

which has a million dollar contract with Mailer! The contradiction here needs no explanation!

We could go on and on about the sophomoric way both Ken Pitchford and Steve Dansky have twisted words and hypocritically knifed everyone around them, while admitting a certain amount of guilt on their own part to give an appearance of raw honesty, but we would like to get on with our second point. This is that you define "Gay Enemies" in terms of their male chauvinism. We have already pointed out how you did this to Allen Young. Another example is Perry Brass, whom Steve defines as a "Gay Enemy" because of what he did to the women on *Come Out!*, and Craig Rodwell is an enemy because his Oscar Wilde Bookstore has a "token-lesbian-shelf." (Of course, you forgot to mention the lesbian manager and the lesbian part-time cashier, but are two-thirds of a staff a token?) Naturally you refused to let Oscar Wilde sell *Double F* and we had to buy our copy at a neighborhood bookstore which sells far more sexist books than Oscar Wilde's will ever see!

The real point, however, is that you are naming gay people as "enemies" because they are primarily women's enemies, and who are you as men to judge who our enemies are? You are doing in a more subtle way what male psychiatrists, male sociologists, and the entire male power structure has been doing for centuries: that is, you are telling women (or at least subtly suggesting) who their friends are, who their enemies are. You have not so subtly decided what is right for women. By pointing out the chauvinist enemy (even though your readership is purportedly male), you are being patronizing to women. Aren't we capable of finding our enemies?

Did women appoint you to be the harbingers of feminism to gay men or have you decided on your own what women will think of your efforts? As you yourself point out, "all men are the enemies," (and one of us, Karla, was one of the Redstockings who formulated that theory), so in the end you are as much of an enemy as the rest. All the male privileges you so eagerly give up are immediately handed back to you by the male power structure. You admit that you are male chauvinists, but you spend the greater part of your magazine attacking others instead of examining the ways in which you yourselves are male chauvinists. For example, your magazine reeks of violence, and what could be more macho than a bloody solution to a problem? Hasn't that always been the way of The Man?

A final point. You attack Gay Liberation as if it were a cohesive group, when in fact, Gay Liberation is no more of an ideological unity

than Women's Liberation. And if you condemn the entire Gay Liberation Movement, then remember that some of those people in Gay Liberation are *women*, our sisters. It's more than a bit chauvinistic to assume that a movement is entirely male.

We think your magazine would be far more valuable if you used your pages to develop and examine your own experiences and ideologies instead of tearing down Gay Liberationists, even though we agree that some of the men you mention are more than objectionable. Instead of dumping on gay men, who are, after all, as oppressed as you are, you should attack only our real enemy—white male heterosexuals. We feel that criticism of gay men is warranted only if it has some constructive point and that your frothing denunciations, which are in many cases unsubstantiated and ridiculous, tend to make one want to reject all your ideas as paranoid and irresponsible.

In Struggle
Karla Jay and June Rook

From *Gay Sunshine*, June/July, 1973. Reprinted by permission.

Anti-Sexist Consciousness-Raising Groups for Men

Paul Carlo Hornacek

Rationale

Anti-sexist men's consciousness-raising groups are beginning to appear in various parts of our country as a complement to and in support of the women's liberation (feminist) movement. These groups are not to be confused or mistakenly identified with the recent and more popular men's liberation movement. Proponents of men's liberation espouse the view that sexism is a societally pervasive institution which oppresses both women and men by prescribing stereotypical sex-role behaviors which are dehumanizing and which cause great emotional suffering. They encourage C-R sessions as a vehicle by which men can get in touch with their emotions, free

themselves of sex-role assignments, learn to be more open with and caring for other men, and struggle together to fight the external (re) imposition upon themselves of the socially oppressive male role. In this manner they learn a way of relating in more rewarding ways to women and to other men.

In direct contrast to this, men who are participating in what some have called anti-sexist (or pro-feminist) men's C-R groups maintain that sexism is an institutionalized way of life in which women, gay people, and children are systematically oppressed and disempowered by heterosexual men. They agree that sexism and the external imposition of stereotypical sex-role behavior which accompanies it is dehumanizing to all people, but feel that while heterosexual men are alienated and limited by sexism, they are not oppressed by it. By definition, those who gain substantial material, psychic and other benefits by the subordination of another group are recognized as the oppressors, not as the oppressed. This distinction is not merely a semantic disagreement; it is a major difference in the purpose of the group. Anti-sexist men's C-R is designed to support women's liberation by changing men's male supremacist consciousness. Men's liberation C-R, on the other hand, supports male domination by reinforcing men's sexist consciousness. Surrendering male privilege requires a recognition of the compensatory gains for economic class differences that males are afforded by sexism. Men in our culture (and especially heterosexual men) are by birthright the benefactors of the oppressive societal institution of sexism—which was created and is maintained in their interest.

Members of anti-sexist men's C-R groups see the need for men to meet together to discuss the ways in which sexism pervades their daily lives, and how their conscious and unconscious sexist behaviors limit and alienate themselves and oppress women, gay people, and children. They recognize the inherent contradiction in men getting together and forming supportive groups in our society which is already dominated by powerful privileged male groups. The justification for men getting together in this way comes from the purpose and methods of the group which are designed to insure a commitment to the struggle against male privilege. Unity in the struggle against male supremacist consciousness is different from traditional male bonding because it is aware of the contradiction and specifically and intentionally designed to oppose male solidarity. Anti-sexist men's C-R is one of the first positive steps men can take on their own, following the example and the leadership articulated by feminists, toward a unified female and male struggle to smash sexism. In being freed from their own sex roles men can free

others who are oppressed by them. Only by recognizing and struggling with this contradiction can the urge to perpetuate rather than to eradicate sexism and male privilege be overcome.

To help insure that the C-R experience does not become just one more instrument by which patriarchy further strengthens itself, anti-sexist men's C-R groups need to build the following three conditions into their structure: (1) a period of criticism and self-criticism wherein at the end of each session, group members reflect upon their own and others' sexism as was demonstrated during that meeting (this is the period when any sexist male bonding within the group is challenged), (2) a commitment to bring forth social change by personal and political activity against sexism, and (3) an acceptance of the principles and tenets of the feminist movement. (This means a recognition that sexism is an inequality between women and men in which all men benefit from the subordination of women.)

Practice

Anti-sexist consciousness-raising is an activity which permits participants to see clearly the ways in which their individual situation reflects the total social process around them. It allows people to examine and come to understand how the institutions of patriarchy foster and perpetuate the devastatingly dehumanizing effects of sexism. My experience in several anti-sexist men's C-R groups over the past five years has led me to subscribe to a structured rather than an unstructured format for C-R group conduct for men. The structure which I have found most useful is borrowed in large part from the feminist movement and its female creators to whom I am indebted for many of the ideas this paper expresses. Outlined below is a method of forming and participating in C-R groups which allows men to emerge feeling good about the fact that they are struggling with other men to give up the male-oppressor role. This format is designed to prevent competition, male dominance, the abuse of authority, and the misuse of aggression. It provides an atmosphere of trust and support wherein men can learn non-traditional ways of relating to women, to children, and to other men. Where women's groups have stressed the importance of flexibility and lack of formal structure in order to counterbalance the effects that male supremacist power structures have had upon their lives, it is important that men's C-R groups adhere to a pre-determined format which assures that anti-sexist principles and self-critical vigilance are ever-present in the process. A C-R group is qualitatively different from a rap, encounter, or therapy group because of the structure which it follows.

Men have reported a variety of different reasons for deciding to seek a C-R group, all of which have an underlying link to the feminist movement. Most are experiencing emotional pain as a result of their male sex-role and are dissatisfied with it. Some have had confrontations with radical feminists in public or private encounters and have been repeatedly criticized for being sexist. Some come as a result of their commitment to social change and their recognition that sexism and patriarchy are elements of an intolerable social system that needs to be altered. Male classmates, co-workers, relatives, friends and neighbors are all potentially good candidates for an anti-sexist men's C-R group. All men in our society have been socialized into the masculine role, all have been taught to objectify and dominate women, all have been continually exposed to a public media which teaches violence, misogyny, and the misuse of power and aggression toward women, children and other men.

The ideal size of a C-R group seems to be about six to eight people. Larger groups do not afford the degree of intimacy necessary to develop honest self-disclosure and progress toward change. Smaller groups tend to become too informal and allow little room for absence or attrition, and groups which are too small contradict the basic assumption of consciousness-raising, which is to learn by hearing the experiences of several other people.

Meetings should be conducted on a regular basis, preferably once a week, in order to facilitate continuity of thought and content. Each meeting should last for a specific pre-designated length of time, usually two and a half to three hours. This time is to be divided according to the size of the group. Most people decide to have ten or fifteen minutes for each speaker to address the topic of the session, leaving fifteen or twenty minutes for discussion and analysis, and fifteen minutes at the end of the meeting for a criticism and self-criticism period. Most groups also like to have five minutes at the beginning of the meeting for each member to say how he feels that evening and whether there are any pressing issues in his life which might interfere with his participation in the C-R session. It is important to begin and end a C-R group on time and to require full attendance at every meeting. A true commitment to fighting sexism is reflected in the fact that the C-R group meeting holds a priority in members' schedules.

Groups use members' homes as meeting places, and rotate on a weekly basis so that everyone has an opportunity to learn a little about the environment in which the other members live. Rotation of the meeting also creates an opportunity for group members to share the

responsibility of hosting the sessions (perhaps providing a beverage and a snack).

While many women's C-R groups have formed and met successfully without a leader or facilitator, on the premise that all women are oppressed by sexism and therefore they themselves are best able to find their way to a liberating theory, men cannot follow the same practice. Since men are socialized into the sexual-oppressor role, it is important that when they meet to struggle against that role they have an experienced, feminist-conscious person to guide them for the first few sessions. This facilitator can be a man who has experienced anti-sexist C-R groups and who appreciates the three organizational principles of men's C-R outlined above, or a feminist who is willing to meet with a men's group for a few times to help them to get started.

During the first meeting participants introduce themselves and usually give a brief autobiographical sketch to help others to begin to know them on a personal level. After this, the real work of discovering feelings and inexpressiveness begins. To enable the sharing of emotional reactions and personal information, it is essential that group members agree to a pact of strict confidentiality. Only by this agreement can an atmosphere of trust develop. Trust is necessary for the honest sharing of personal information and for the persistent struggle against the enemy within ourselves. Members may choose to share information with outside people about the group process and structure or general topic, but not about the group content.

For successive meetings, the format is a very simple one. Topics are selected according to group preference a week in advance. During the session itself the topic is addressed by each person until it is exhausted. All topics must relate to the socialization of males and females within our society which leads to the perpetuation of sexist behaviors. The person who chooses to speak first discusses the subject by speaking in the first person, i.e., only making "I" statements based on his own experience. He expresses how the topic in question has affected his life, attempting to be honest about revealing personal information and trying to stay as close to the topic as possible. Intellectualization, a defensive maneuver by which men avoid feelings and emotional statements, is to be avoided.

The role of the members who are not speaking is very important. They are to give their full attention to the speaker and attempt to understand what is being expressed. Listeners should silently note experiences and feelings with which they too are familiar. No one is to interrupt the speaker. Questions of clarification can be raised when the

Ten Essential Men's C-R Topics:

- Childhood training for sex-roles
- Marriage, monogamy, jealousy
- Work and housework
- Fathers and sons
- Rape
- Homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality
- The nuclear family as a bastion of sexism
- Maleness and masculinity
- Sensuality and sexuality
- Intimacy with women; intimacy with men

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Dangers With Men's Consciousness-Raising Groups

Leonard Schein

The formation of men's consciousness-raising groups must be seen as a positive step in the struggle against sexism. At this time it is extremely important for men to start working with other men in new ways that destroy traditional "male bonding." Men working with other men is a necessary and good direction for three main reasons.

First, men have a long history, when working with women, of cooptation, of treating women in a sexist manner, of channeling a movement's energy into male directions, and of making male issues the

speaker indicates that he is finished. Speakers are not to be confronted or challenged. If a member hears sexist language or a report of sexist behavior, he is to make a mental or written note and bring it up during the criticism/self-criticism period described below.

When one person has finished speaking, another begins until all the members have addressed the topic. When the round has been accomplished, a discussion and analysis period begins. Members try to find a pattern to their experiences and draw conclusions from what has been discussed. During this period it is important to try to understand how their abstract, aggressive, unemotional masculine role has affected their lives and the lives of women and children to whom they relate. The consciousness-raising process is one in which shared personal experiences come to be seen as a consistent product of societally imposed sex-role stereotyping, rather than natural or idiosyncratic personal behaviors. Finding a pattern to shared personal experiences is easier and more meaningful when men try to relate what they reported to what they have read in feminist writings. Consequently it is important for an anti-sexist men's C-R group to simultaneously involve itself in the study of feminist theory.

The final portion of the meeting should be devoted to criticism and self-criticism, a process in which members attempt to point out the sexism in their own and others' statements. This is not a time for hostile remarks or advice giving. Criticisms are to be accepted and digested, and not responded to defensively.

After several months of meeting in this fashion, most groups begin to search for a larger purpose. Their activity may take the form of political action against sexism, formal study of feminist literature, the seeding of new C-R groups, reaching out to women's or gay groups in an attempt to meet and work together, or other specific forms of anti-sexist practice. Usually one or more of these activities begin to occur in addition to an on-going C-R group experience. Time restrictions are such that for some people, the anti-sexist political activity replaces the C-R group meeting altogether. The friendships and close ties that develop as a result of participation in an anti-sexist men's C-R group often are both profound and long-lasting. The personal insights that are gained are invaluable. The politicized views of sex-role stereotyping are enlightening, and the various actions in support of women's liberation which are the result can hasten the revolution which feminists have initiated.