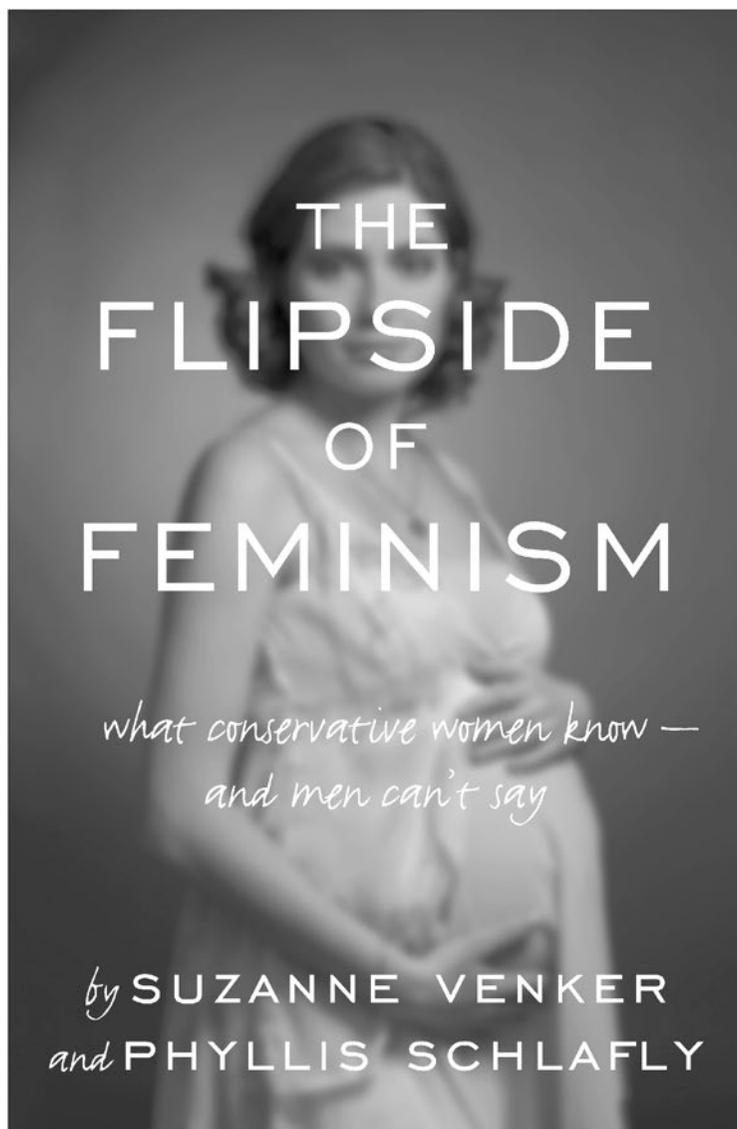
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In *The Flipside of Feminism*, Venker and Schlafly provide readers with a new view of women in America – one that runs counter to what Americans have been besieged with for decades. Their book demonstrates that conservative women are, in fact, the most liberated women in America and the folks to whom young people should be turning for advice. Their confident and rational approach to the battle of the sexes is precisely what America needs.



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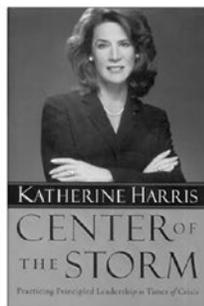
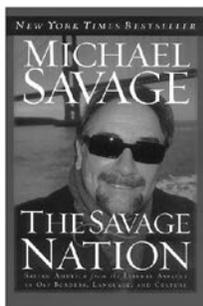
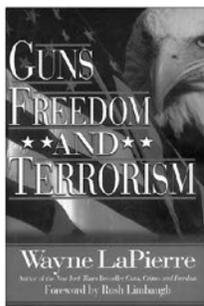
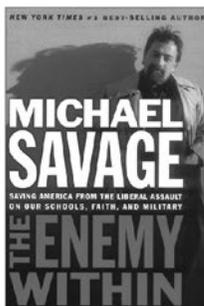
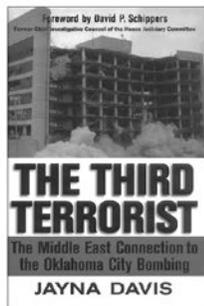
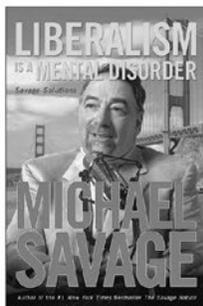
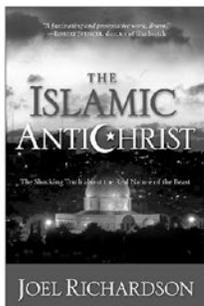
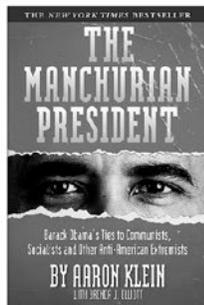
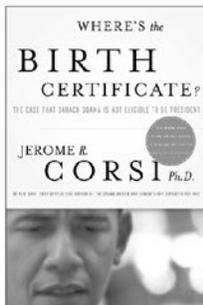
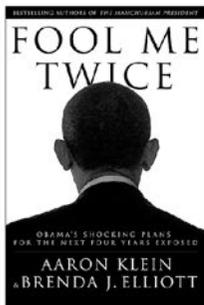
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