and unintentionally buttresses the privileges of the powerful group. We might also ask: What are the consequences if men do not live up to the expectation? If women do not live up to the expectation? And finally, what would have to happen for the false parallel to become a true parallel?

• In the case of gender violations, we can ask: What happens to women who have moved into positions usually occupied by men? What patterns do we find there? Do bosses and co-workers give them the same respect they give men? Has discrimination against women in the workplace ended for those women, or does sexism persist, perhaps in a new form?

• And what happens to men who find themselves in female-defined jobs (or other spaces)? Are the bosses men or women? Do bosses treat the men with respect or look on them suspiciously? If male advantage carries over, how does it play out in interactions with men and women?

• In the interpersonal realm, we can ask: What happens when men do their share of the third shift? How does the female partner react? How do her female friends, and the women in the neighborhood, react? Do they give these men extra points? How do other men react? Do men consider him a rate buster, giving other men a bad name?

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Fieldworkers who study settings in which women and men hold traditional roles will probably be on guard for sexism (for example, male bosses' treatment of female secretaries). We may be more surprised to find overt or covert sexism in the case of gender violations, especially when women engage in activities or join occupations long held by men. These are, after all, supposed to be instances of success. Whether examining gender conformity or gender violations, we can study the patterns of interaction between women and men and how these patterns reproduce or challenge inequality. But is it possible to study inequality when only men are present or only women are present? The next chapter explores feminist studies that reveal the reproduction of gender inequality in same-sex groups.

4. SEXISM CAN BE ANYWHERE

I've often heard faculty and graduate students say, in my predominantly quantitative department, that "you can't study gender unless you have data on women and men." If one treats gender as a variable, then that belief makes sense; comparisons are necessary to see if gender has an "effect." Yet "some

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of the most extreme displays of 'essential' womanly and manly natures may occur in settings that are usually reserved for members of a single sex category" (West & Fenstermaker, 1995, p. 31). In this chapter I'll examine qualitative studies on the reproduction of inequality in same-sex groups and in settings where only a few members of the other sex are present.

Analyses of all-male groups reveal that men *reproduce* hegemonic masculinity or find ways to *compensate* for its loss. As Michael Kimmel (in Katz, 2006) has argued, "In large part, it's other men who are important to American men; [they] define their masculinity, not as much in relation to women, but in relation to each other. Masculinity is largely a homosocial enactment" (p. 119). And this relationship among men (particularly heterosexual men) is based on a cycle of control and fear (Johnson, 2005):

> Men pay an enormous price for participating in patriarchy. The more in control men try to be, for example, the less secure they feel. They may not know it because they're so busy trying to be in control, but the more they organize their lives around being in control, the more tied they are to the fear of *not* being in control. (p. 55)

Feminist fieldworkers can look for the strategies men use in reinforcing or reclaiming that sense of control and the harmful consequences of those strategies for both women and men.

Women did not create the wires of the sexist birdcage, but they can still *reinforce* them. In addition, when women have heterosexual, class, or race privileges, they may unwittingly or knowingly disidentify from women who lack those privileges. Women who have privileges may use "sisterhood" to mask unfair treatment of women who are lower in the hierarchy of a group or organization. Fieldworkers can study how women, in their interactions with each other, reinforce or challenge their subordination as a sex class.

All-Male Settings

Timothy Jon Curry's (1991) study of male college athletes' behaviors in the locker room shows that men don't have to have women present to engage in sexist practices. These athletes talked about women primarily as sex objects and policed each other's sexuality through homophobic remarks. Everything a male athlete does—and how he appears—"runs the risk of gender assessment" (p. 129). Contrary to earlier work that emphasized camaraderie and cohesiveness among male athletes, Curry's study demonstrated that the men constantly competed with each other. Their bond

was based largely on their displaying to the team that they were "man enough" to take put-downs by other players. They one-upped each other in their homophobic and sexist comments.

Why did the athletes compete with each other rather than focus only on competing with their opponents? Because no player could count on keeping his particular position on the team. If he got injured or played badly, he could be replaced. This competitiveness eroded friendships rather than produced cohesion. As one athlete said:

> One of the smaller guys on the team was my best friend . . . maybe I just like having a little power over [him] . . . It doesn't matter if the guy is your best friend, you've got to beat him, or else you are sitting there watching. Nobody wants to watch. (Curry, 1991, p. 123)

The players learned to suppress empathy and maintain a pose of invulnerability, thus reinforcing hegemonic masculinity. Similar to the men Sattel studied (1976) in his work on male inexpressiveness, these men had learned to equate self-disclosure with vulnerability. Sharing personal information might also have made it more difficult for male athletes to *want* to compete with teammates.

In the locker room, men reduced women to sexual objects and conquests. On the rare occasion when players spoke of women as people, they did so in whispers. Other players made fun of teammates for engaging in such talk. For example, when an assistant coach entered the room and noticed two players speaking in hushed tones, he said, "You'll have to leave our part of the room. This is where the real men are" (Curry, 1991, p. 128).

Homophobic comments were rampant. Curry (1991) argued that because male athletes are nude in the locker room and physically close during plays, they may go even farther than other men in distancing themselves from any insinuation of homosexuality (which, in U.S. society, associates men with the denigrated category of women/femininity). Despite the equation of men's athletics—and sports, generally—with heterosexual masculinity, some of the men worried that people (particularly other men) would equate close contact among players with same-sex desire. As one coach said:

> We do so much touching that some people think we're queer. In 37 years I've never for sure met a queer [athlete]. At [a certain college] we had a [teammate] that some of the fellows thought was queer. I said "pound on him, beat on him, see what happens." He quit after three days. He never approached anyone anyway. (p. 130)

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Feminist fieldworkers can think about the larger lessons men learn from participating in organized athletics (or any other all-male activity). In Curry's study (1991), the men learned to associate hard work and competition only with men; they reinforced ideas embedded in a rape culture through their talk about women as objects to be taken; and they learned to normalize aggression. "Real men" are not nurturant, do not see women as people first, and do not value or seek egalitarian relationships with women.

Curry (1991) surmised that some of the men felt uncomfortable with the culture of the locker room. But not one man publicly questioned others' homophobic and sexist remarks. Doing so would have put his sense of himself as a man—a core valued self—on the line. As the coach's remarks (above) suggest, a man who would take a stand against sexism or heterosexism would also risk physical harm. As we learned in the previous chapter, deviant cases (for example, men who don't follow the norm) put the group norms (masculine "ideals") into relief. Researchers, then, can learn about hegemonic masculinity, and the policing of masculinity, by seeing what happens when men violate others' expectations for them as men.

Excelling in men's sports is an important signifier of heterosexual masculinity. But not all young athletic men try to pursue a professional life in sports, even when they do well at them and identify as straight. Social class comes into play when men—as men—make plans about their future work lives. Messner (1989) interviewed Hispanic and black former athletes from poor and working-class families as well as white former athletes largely from middle-class families. The white middle-class men recognized the slim chance of making a career in professional sports. Even a young man who had been a star athlete in several sports in high school decided not to play organized sports in college:

> I think in my own mind I kind of downgraded the stardom thing. I thought that was small potatoes. And sure, that's nice in high school and all that, but on a broad scale, I didn't think it amounted to all that much. So I decided that my goal is to be a dentist, as soon as I can . . . I'm not going to play basketball forever and I might jeopardize my chances of getting into dental school if I play. (p. 77)

The middle-class white men who enjoyed the advantages of masculinity as athletes in high school shifted their concern to the adult signs of masculinity in our society, namely education and career.

Men from poor and working-class families, on the other hand, clung to the athlete identity, hoping to cash in on it as a pro, or at least to play sports

in an arena where they could make a living. They did not have the same edu-
cational or career aspirations as the middle-class men, because they knew
they had started out with a class handicap and would have fewer options in
the future. Messner (1989) relates the poignant story of a man who had been
a star athlete in high school but didn't have the grades or the money to go to
college. The U.S. Marine Corps offered him the chance to play baseball on
their team. Understandably, he accepted. The military sent him to Vietnam;
a grenade blew up in his hand and he lost four fingers off his pitching hand.
At the time of his interview with Messner, he was driving a bus. Yet, when
he looked back, his earlier life decisions still made sense to him:

> . . . I didn't feel like I was gonna go out there and be a computer expert, or
> something that was gonna make a lot of money. The only thing I could do
> and live comfortably would be to play sports—just to get a contract—
> doesn't matter if you play second or third team in the pros, you're gonna
> make big bucks. That's all I wanted, a confirmed livelihood at the end of my
> ventures, and the only way I could do it would be through sports. So I tried.
> It failed, but that's what I tried. (p. 80)

That the middle-class men gave up sports for adult masculine status
makes sense. They knew the low odds of making it as a pro. They also knew
they would have the middle-class educational resources to succeed outside
of sports. In fact, their athletic experiences in high school and college served
as resources they could use to network with other men, raise their status with
men, and bond with men: Their athletic identity became "a badge of mas-
culinity that [was] *added* to [their] professional status" (Messner, 1989,
p. 78). For the athletes from poor backgrounds, athletics was the only hope
for a better future and the one context in which they could get the respect
that middle-class men could achieve through education and careers. Messner's
study alerts fieldworkers to look for the resources class and race provide (or
fail to provide) to men in their attempts to live up to hegemonic masculin-
ity, and the consequences of those resources for men's plans and lives.

Men who lack signifiers of hegemonic masculinity—poor men, men of
color, gay or bisexual men, men with disabilities—may be especially fear-
ful of the control they are losing or have lost. Fieldworkers can study how
men respond to downward mobility in the gender hierarchy. Thomas
Gerschick and Adam Miller's (1994) interviews with men with physical
disabilities showed that most of the men initially felt their lessened physi-
cal abilities to be emasculating. The men used three strategies to deal with
their loss of status as men: reformulation, reliance, and rejection.

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Men *reformulated* (redefined) what manhood meant, making it fit their reduced capabilities. For example, one man, a quadriplegic who required assistants day and night, said:

> People know from Jump Street that I have my own thing, and I direct my own thing. And if they can't comply with my desire, they won't be around . . . I don't see any reason why people with me can't take instructions and get my life on just as I was having it before, only thing I'm not doing it myself. I direct somebody else to do it. So, therefore, I don't miss out on very much. (Gerschick & Miller, 1994, p. 37)

This interviewee might have seen himself as a failed man. But he found a way to redefine his situation. He could do so successfully because he had the *economic* resources to control others. Hiring strangers as assistants meant, to him, that he was in a privileged position, a boss with employees, rather than someone who had become dependent on others.

That social class is central to such reformulations is illustrated by the experience of another man, a polio survivor and quadriplegic:

> When I say independence can be achieved by acting through other people, I actually mean getting through life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness while utilizing high-quality and dependable attendant-care services. (Gerschick & Miller, 1994, p. 38)

By controlling others—something middle-class white men are expected to do—both men could reinstate themselves as "real men."

Men with disabilities also used the strategy of *reliance*, holding on to conventional notions of masculinity rather than reformulating them. (The authors found that men often vacillated among the three strategies.) But this strategy was less effective, because others could tell that the men were unable to meet societal expectations for able-bodied men. As a 16-year-old with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis said:

> If I ever have to ask someone for help, it really makes me feel like less of a man. I don't like asking for help at all. You know, like even if I could use some, I'll usually not ask just because I can't, I just hate asking . . . [A man is] fairly self-sufficient in that you can sort of handle just about any situation, in that you can help other people, and that you don't need a lot of help. (Gerschick & Miller, 1994, p. 42)

Some men *rejected* the dominant conception of masculinity, although none did so completely. For example, one man said of fathering:

> There's no reason why we [his fiancée and himself] couldn't use artificial
> insemination or adoption. Parenting doesn't necessarily involve being the
> male sire. It involves being a good parent . . . Parenting doesn't mean that it's
> your physical child. It involves responsibility and an emotional role as well.
> I don't think the link between parenthood is the primary link with sexuality.
> Maybe in terms of evolutionary purposes, but not in terms of a relationship.
> (Gerschick & Miller, 1994, p. 48)

Yet even this man, when it came to the issue of a woman working outside
the home, said that he could not imagine being dependent on his wife's
income. He noted this inconsistency, saying, "That's definitely an element of
masculinity, and I guess I am just as influenced by that, as oh, as I guess other
people, or as within my definition of masculinity. What do you know? I have
been caught" (Gerschick & Miller, 1994, p. 49). Yet there may be cases where
a clearer rejection of masculinity occurs, and we should remain open to that.

Fieldworkers should also be on the alert for *compensatory* masculinity—
men making up for an inability to signify the dominant form of masculin-
ity. This phenomenon has been found among some gay and bisexual men
in their sexual practices. Rafael Diaz (2004) studied the conditions under
which gay and bisexual men engage in risky sexual behavior, defined as
anal sex without a condom. Instead of assuming that there is a "pathologi-
cal" group of men who don't use condoms and a "healthy" group of men
who do, he asked men when they did, or did not, engage in risky sex. He
found that men failed to use a condom when they needed to affirm their
physical attractiveness, needed "to restore a wounded sense of masculinity"
(p. 378), needed to get rid of feelings of isolation and alienation, or felt the
need to escape, at least for a while, "from poverty, racism, interpersonal
rejection, and AIDS" (p. 378).

For example, some of the men, from a poor area of San Francisco, visited
a higher-status area to look for men with whom to have sex. In this "trip to
fantasy island," as Diaz (2004) called it, the men equated the socioeconom-
ically better area with clean, healthy, HIV-negative men—a risky assump-
tion. The men had internalized the idea that the middle class can be equated
with cleanliness and health and the poor with dirtiness and disease.

Diaz (2004) points out that the same men used condoms when they felt
good about themselves, saw their partner as a human being, and did not cut
their mind off from their actions. He argues that the splitting of sexuality
from the self is a product of the history of homophobia in the United States,
whereby gay sex became something a man did in secrecy, "what you do
with strangers in strange places at strange hours" (p. 378). He argues that
even those who are out of the closet and living in a gay-friendly city do not

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necessarily lose internalized homophobia. And because masculinity is tied up with sexual conquest, the men's risky actions could temporarily affirm their physical attractiveness or sexual prowess. Fieldworkers can, as Diaz did, take broader issues (heterosexism, racism, and poverty, for example) into account in examining whether and how men participate in behaviors consistent with heterosexual masculinity (such as risk taking) or in opposition to it.

Compensatory masculinity may also be found among relatively privileged men. One reason men joined the mythopoetic men's movement was to make up for their not being successful careerists (Schwalbe, 1996). The men held such middle-class jobs as teaching and social work, and most were in a two-income household, but they had not made it in the higher-status professions. Although some of the men were sympathetic to (liberal) feminism, they rejected the idea that they were part of a "privileged group" or "oppressor class." (After all, they were kind men who didn't strive to exploit others.) Yet the mythopoetic men were critical of profeminist men. As one man said:

> We have some profeminist guys in the men's center here. They're the kind of guys that if it isn't women, it's the gays. That's probably good. It reminds us that we're this middle-class, white, age-fortyish group. And see, this bothers [the profeminist men]. They say, "Where are the blacks? Where are the gays?" But anyway, the profeminist guys—Bly talks about this; he's got a tape on it; he talks about this fairy tale with the dwarfs and how you can't pick up on women's pain. You know all the stuff: the discrimination and all that stuff that's happened to them for thousands of years. We can't pick that up. We can't bear that pain of theirs. It doesn't mean we can't be sympathetic to women, and I *am*. I feel that strongly. And the more we get ourselves together and empowered as men—that's what I see in this mythopoetic stuff. It's a very inward, self-oriented thing. (p. 189)

By focusing "inward," as this man put it, the men insulated their activities in the mythopoetic gatherings from critical analysis. They believed that their rituals and talk could stand outside the public realm and the systems of sexism, racism, and homophobia (of which they were a part). The men felt they were participating in what leaders called the mythological realm, rendering a political analysis irrelevant. These men kept the political separate from the personal, something that feminist women challenged years ago.

The men that Schwalbe studied did not make the kinds of sexist remarks Curry (1991) found in the locker room and that other researchers have

found in such male-only settings as fraternities (Martin & Hummer, 1989). But these men still shared an androcentric perspective, taking "men's realities as paramount and [giving] lesser weight to women's realities" (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 193). Their silences, often more than what they did say, revealed their unwillingness to think about how women might look at a situation and why. Here is an illustration from Schwalbe's field notes:

> A man talked about breaking up with his wife. The other men in the circle laughed when he said, "She thinks I'm slimy because I'm attracted to other women. Maybe women aren't attracted to other men." He presented this as if she were unreasonably resentful of his perfectly normal male attraction to other women. But then later in the evening, when the talk turned to "unfinished business," this same guy said, "I have a tendency to overlap relationships. I'll get a new one started before the old one is finished." It wasn't apparent that he saw a connection between his wife's accusation of sliminess and his admitted tendency to "overlap relationships." I thought that if women had been present the connection might have been served up to him. No man in the circle raised this issue. (p. 194)

Similarly, the men did not put down gay men, but when they said they wanted physical closeness with men, they almost always added "but not in a sexual way." This was said often enough to suggest that having sex with men would be a bad thing. And the men who admitted being sexually attracted to other men made it clear that they had not *acted* on that impulse. Thus, the men, in spending time mostly with other heterosexual men, made comments that reinforced androcentrism, sexism, and heterosexism. Fieldworkers should be sensitive to remarks made by straight men, who may appear sympathetic to gay men, that reveal a distance from them at the same time.

Instead of subscribing to feminism, the mythopoetic men bought into essentialism, the idea that men and women are basically different rather than that differences are a product of sticky social constructions, socialization, and the maintenance of male privilege. Without such essentializing, the men could not have worked on revalorizing "man" in the abstract and themselves as men. By claiming that "man" needed validation, they largely denied the systematic oppression of women *as women*. The men kept their energies focused on their inner lives, and failed to link their feelings to patriarchy. Schwalbe's (1996) study alerts fieldworkers to how "gentle men" may reproduce gender inequality, even as they break some of the rules of hegemonic masculinity (by expressing vulnerability to other men, for example).

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All-Female Settings

Perhaps it's not so surprising that men in male-only groups engage in sexist practices. But fieldworkers should be aware that women in female-only settings may unwittingly reinforce gender inequality. For example, Matt Ezzell (2004) found in his study of a largely white women's collegiate rugby team that players eschewed feminism and regarded their involvement in this physically tough sport to be about them as special *individuals* rather than about the ability of *women* to transcend stereotypes of female passivity and weakness. These women's unconventional behavior in sport did not offer a radical challenge to images of white, middle-class femininity as a whole.

Rugby is one sport where the equipment and rules for play are identical for women's teams and men's teams, and the women felt proud of playing a "man's game." As one player told Ezzell (2004) in an interview:

> I think rugby is definitely unique in that sense because there is no separation [in the rules], and I love that. I love that about the sport . . . I think some of those rules are really silly, and they're made just, to, um, maintain this proper feminine image. And I think that's wrong. (p. 15)

The women played hard (using no pads or helmets) and believed that players should tough out pain and injuries. Much like the male athletes Curry (1991) studied, the women took on injuries as a badge of honor. One player said:

> Tammie's got a broken shoulder bone—or broken, it was her shoulder blade, all the ligaments were torn; it was basically broken and she played the entire season with it. . . . So she's playing with one arm, tackles this girl that had been talking trash, stands over her and says, "Get up, bitch, I'm not done with you yet!" You know, and when you see somebody do that the whole team is like, "Yeah, let's go!" . . . I mean, there's no way it wasn't hurting Tammie . . . she's going to have permanent damage. And Ella's going to have permanent damage to any number of joints and bones, and she already does. (Ezzell, 2004, p. 16)

The women, however, had a dilemma. To the extent that they were successful at the sport, they became intimidating—and thus less attractive—to men. Almost all team members identified as heterosexual; they worried that the stigma surrounding athletic women, especially those playing a tough male-defined sport, would mark them as lesbians. The women's strategy for dealing with their problem reinforced heterosexism: They made a point of

saying that *other* women's rugby teams are filled with lesbians, but not *theirs*. The players at Comp U disidentified from other female rugby players and tried to ensure that their team was "hot"—made up of small, "sexy-fit" women who were recruited largely by members of the *men's* rugby team. Apparently more lesbians had participated on the team in the past, and current members wanted to keep this from happening again. As one player said:

> The years when the girls have been really attractive, like last year the recruiting class, and my year the recruiting class was hot . . . that's when the guys' team is closest to us . . . When [the straight players] felt like the lesbian girls were ruining that for us it got . . . you know, it was like a big point of contention. It was like, they're our guys and you're pissing them off. (Ezzell, 2004, p. 27)

Players cared a lot about not pissing off the men because male rugby players constituted their main dating pool. According to the players, even other athletic men on campus worried about dating presumably tough female rugby players.

In addition to distinguishing their team from other rugby players, the women engaged in identity work that distanced them from women in other sports, women on campus (especially members of sororities), and women in general. They saw themselves as tougher than most women who participated in organized sports, and (hetero) sexier than most female rugby players, though not as sexily "trashy" as sorority sisters—whom they called "sorostitutes." The players effectively "othered" women. They fashioned themselves into the exception—as individuals and as a team. Ezzell's study (2004) suggests that feminist fieldworkers should pay attention to the ways women talk about women outside their group and the consequences of that talk for reinforcing *men's* sexist ideas and labels for women.

Women who play a "man's sport" put the stereotype of women as weak into question. But the rugby players' actions did nothing to enhance the position of women *as a class*. They put down the occasional player who linked women's rugby with feminism as someone "who was trying to prove something." What they left unstated is that players on the men's rugby team would find feminism—and by implication, feminist players—unappealing. Feminist fieldworkers should keep in mind the larger consequences of what women do in same-sex groups. Are they breaking barriers in one way while reinforcing negative images of (other) women?

The female rugby players were not invested in feminism. What happens in women's organizations whose purpose is to lessen gender inequalities?

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Alleen Barber's (1995) study of Unity, a women's organization in the busi-
ness of making sure that corporate women elsewhere are treated fairly,
showed that the managers reproduced inequalities—in pay, prestige, and
treatment of employees—within their own organization. The managers
gave their workers occasional roses rather than bread: flowers on the first
day of work, a day off on birthdays, flowers at each 1-year anniversary of
work, and free tampons in the bathroom. As one woman said:

> On my first day there was a card and flowers, you know. I got taken out to
> lunch. And everybody was very friendly. And then I was put in my cubicle
> and kind of left there. And I realized that people weren't necessarily going to
> come over and reach out to me, and so I remember the first month or so . . .
> feeling extremely isolated. (p. 15)

Many of the employees liked the idea of working in a women's organi-
zation. But after a while they started to notice that they endured poor pay
and bad treatment in order to help women—in other organizations—move
up the corporate ladder. Some women even felt embarrassed about getting
points from people outside the organization for doing virtuous work. As
one woman put it:

> Sometimes I feel guilty because everyone's like, "Oh, you work for a
> women's organization, you work on women's issues." And I just feel like,
> "Oh, I'm not really working on those issues, you know? I'm sorry. I'm not.
> I'm doing something totally different" . . . I guess a part of me wants to be in
> a more feminist—openly feminist kind of [organization]—and working on
> issues that I kind of feel are more critical than having women move from
> managing director to vice president. (Barber, 1995, p. 16)

In addition, when the young women said they felt cared for by the orga-
nization, it was other junior-level workers they referred to, not the higher-
ups. As one woman said:

> The people I work with are the best thing about Unity. And like whenever
> there's a problem I can always go to Cynthia or Emily or Marianne [junior
> people]. And like everybody now, after the phone incident [when a senior
> person yelled at her in front of her peers]. I mean now I know I can really go
> to anyone . . . I feel like I can get along with everybody on the junior staff.
> I mean, I don't have a lot of connections to the senior staff. But everyone
> on the junior staff. (Barber, 1995, p. 21)

It's important, then, to make sure we know who a woman is referring to when she says she feels cared about by other women. Which "sisterhood" is the participant talking about? Who would she not include and why?

Barber's study (1995) illustrates a more general point that we should think about as we enter all-female settings: Women in positions of power can use "women's culture" as a resource for masking inequalities between themselves and women in subordinate positions. The senior women at Unity counted on a pool of young urban women who would work for the organization because of its (presumed) commitment to women's issues, or because it could provide a stepping-stone to a better job else-where. Other young women needed a job fast, and Unity provided one. Barber notes that if the junior women had been working for men, they might have noticed problems in the workplace sooner and attributed them to sexism. It was harder for these young women to see inequalities because the people in power were not only women, but self-defined fem-inists directing an organization intended to help women. Her study alerts us to the possibility that feminist-sounding organizations may reproduce other inequalities.

Unity was a hierarchically organized workplace. What happens when women of the same age, race, sexual orientation, and class have their own peerlike organization? In his study of a black campus activist organization at a predominantly white university, Ken Kolb (2000) discovered that almost all the participants were women. Yet when there was a public per-formance, the women always put black men at the center, rendering the women's work invisible. At one major event, a woman had even written the man's speech. In addition, the women lauded the men for their smallest efforts and made excuses for them when they didn't carry through.

Overall, the women were much harder on female participants than they were on male participants. Why? The women felt an obligation to "uplift" black men. They knew that others held negative stereotypes of black men; showcasing a black man in a responsible public position might put that stereotype into question. In addition, the women praised the men because they found them to be among the small group of men on campus—their dat-ing pool—who weren't athletes, who cared about academics, and who had an interest in creating social change. The women, all straight and from middle- and upper-middle-class families, wanted to get involved only with men who fit those criteria. In addition, the women believed that putting men forward might move more people—especially men—to join the organi-zation. As one woman said:

> Because sometimes males just have that voice or attitude about them that will get people to listen. If we were to have more males in the organization, I think it would be a bit better and we would get more people. Just like, for example, being in church all my life, people really—they'll listen to women if they come and preach or whatever, but really it's the *male* voice they want to hear. I think if somebody saw, or people on this campus saw, a black male leading something like this organization or just being a leader in any of the committees they'll be inspired to be like, "look at that brother doing this. I should join and see what's going on, if he's so excited and fired up about this." (Kolb, 2000, p. 34)

As others have argued (Brown, 1993; Carbado, 1999; Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Parker, 1997), only black *men* can serve as the true representatives of "the race"; their achievements are seen as the measure of how well or how badly blacks are doing. (This is analogous to Hochschild's [1989a] idea, discussed earlier, that only men can "do social class" for the family.) The women in this campus activist organization also had accepted the idea that black men should be made central, thus denying the importance of their own work. As Kolb (2000) asks in his conclusion, are there other areas where black middle-class women will be reluctant to criticize black men, including intimate relationships?

When women have crises in their relationships with men, they often talk to other women about what's going on (Oliker, 1989). And women are often supportive. Researchers can ask: What are the consequences of this sisterhood for reinforcing or challenging the behaviors that men engage in and women complain about? Michelle Wolkomir (2004, 2006) studied Christian wives who joined a support group for women whose Christian gay husbands were hoping to become ex-gays. The women experienced sadness, frustration, and rage when they found out their husbands were having affairs with men. It put their identity as Christian wives into question and made it difficult for them to continue to think of their partners as Christian husbands. One woman described the dilemma well:

> When Ted was exhibiting masculine qualities in our marriage—taking the lead, taking care of us, working extra hours so we'd be better off, making good decisions, and just being a good family and spiritual leader—I could be a helper/completer for him. God made woman from the man, for the man, for the relationship. I felt like he valued the complement and completeness I brought to him, so I could do my role joyfully . . . The wife submits to her husband as Jesus submitted to God. When the homosexuality came up though, I did not know what to do as a Christian woman. (Wolkomir, 2004, p. 742)

The wives' first strategy was to try to be "better women" by working on their appearance and giving more to their husbands. This strategy failed to change their husbands' desire for men. But the women who led the support groups taught these wives to change their outlook, construing the situation as one that should be "given up to God." Through the program, the women learned to think of their husbands' problem as a psychological illness. Doing so relieved the wives' anxiety about being inadequate women. It also allowed them not to blame themselves for their husbands' attraction to men and to believe that although their husbands desired men *sexually*, they desired their wives *emotionally*. This gave the women hope because it positioned them and their children as their husbands' primary commitment.

The women learned to rely on God—the male headship above their husbands—to make things right, at least when it came to how the women felt about themselves in this situation. As one wife put it: "I've totally let go and let Him take care of it [the marriage]. I feel freed from the worry. It's like, "whatever, Lord. I'm just waiting on you" (Wolkomir, 2004, p. 748).

Yet the women did not sit back and wait for God to take over. Rather, they used their new outlook as a way to bring the men back into line. One woman talked her husband into leaving his lover's apartment by invoking the Bible and God. She told him that there may be ambiguity in the Bible about whether homosexuality is acceptable, but "*nothing*, I mean nothing, in the Bible [makes] adultery okay. Adultery is sin and God hates it. You cannot do this" (Wolkomir, 2004, p. 750). Other wives used biblical passages to convince their husbands not to divorce them. Thus, the women used traditional religion as a resource to keep their husbands around. Their strategies, however, also maintained patriarchal ideas and practices: The husband should be accepted under all circumstances and the wife should obey a masculine God who buttresses that loyalty. The women in the support group came to feel less angry and unhappy by talking to each other and learned how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases. But their beliefs kept them from seriously considering leaving the relationship.

Wolkomir's study provides this lesson for fieldworkers: Women in same-sex groups may teach each other to use patriarchal ideas (submission to husband and God in this case) in ways that both resist their male partners' transgressions *and* reinforce patriarchy and women's place within it. Similarly, Stacey Oliker (1989) found that married women's female friends supported them through marital problems. The kind of support offered by the friends kept the wives committed to their marriages while leaving their husbands off the hook. Husbands sometimes felt threatened by their wives' close friendships with women, expecting the friend to be on the woman's

"side." But the men's fears had little basis in reality. When wives talked to female friends about their marital conflicts, these friends usually generated empathy for the husband. As one wife said:

> So much of the time I see only my side—I've got blinders on. And June will say, "You know, he's probably feeling real insecure and angry." And for the first time I'll realize there's another human being mixed up in this, instead of just me and my own passions. (p. 125)

Or the friend might agree that the husband had acted badly, but then point out the husband's good behaviors, implying that the good overrides the bad (Oliker, 1989). One wife said:

> A lot of times, I just looked at the negative. I'd compare Gary to the other husbands. And when you look at someone else's husband, you just see the good side, not the bad one. Jan will point out to me, "You know, Gary helps out with the dishes—or does this or that—and Eddie never does." I'd start to think, "Gee, I really am lucky he does that. He's not all bad." (p. 126)

The emotion work that wives' female friends provided is what Oliker (1989) called "marriage work." The wife's friend acted somewhat like a therapist, allowing the woman to vent her anger. Then she helped the wife reframe the conflict so that the wife could feel better about her husband and the marriage. The friend helped the wife see things from the husband's point of view; that empathy often triggered sympathy.

It's possible for a friend to encourage a woman to act assertively with her husband or to leave the relationship. But Oliker (1989) found that the wives' friends more often suggested accommodative strategies. On the rare occasion when a friend became negative about the husband, the wife turned against the friend. Here are two examples:

> When Carol criticizes Tom for his gambling, I get a little angry: "How dare you? I never say anything about your husband." She just doesn't hold anything back. I don't like it, but I just tell myself she doesn't understand. (p. 134)

> Just before we got married, Marie would listen to my troubles and tell me I probably needed to find someone else. I didn't like that at all. When you complain to people, you really want them to find a solution for you. If they're negative, you start defending him. (p. 135)

Why did the wives and their female friends adopt an accommodative stance? Oliker (1989) argued that for many straight women, especially

white women, the wage gap meant that they were dependent on a male part-
ner's salary to live decently or well. In addition, the women Oliker inter-
viewed (most of her interviewees were over 30) worried about the
possibilities of finding someone better. As the main ones responsible for
making a marriage work (the "third shift" I referred to earlier), the women
thought that they should stay and work on their relationships. They had also
internalized the cultural message that children do best if they live with a
mother *and* a father.

What were the consequences of this collective marriage work? The mar-
riage work women did with their female friends gave advantages to the hus-
bands. Sometimes the women resolved a marital problem by talking to a
friend; the husband never knew a problem existed. Ultimately, husbands
benefited from the network of female friends who helped each other with
marital problems. As Oliker (1989) wrote:

> Since marriage work, as I observed it, pressed the wife toward compromise,
> it solidifies the position of the person who does not need to budge. Since mar-
> riage work consumes the wife's time and energy and occupies her intelli-
> gence, the husband's unconsumed resources remain at his disposal (to invest
> perhaps in social mobility and prestige and further marital power plays) . . .
> Regardless of its overt intent, the ethic of commitment in women friends'
> marriage work legitimates men's domestic authority. (pp. 149, 151)

Wives and their female friends, then, do not remain passive in the face
of marital problems. But the overall consequence of their "work" is to priv-
ilege the men.

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The concepts "man" and "woman" depend on each other; culturally, one
makes no sense without the other. "Man" is the dominant category in U.S.
society, so "woman" becomes that which is not man. When men, especially
heterosexual men, get together, they may reinforce that dominance, delin-
eating their differences from and superiority to women (consciously or
unconsciously). This may be done indirectly; the cultural association of
"gay man" with effeminacy means that men's heterosexist remarks in the
locker room establish that male athletes are *not* like women. In this sense,
men's homophobic behaviors become "a weapon of sexism" (Pharr, 1997).

Feminist fieldworkers can remain cognizant of sexist and heterosexist
practices in male-only groups. These behaviors may occur in settings in
which the group is conventionally marked as hypermasculine (for example,

sports) or in which the group is engaged in challenges to hegemonic masculinity (for example, mythopoetic gatherings). In addition, fieldworkers can study men whose masculinity has been challenged (such as men with disabilities), learning how they respond to the loss of privilege.

Women in female-only groups may support each other in ways that inadvertently reinforce male advantage. The "marriage workers" that Oliker (1989) studied made life easier for their husbands, thus leaving inequalities in the marriage intact. The Christian wives married to gay men learned from their female support groups how to live with their husbands despite the men's ongoing affairs. These studies alert fieldworkers to the possibility that supportive relationships among women can maintain the (patriarchal) status quo.

Women who have other privileges (race, class, sexual orientation) may create or maintain hierarchies among women in all-female groups or organizations. If solidarity is expected among women, women with the highest status may use appeals to sisterhood to mask inequalities.

Whether they are studying male-only or female-only groups, feminist researchers can analyze how participants' practices accommodate, work around, resist, or challenge the gender order.

Questions to Ask in the Field or at the Desk

In male-only groups:

- What conception of masculinity do participants share?
- Are members reinforcing hegemonic masculinity?
- What resources for signifying masculinity are available to the men? If some men lack conventional signifiers, how do they compensate (if they do)?
- Do the men take their identity as men for granted, or do they make it a topic of discussion? If they talk about men and masculinity, what rhetorics do they use? Do their understandings of men and masculinity (and women and femininity) reinforce, however subtly, sexist and heterosexist ideas? What are the consequences of the men's ideas about masculinity and men for reinforcing or subverting gender ideologies?

In female-only groups:

- What conception of "woman" or "femininity" do participants share?
- Are women bonding over female-defined activities? Do women use the role that goes along with these activities to retain unequal relations or to challenge them?