

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.

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Ten Essential Men's C-R Topics:

- Childhood training for sex-roles
- Marriage, monogamy, jealousy
- Work and housework
- Fathers and sons
- Rape
- Homosexuality, heterosexual, 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 cooperation, of treating women in a sexist manner, of channeling a movement's energy into male directions, and of making male issues the

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priorities. A few examples demonstrate this cooption process. The New Left political movement has always argued in loud and large terms about how we must fight the oppression of people throughout the world. But this same New Left was very late to recognize women's oppression. Then it developed an empty rhetoric about supporting women's liberation, but whenever priorities were set, women's issues always took last place. The New Left is only interested in the welfare of certain oppressed people. Those people are the ones who fit the traditional Marxian analysis: (male) workers, (male) third-world people, and (male) people of color in North America. The struggle of women to gain human status has never been taken seriously by people in the New Left. We have a situation in which energies are devoted to freeing oppressed males.

Not only did the New Left not work for the political benefit of women, its "Macho Marx" male consciousness perpetuated and reinforced the worst of patriarchal role division. Male chauvinism was the New Left's "little red book;" the movement was completely authoritarian and male dominated. Men did the important work while women were stuck doing the domestic and office shit-work. The male radical "leaders" became like rock stars with their following of "groupies" to sexually nurture them after a hard day fighting imperialism.

The Gay Liberation Front is another example of a political struggle where men have co-opted the Movement away from women. In the beginning, the Gay Liberation Front was a movement of both male and female homosexuals, but after a while it was clear to lesbians that they could no longer work politically with gay males. The gay men channeled their energies and priorities into male directions and took political stances that were degrading to women (supporting pornography, sadism/masochism, and refusing to deal with butch/femme role division). Gay males were sexist toward the women and ran the movement in an authoritarian manner. The male consciousness of the gay males, in the same manner as in the New Left, prevented lesbians from being taken seriously in their own right as full human beings.

The straight world has its examples also. In the 1972 Democratic National Convention, when the crunch came, George McGovern sold women's issues down the river. Another example is that of the American Civil Liberties Union and the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography which, under the guise of supporting freedom of speech and press, have been the foremost champions of the legalization of pornography and prostitution. Pornography and prostitution oppress women, establish anti-female models of sexuality, and further male

domination and misogyny. Male politicians and political parties have always sold "their" women supporters short because of "political reality."

The second important reason for men to work together is our need to directly confront male violence and misogyny. We can no longer take the easy way out, by relating to women and being nurtured by them and draining them emotionally, but must face directly the violence and hatred toward women which is inside ourselves. We must confront our misogyny as fundamental to our consciousness, in order to fully understand ourselves and to really understand the fears that we force women to live with every day.

The third reason is that we have similar experiences, consciousness, perceptions, and world views to share with each other. We have all been socialized in masculine roles. Together we can best explore the depth of our male consciousness—two heads are better than one. We also need each other to learn new ways of relating to people as full human beings: emotionally and caringly, without competition, aggression and power-tripping, in open, vulnerable, equal and supportive relationships. We know our experience best, and we can no longer pretend to help others with "their" oppression (especially women) because we are the ones who need the help; we are the ones who are the enemy; we are the ones who oppress and objectify women; and we are the incomplete, crippled human beings.

I believe there should be three fundamental principles as a foundation for men's consciousness-raising groups. Before any man joins a group, he should agree to these essential propositions. First, the full acceptance of radical feminism in theory and practice. By this I mean that we must agree that patriarchy is the prime contradiction from which all other models of oppression come—capitalism, imperialism, slavery, racism, etc. The role division that our society forces upon males and females through socialization must be actively struggled against (theory put into practice). In addition, we must see male consciousness and its concrete expressions as the main opponents of full humanism in the world, and we must realize the privilege we enjoy as a class/caste over women. We must also recognize that although both males and females suffer under patriarchal rule, our suffering is not the same, and in fact is qualitatively less than that of women. The emphyseas, self-loss, powerlessness, and violations that women endure are far more insidious than our masculine role suffering. Even as incomplete, unalike human beings, we enjoy privilege and power: the world, God, and culture are all made in our own image.

The second principle is the acceptance of emotionality as a valid and necessary part of the new man we are trying to create. We must appreciate the limitations of logical-intellectual-rational discussion, and concentrate our energy on discovering and exploring our emotional potential.

The third principle is that we as men can never speak for women. Anti-sexist men cannot co-opt or take control of the Feminist Movement. We must realize our debt to feminism and that, for most of us, our main motivation for dealing with sexism comes from women who have forced us to, and that feminism has already provided the theory, structure, and models for us. Presently, women in the feminist movement are so far beyond men in terms of full human consciousness that we cannot bring them down to our level but must instead attempt to raise ourselves to theirs.

My experience in men's consciousness-raising groups has taught me to be aware of four dangers. The first danger is that the men's group may be used to collude against women. Since more often than not we in a men's group have common women friends, it is important that we not team up in our groups against these women. Most of us join our first consciousness-raising group because women with whom we are involved will no longer accept our sexism. In order to have fulfilling relationships and become whole, we have to deal seriously with our maleness. In entering these groups, we are coming from a place of feeling very hurt, afraid, and confused, and so we look for allies to support us emotionally. There is a tendency for us to betray women to gain sympathy and reassurance and to rebuild our deflated egos. There is also a tendency to put our own position in the best light (especially in the beginning of the group, before trust is really established) without realizing the consequences of these untruths to our female partners. There is also a tendency to play ego games with women friends: "See, I'm not as bad as John . . . See, Bill agrees with me . . . Ralph tells me that Carole does this sexually with him . . ."

The experience of the "Brother" collective in Berkeley, California, illustrates a further aspect of colluding against women. John, a bisexual, was married to Scottie for eight years and they had two children. Their relationship was monogamous until the men's group, when John "fell in love" with Bill, a gay member of the group. The following is Bill's revealing perception of Scottie's feelings:

After that (John and Bill becoming lovers) Scottie became lovers with another man. I feel that to some extent Scottie felt pressured to agree to what John wanted to do this past year—open up their marriage to other

lovers, and specifically male lovers for himself . . . Yet Scottie has felt through this year less loved by John than ever before. She saw that John's love for me and other men was more emotional, more feeling—there seemed to be more loving strokes for these men than for herself. Scottie was hurt and oppressed by this inequity . . . But because she has felt less loved and because she is not bisexual, I have found myself editing my gayness for her so it would be less threatening. John has also done some editing of his gayness though less than I. I feel deceitful both to myself and to Scottie and feel this is an oppressive element for each of us in the relationship. John, Scottie and their two children are planning to leave this area. It has been projected by John and by myself that I would join them after the summer. I have talked to Scottie about this a number of times. She is being put in a very difficult position. If she says she doesn't want me to join them, she risks that John will be unhappy and resentful. If she gives her approval, she continues for herself an uncomfortable experiment from which she'd like some distance. I feel that as a man and as her partner's lover, I am unavoidably oppressive to her in this situation. I continue to be lovers with John because that is what I want and he wants and what Scottie has agreed to (emphasis mine).

Joel, another gay member of the group, seemed to recognize the obvious oppression of Scottie in the John-Bill-Scottie triangle. Yet he and the other members of the men's group did nothing to censor and stop the sexism of John and Bill. The group gave tacit approval for the continuation of men fucking over women by tolerating their relationship and being uncritical. If "Brother" were really serious about fighting sexism, it would not have been a party to such destructive sexist consciousness and behavior. Women, being typically less powerful and more vulnerable in any relationship with a man, lose (both economically and emotionally) when men bond together in their own interest. John wins everything; he holds his relationship with Bill over Scottie's head (forcing her to take another "sexual" lover). John is even oppressive to gay males (especially Bill) by not taking them seriously in an equal emotional relationship while "he gets his rocks off in a new way." It is clear that John is continuing to force Scottie into compromises and situations she does not freely choose in order for her and the two children to survive. Men's groups should attempt to prevent the recurrence of this unfortunate "Brother" experience.

The second danger we have to watch for in these groups is the misdirection of anger toward the women who have forced us to confront our sexism. Our past experience with anger has been to turn it into violence. Now, as men we are at a loss to find a new, sane method of dealing with our hostility. In opening up to our emotionality as never before, we do not quite know what to do with our anger,

especially since women are no longer available to maintain our fragile egos. Groups have to be careful to direct anger towards its real source, the patriarchal society and masculinist socialization which forces every man (including "sensitive, gentle us") to have a male supremacist consciousness. Our anger is inside us. We must take responsibility for it and struggle to change. This anger cannot be smoothed over or directed towards women. It is a fundamental core of our psyche, and we have to face it squarely to become fully human.

The third danger is that we may not continue to struggle with our individual sexism. After the group meets for some period of time, we begin to develop a method of nurturing each other and having closer ties emotionally. As we become more sensitive and are more aware of our vulnerability, there is a tendency to backslide away from fighting our sexism because we do not want to hurt those we care a lot about. It is important to learn nurturing and caring, but these cannot be unconditional and unconditional. Unconditional caring is a trap for ourselves and the men we care about. The absence of criticism is not only dishonest, it allows us to give up the struggle against sexism when it becomes particularly painful. We develop a more hidden, sophisticated system of sexism to hide our male privileges behind false illusions.

The fourth danger is that our consciousness-raising may exist exclusively inside the group. The analysis and new consciousness that we learn in our groups must lead to political practice in order to destroy patriarchal authority, sexism, and role division. We must change the way we relate with our friends—both males and females—and we must criticize our friends' sexism. We must be willing to drop our sexist friends if the contradiction is too great. This challenge must take place at our jobs and in our social life. We must also publicly bring to the attention, especially of males, that sexism is prevalent in our society. Facing the men in the streets who are violating women (whistling, derogatory remarks, sexual objectification) is a difficult but necessary task. We cannot let the threat of male violence scare us away from our responsibility to combat sexism in other men. We need collective support because as sensitive individuals it is hard to deal with male violence alone. We must also rechannel our priorities in terms of political action into those issues which are seen by macho male consciousness as "just women's issues:" childcare, contraception, abortion, rape laws, the Equal Rights Amendment, etc. These are not women's issues or side issues, but issues that go to the very core of role division in patriarchal society. If we are really serious about our priorities, we must deal with political issues that challenge patriarchal

rule.

For the best understanding of consciousness-raising groups, see Kathie Sarahild's "Program for Feminist Consciousness-Raising" in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* and "Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon" in *Feminist Revolution*.

Men Doing Childcare for Feminists

Denys Howard

Sometime in March last year I read an article in the *Scribe* about a group of men who did childcare for women's groups. I called a man I didn't know, Jamie Bewson, and told him that I would be interested in helping out. He invited me to a childcare potluck, a coming-together of other men who called themselves anti-sexist and wanted to be with little people.

I had been a "baby-sitter" for groups while I was in college. For two winters I had gone up to Menucha and spent time with five or ten little people while their parents took part in a church retreat. I had participated in Christian church school for years, sometimes as a "teacher" for very young children. But that potluck was my first exposure to other big people who tried to treat children as their equals, who sought to affirm each child's integrity and to respect their individual growth and rights.

Because I was not very active in other things, I was able to do childcare fairly frequently last spring. I remember one weekend I spent with a three-year-old named Pan, while his mother was doing a theater workshop. Pan came to my apartment and spent the day there. We went for walks to the store and over to Laurelhurst Park. I didn't have a whole lot of "toys" for him to play with and I had worried about that. But Pan taught me that anything can be an object of interest for a little person, and that in fact I had a whole houseful of toys. I really got to know him—talking to him, listening to his language, changing his diapers, sharing our food.

After I had been doing occasional childcare for about four