Day in, day out; What makes a man a man?

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Day In, Day Out
What Makes a Man a Man?

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Acknowledgement

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What makes a man a man? At first glance, the topic of masculinity and the question "what makes a man a man," might seem to be an ocean too big to navigate. Consequently I have narrowed my research and subsequent photography on the topic into a channel that would be more easily explored. My question, "what makes a man a man," examines the stereotypical notions of manhood and masculinity as it pertains to the family. I am not necessarily looking at masculinity from the standpoint of the entire family, but rather from the male's viewpoint.

"Day In, Day Out  What Makes a Man a Man?" is intended to question how society and more specifically the family has been trained or influenced into believing what makes a man a man. It is also meant to challenge why men have to look, act and be a certain way to assume a stereotypical role that our culture projects onto being masculine. What will be looked at specifically is how I, as a man, learned what it was to be a man from my family, peers and society. But not to stop there. I will also then stand back to question my knowledge of masculinity, and challenge it in a way that pokes fun at the stereotypical notions of manhood as I, and a vast amount of other men over the years, have been trained to believe.
Introduction

The topic of masculine identity as opposed to issues of femininity is something that is fairly new in critical studies, so it came as no surprise that when I decided to explore the topic of, what makes a man a man, through photographs, that my friends and family found it a little hard to believe.

The narrative of masculinity is both a personal and a public story. My thesis explores masculinity and its' personal and public intersection within the context of the family. Through a re-invented family album, I set the stage to examine the daily life of a man. Like a movie plot, the story plays with stereotypical notions of masculinity and opens to ask questions about the roles men play.

My photographic narrative serves as a surreal reminder that photography itself plays a role in determining how we view masculinity. In my book of photographs, I present a day in the life of a man whose sense of self and masculine identity is tied to his family and job. The role he plays out as a sensitive caring father is set against the influences of a society that is filled with conventional ideas of man as the hunter-gatherer and provider.

How do men feel about societies notions of masculinity and in whose interest does it serve?
I grew up in a family comprised of a father who worked and provided the income for the family and a mother who was a homemaker and took care of my brother and me. I lived pretty much the same kind of life any boy in rural America lived. I played stick-ball in the alley with my older brother and his friends and by the time I was seven, was playing some kind of sport every summer. But aside from participating in the same old childhood activities, I grew up by helping my parents, mostly my father, build a house. I was introduced to power tools that had more power than I did by the time I was twelve years old. For a teenager, working on your parents house during the summer was never a pleasant thought. My dad, on the other hand, thought that I should know how to build and repair things if I was going to grow up to be a man, because that was what real men did, build and fix things. My father and older brother also hunted and when I became old enough to hunt, I was forced into going hunting with the guys. I hated hunting because I thought that it was boring and pointless. I think that my dad thought that taking me hunting would help me to associate more with men and in turn, help me to become one.

Aside from working and hunting with my dad, I was also heavily influenced by sports. My role models growing up were athletes, namely in part because I grew up in a family that loved sports. Football and car races were the two biggest forms of sports that my dad loved, so I ended up watching a lot of the two and became pretty well versed in the lingo of these respective activities. My brother was a standout baseball player and was even a success in
football until a knee injury sidelined him in high school. By the time I was 15, I had taken up tennis and golf, two sports that were considered to be "wimpy" and not really a sport since there wasn't any physical contact or danger involved. I never really gave it much thought that I was being made fun of because I didn't play a real man's sport, like football. In school, I was almost always the last one chosen for pick-up team games because of my thin build. It didn't matter that I was good at sports, I was judged on my physical appearance, "he can't be good, he's not big enough," was what I always heard. As Psychologist Anthony Quaglieri notes, "men are trained by the world to see themselves as not enough." (The Male Body, p. 95) Being small physically, has at different times in my life been something that has bothered me, but was never really that important to me. My real interest was in my creativeness, namely art and, more specifically, photography.

Life in a small rural town in South-Western Pennsylvania meant that my high-school was governed or rather ruled by sports, namely football, since the region had produced so many stand-out professional football stars like Joe Namath, Joe Montana and Dan Marino. Since I was never big enough to play football, I soon realized that the only way to get any recognition was to really focus on my artwork. By the time that I reached college I was getting more involved in photography. Suddenly I was considered interesting because I was a photographer. At the same time though, I was still looked at as being less of a "real-man" because I didn't drive a cool car, didn't work out and didn't have any kind of relationship with a girl. As Anthony Rotundo states in American Manhood, "strength, appearance and athletic skill matter more now than in previous centuries." (American Manhood, p. 6) People didn't seem to care when I told them that I was devoted more to my career as a photographer than I
was to looking more macho and acting like a stereotypical man.

It wasn't until I had graduated from college that I really started to get angry at the fact that I was still being ridiculed for not wanting to buy into conventional stereotypes of being a man. As Mel Feit, executive director of the New York-based National Center for Men states, "men are not only victimized, many are hurting." "There is a sense among a lot of men that society really does judge them not on who they are, but what they accomplish and what they have achieved." (A Man's World, p.32-33) I didn't want people to judge me anymore on a stereotypical image of man, but who I was as a person. So I became more and more frustrated because I felt I had no real outlet to voice my opinions or vent my anger. My frustration soon led to mood swings and a darker, moodier look to my photography because I was angry at the way society had told me I should act to be more of a man. Alvin Baraff, founder of MenCenter in Washington D.C., notes, "life for men looks good on the outside, but men are not walking around that happy because they are being constantly criticized and the result is anger and confusion."(A Man's World, p. 37) Society also tells us as men that we can't be sensitive, we have to be tough as nails and not wear our emotions on our sleeves and I just didn't want to accept that anymore.
Chapter II
The Journey Into Masculinity

It wasn't until 1999 when I began graduate school that I was inspired to start looking at issues of masculinity. What inspired me the most was a movie that had opened in theaters in October of that year entitled "Fight Club." The line from the movie that influenced me the most was when Brad Pitt's character states, "You are not your job, you're not how much money you have in the bank, you're not the car you drive, you're not the contents of your wallet, you're not the clothes you wear." (Fight Club '99) That statement made me realize that masculinity isn't something that you obtain through a purchase or what you do for a living.

Stephen Wicks adds in his book Warriors and Wildmen that, "a man's job easily becomes his whole identity and existence." (Warriors and Wildmen, p. 12) At the same time, I was realizing that photography wasn't who I was as a person but rather, it was just what I did. So with the line from Fight Club, I found myself beginning to question what really makes men, men. Underneath it's title theme of fighting was a movie that dealt with many issues of masculinity. I connected with the movie because it was saying to me, "now you have permission to voice your opinions on masculinity without being made fun of or ridiculed."

As Dr. Loren E. Pedersen explains, "men might feel more comfortable communicating in their preferred style if there were not rigid social sanctions against men behaving in ways described as feminine." (Sixteen Men, p. 47-48) For me, Fight Club tore down those rigid social sanctions of communicating my feelings about masculinity. What the premise of the movie
dealt with, was the main character's frustration of every day life as a man and what society wants the common man to be like. Whereas the movie's solution to questioning manhood dealt with fighting back with anger and violence, I found that poking fun of, or a satirical approach toward questioning masculinity would better suit me since I don't naturally possess a mean disposition.

In my second quarter, or during the winter of my first year of graduate studies, I began to do artwork that would mark the beginnings of my interest in masculinity issues. As I look back now, I can see that before I could dive head first into the topic of masculinity, I had to discover how I was going to approach the topic. My first forays into the topic were weary at best. Looking back, I tried a sensitive, emotional approach that dealt with my relationship with my brother while we were growing up. For me, it laid the foundation for exploring masculinity because it allowed me to answer more questions about myself. The picture story that I had assembled through photographing my brother allowed me to see that the questions I had about masculinity weren't about the disintegrating friendship between my brother and me, but was more about myself.

After spring break, I struggled to really see where the next path down the topic of masculinity would take me. After a couple of weeks I was able to regroup, in a sense, and decided that the best thing to do was an in-depth study of myself through self portraits. At the same time, I was also using found images and applying text to them, which dealt with memory and male identity within my family. This was a sidebar project that would ultimately lead to my bigger exploration into the topic of masculinity that I will get back to later.
In the beginning, the self portraits were somewhat of a struggle. I was getting no where with them. I found that shooting many roles of film of what my daily life consisted of wasn't really showing me anything. I decided that I would focus more on my face because it acted as a road map of my feelings. For me, the process of photographing just my face was an awakening into a personality and emotion that I had never seen in any photograph of myself. It revealed an intensity and almost anger that I knew existed in me but never thought, would ever surface. By turning the camera on myself, I was able to answer a lot of questions about me as a person. Doing that allowed me to move on to the topic of masculinity on a much larger scale.

This is where using found images from the media and applying text to these images comes into play. At the time, I was taking a class called "beyond the family album," which dealt with exploring new ideas of how the family album can be re-invented and explored. After I had answered the questions about myself, I moved onto questioning society as a whole but in the context of the family. The text that was applied to the found images were stories about my childhood and growing up male within a family. What made this work successful, was that the images that I had selected was related to the text that I had written and applied to them. I liked how the work had developed and was anxious to see where it would go next.

The next stage of the work came during the fall quarter of my second year of graduate studies. My original plan was to continue to print my stories onto pictures but at the same time, I felt that the work needed to go a step beyond where it was at. As I began searching for photographs that related to the stories that I had been writing, I began to see that the text could be placed on objects in their three-dimensional form instead of a photograph. By doing
this, the stories began to take on a whole new life. At the same time, I saw what the work was embodying and began asking more questions about masculinity, rather than it just being about male identity in a family. After I began working on my thesis, I found that this stage of the work was becoming stagnant. I really didn’t feel as if the work could question anything else on a grander scale about masculinity. The stories about my life growing up weren’t reaching out far enough into the mainstream. I wanted to get away from the works’ association with my family and have it question more of the issues of “what makes a man a man.” Because of this, I realized that I would have to go back to the drawing board if something bigger was going to materialize. As many artists know, going back to the drawing board can be very frustrating. Each new idea that I tried working through never seemed to have enough strength to sustain itself over the long haul. The research that I was doing was only backing and influencing the questions that I already formed about masculinity, but the idea for something visual still wasn’t materializing.
Chapter III
The Start of Something New

It wasn’t until the spring of my second year of graduate studies that I was able to come up with an idea that would allow me to express my views about masculinity and “what makes a man a man.” I found myself returning to photographing which excited me since I hadn’t really picked up a camera in almost seven months. The idea or rather the subject matter that I had chosen was once again my older brother, whom I had photographed over a year earlier. The previous year, when I had photographed him, I asked him to wear all of his archery/hunting gear, and photographed him from dramatic angles to tell a story. This time I would ask him to again get into his element of archery hunting. Instead of wearing his hunting outfit, which consisted of camouflage and boots, as he had done the first time, I told him that he was going to be wearing a business suit and wing tip shoes and go out hunting. His initial reaction was laughter and a bit of confusion, but he agreed. The premise of this picture story was to document the everyday man waking up in the morning and getting ready to go to work, then photographing him at his workplace. The twist of the story would occur when we would see this business man in a suit hunting with a bow and arrow. After the first photography session with my brother, the photographs did what I wanted them to. They told the story of a man waking up and getting ready to go off to the office only to venture out into the wilderness to hunt and provide for his family.

After showing and discussing the work with my thesis committee, each agreed that the story could be better told through the form of a book. The reason why I chose to make a
book as opposed to a short film was because I wanted my story to have the pacing of a re-invented family album. A short film would move too quickly and not allow the viewer to really examine the images separately, but a book or album would allow the viewer to do this. I realized if I was going to make a book of these images, I would have to build on the quantity of photographs within the story, and add more details. This wasn’t particularly a problem because I had planned on going back to reshoot some of the images and incorporate some new photographs into the story. I also wanted to add some subtle twists into the story that would contradict some of the stereotypical notions of masculinity.
Chapter IV

"Day In, Day Out What Makes a Man a Man?"

I knew that by incorporating subtle twists into the story of images, I could question more issues that dealt with masculinity. In the book, the picture story is broken down into three chapters, "Wake-Up and Breakfast," "The Preparation," and the final chapter "The Hunt."

"Wake-Up and Breakfast"

Since the sport of archery hunting and office work both begin early in the morning, I decided that the first image of the story should show an alarm clock and the significantly early time that the business-man and hunter must wake up in order to prepare for his day of work. The first twist appears on the very next page when we see the man walking down a hallway to the kitchen. The twist is that an image of what looks like a menacing animal is bleeding through the side walls of the hallway. This component was added to the image because I wanted to create an almost "dreamlike" aura that takes us into the mind of this man. We the viewer are not very sure what this might mean at this early point of the book, but it leaves us wondering what might come next.

Later, we see the man turning on the morning news and then heading off to wake up his baby. Traditionally the mother takes care of waking up and feeding the baby in the morning. The reason for this photograph was that I have constantly heard men talk in public and on television about how the baby is the woman's responsibility. I wanted to show that the man
could also take care of the baby and that this is something that should no longer be considered a stereotypical woman's role. This is where the next twist in the story occurs because these images are overlaid on a plaque with a nameplate stating "First Buck." The plaque and the plate title are a play on the idea of this man's son being his first "buck," which is also a male deer. Combining these images plays on conventional notions of the family album with a twist.

Next we see the man shaving. I included this photograph to show him in the act of this traditional male past-time. Shaving has always been considered something that makes men more masculine, and it's traditionally one of the passages that leads a boy into the early stages of manhood. The next sequence of photograph's show's the man standing in his bedroom wearing a large towel around his waist, having showered, choosing which suit he is going to wear to the office. We see the man choosing which neck tie would best match his suit. We also see him ironing his shirt, tying the perfect neck tie knot and making sure that his wingtip shoes have the perfect shine to them.

I included these photographs to allow the viewer to see that this man was very particular about the way he looks. The notion of the real rugged man not caring about what he looks like has always been something that has puzzled me. Why can't guys care what they look like?

Later we see the man sitting down to a breakfast of donuts, coffee and orange juice. My decision to have the donuts in the photograph was to show that the modern man no longer has time to sit down and eat a healthy breakfast before he goes to work. The man eating donuts for breakfast also represents the fast paced world in which the career minded man
lives in. The orange juice symbolizes his desire to still want to be healthy but in a lazy way; the modern day man is too busy to really worry about what he eats.

In the same sequence, we see that he is also interested in the stock market since he’s reading the Wall Street Journal. By including this photograph, I wanted to allow the viewer to think that this man might possibly be a stock broker or an investment advisor, something that has to do with investing or big business.

Once the man has finished his final preparation in the bathroom, he gives both his wife and child a kiss goodbye, puts on his suit coat and walks out the door to work. The photographs of the wife and baby show that this is a family man. They also show that he is the bread-winner or hunter-gatherer and that the wife is playing the traditional role of the caregiver and nurturer. These two stereotypes were something that I wanted to include from the beginning because they were part of the foundation of this entire story. I wanted to show that the man is still assuming his traditional stereotypical role of the money-maker, he provides for his family and his wife is the nurturer, she takes care of the child and house. These photographs also take on another meaning because they have been overlaid on a full page image of a roaring grizzly bear. Combining these images transcends documentary realism by once again using digital photography techniques and by bringing us back to the “dreamlike” imagery that was used earlier in the book. Another aspect of these combined images is that the man could be facing a bad day of work or actually be facing the grizzly bear in the background. Either way, it still leaves the audience guessing.

This also brings us to the close of the first chapter and leads us into the next chapter, titled “The Preparation,” to leave the audience guessing as to what he is preparing for.
"The Preparation"

In the first photograph of the second chapter, we see that the man has arrived at a large building that doesn't look anything like an office. The building is actually a large garage. At this point of the story, you would have to be wondering what this man does for a living if he's going to a large garage rather than an office. Some of the questions might be, is he a mechanic and if he is why would he be wearing a suit? A small twist in the story occurs in the next photograph when he opens this large flat case sitting on top of a work bench. Inside the case is an elaborate looking archery bow. I still wanted to keep the identity of what this man does for a living ambiguous, at this point, so that the viewer can form his or her own idea as to what he does. In the following photographs, we see him secure his bow to the front of a four-wheel all terrain vehicle (ATV) and then prepare his equipment for whatever it is that he does. In one photograph he is attaching razorblade like tips to his arrows and is sharpening a knife in another. I still wanted the audience to remain unaware as to what he's preparing to do.

This chapter of the book also breaks away from the conventional ideas of a family album and works more like a film with the content and pacing of photographs. Doing this allows the audience to think that this man might be dreaming and that he's really going to the office. So it's hard to tell if what happens next is reality or fantasy. At this point of the book the third and final chapter titled "The Hunt," is ready to begin. It may already be evident to some viewers why this man is hunting and to those who are still unsure the answers will come later.
"The Hunt"

The first page of the final chapter opens with two photographs of the man on his ATV driving out of his garage directly at the viewer. But the twist here is that these images have been overlaid onto a full page image of a menacing grizzly bear's head. With the title at the top of the page being "The Hunt," the question can be asked, who is the hunter and the hunted? It also plunges the viewer deeper into the possible fantasy that might or might not be occurring.

The obvious question that viewers might ask themselves at this point of the story is, why would this guy be so worried about what he looks like? Why would he be clean shaven and why would he be wearing a suit if he was a hunter? This is exactly what I want my audience to be wondering because this is where the major twists in the story begins to occur.

In the following photographs, we see the man get off of the ATV and begin hunting, leaving one location unsuccessfully and driving off to another location where he might have better success of finding an animal in order to get a "clean shot." In several of the images in this chapter, images of animals continue to bleed through the main images much like earlier in the book. This and another digital photography technique of repeating images were used to get the viewer further into the mind of the hunter and further into a fantasy.

In the final photograph, we see and arrow sticking in a tree and the man with an expression of disappointment. The symbolism here is that the hunt will continue "Day In, Day Out" for this man, much like man's masculine identity. To quote Mel Feit again, "men feel that society really does judge them not on who they are, but what they accomplish and
what they have achieved." (A Man's World, p. 32-33) I wanted to show that this man should be looked at who he is and not whether he was victorious in the end. He is still successful and has accomplished many things and should be viewed not as failure but as a survivor because of his determination to continue "Day In, Day Out."

My main point of this book was to ask the question, "what makes a man a man," on several different levels. Why would a man go hunting in a suit? Why would a man be so worried about how he looks like if he is going out to hunt an animal?

These are two obvious questions that arise from the work. Upon further examination of the images individually and as a whole, you can find that there are several different layers of masculinity involved throughout the entire story. This leads me to the next chapter which will explain the different layers of the story and give more insight as to how the photographs go against traditional stereotypes of masculinity.
Chapter V

"Explanation of the Story"

My initial reaction when I came up with the premise for this story was laughter. I had tried the in-your-face method of expressing my views on masculinity, but always found myself not liking the results. So I decided to approach the topic with a touch of humor. Being able to laugh at masculinity seemed so much more natural for me because, at times, certain stereotypes involving masculinity can seem so ludicrous. The idea of having a business man getting ready to go off to the office but instead going out to hunt makes fun of masculinity in several ways. One way is that it makes fun of the stereotype of the man being the hunter-gatherer or provider. Carol Tavris points out in The Mismeasure of Woman that when she was growing up, "men were task-oriented and women were person-oriented, which meant that men were best suited for work and women were best suited for motherhood." (The Mismeasure of Woman, p. 247) The stereotype of men being the worker and provider and the women being the caregiver has all but vanished but I wanted to show this point because it is so archaic, even though some people still follow this belief.

Tavris also points out that, "male-bonding originated in prehistoric male hunting groups and lingers today in their modern equivalents, sports, politics, business and bars." (The Mismeasure of Woman, p. 247) With the photographs, I wanted to take the idea of masculinity that existed in prehistoric hunting and blend it together with it’s modern equivalent of business and the sport of hunting. Man no longer has to go out into the wilderness to hunt animals to provide food for his family, that’s why we have grocery stores.
So the question here is why does man still do this? It's a challenge, possibly? But how is hunting a defenseless animal a challenge when you are using a weapon that is very powerful?

Back when man had to hunt animals to provide food for the family he used a spear or set up traps, this was a challenge. Does hunting make a man more of a man because he is doing something that his barbarian male ancestors did? Or does hunting make a man more rugged because he is "one with nature" hunting an animal? Stephen Wicks states in his book Warriors and Wildmen that, "some men have found it very difficult to adjust to the decades of modification, and rely on other devices to demonstrate that they are men." (Warriors and Wildmen, p. 34) Maybe this is the reason why so many men venture out into the woods to hunt every fall. Hunting allows them to demonstrate that they are men. There is the whole notion of "you can't grill it, until you kill it," as former rock star and now world renown hunter Ted Nugent once said. (VH1 Behind the Music) But does the statement really apply in the modern times that we live in? Not hardly. I'm not bashing hunting in any way, in fact I used to be a hunter and I believe that archery hunting is an artform. But does hunting really make you more of a man?

Dr. Willard Gaylin points out in The Male Ego, "so much for man the warrior, what about man the provider?" "Work is no longer singularly masculine and most work is no longer a source of joy, work has been reduced to a necessary burden that is rarely a source of male pride." (The Male Ego, p. 6) I wanted to turn around the notion of man the provider not getting any joy out of his job. His job wouldn't be a necessary burden, it is something that he looks forward to doing. He would also be fulfilling the notion of his job making him masculine because he is a prehistoric hunter that provides food for his family.
Aside from the obvious storyline of the business-man hunter, I also point out several other stereotypical notions of masculinity. For instance, man being the father/procreator, man as the husband, man as the nurturer of his children, his attention to detail, tidiness and hygiene, his appearance, the food he eats and the male ritual of shaving.

I also wanted to show the notion of the man being a father and procreator by incorporating photographs of the man interacting with his child. This has always been something that has been a source of male pride especially if he is able to produce a son so that his family name will be carried on for another generation. But as Dr. Willard Gaylin states in The Male Ego, "man the procreator can no longer take comfort in having fulfilled his role by producing numerous offspring. Numerous offspring help no one these days, because of an overpopulated globe." (The Male Ego, p. 6) Aside from the notion of man being the procreator, I more importantly wanted to show that a man, and in this case the father can be the caregiver toward his children or at least try to. Growing up, I learned in several ways that women are the caregiver's toward the children in the family and that men did not do this because it threatened their manhood. Guys were not supposed to take care of children because for one, it wasn't manly, two, they didn't know how to care for a child, and three, they had bigger things to worry about, like their job. An example of this is stated in Joseph Pleck and Jack Sawyer's book Men and Masculinity, "man's drive toward getting ahead means we often find little time or energy for being with children." (Men and Masculinity, p. 53) Yes, a father may feel that his biggest contribution toward his family is to be a good provider even if it means sacrificing time with his children. But one may ask the question, what's the point of having children if you never spend any time with them? It's
a good question, because as I feel, having children is about influencing their lives and spending time with them as they grow up.

Most of us know the popular song “Cats In the Cradle,” by (Harry Chapin). In it is the story of a father who is too busy to spend time with his son growing up, and before the father realizes, his son has moved away and has his own family. When the father retires, he now has time to spend time with his son, but his son is too busy to spend time with his dad. It’s a sad song but for many men who are fathers, it is a song that hits very close to home. I wanted to show in my story that this father does want to have an influence in his child’s life, and also show caring toward his son. He wakes his baby up in the morning, feeds him and gives his child attention. I also wanted to show that this man appreciates having a wife and child and being a father. He not only takes pride in being a father, he takes pride in providing for his family. As Mariah Burton Nelson states in her book The Stronger Women Get, The More Men Love Football, “with marriage, a man is expected to stop seeing women as sexual conquests and start the real work, joy of loving one person.” (The Stronger Women Get, p. 105) I wanted to show that this man loves his family, both his wife and child even though the story isn’t all about being a husband and father. He is the quintessential father, he’s loving, caring and devoted to his family.

Another factor that I wanted to show about masculinity was how this particular man showed a great deal of attention to detail as it pertained to his appearance. While I was growing up, the media presented a “real man” as being a rugged, tough person that wore blue jeans and a t-shirt and a symbol of working class “chic.” We all know the popular image of the Marlboro Man in advertising. He was all man, John Wayne, James Dean and Gary
Cooper all rolled into one. I never really understood why a guy was considered soft or not a man's man if he cared about his appearance and the way he dressed. For me, putting on a suit made me feel more important, more distinguished. A rugged, tough guy would never think to wear a suit, and if he did, he wouldn't think that he looked good. As Susan Bordo points out in The Male Body, "if a man is self-confident, if he knows that he is attractive and beautifully dressed, then he's not a man anymore." (The Male Body, p. 195) I wanted to show that this man did care about his appearance by showing him choose a tie carefully, ironing his shirt, polishing his shoes, making sure that he is clean shaven, fixing his hair just right, brushing his teeth and using mouthwash. In stereotypical notions, he would be considered a male-pushover but remember, he's not a wimp that goes to the office, he hunts animals for a living. Another aspect included into the story was the contradicting sides of a man eating junkfood, in this case donuts, but then making sure that he has his healthy glass of orange juice for breakfast. A real man doesn't care if he is putting junkfood into his body, he just wants to satisfy his hunger. I wanted to put a humorous twist on this by showing that this man also wants to worry about his health by drinking something healthy.

This chapter discussed many of the intricate details of the picture story and how they have either challenged or enforced stereotypical notions of masculinity as they pertain to society, but not without a little bit of humor. In the next chapter, I will be looking at masculinity from a more general perspective as it pertains to the picture story and to my opinions on masculinity.
Chapter VI

About Masculinity

"How does one become a man?" (Constructing Masculinity, p. 127) It is a question that is perfectly asked by Anne Fausto-Sterling in Constructing Masculinity. It is also the question that I am asking in this thesis, just worded a little differently. As Jack O. Balswick, professor of sociology at the University of Georgia states, "in learning to be a man, the boy in American society comes to value indications of masculinity expressed largely through physical courage, toughness, competitiveness and aggressiveness." (Women and Men, p. 135) It's one possible answer to the question, but can a question so complex be answered so easily? Not really. To get back to Anne Fausto-Sterling, she mentions that, "in the current intellectual fashion, men are made, not born. We construct masculinity through social discourse." (Constructing Masculinity, p. 127) So if men are made, and not born, then what specifically makes a man a man? As Dr. Willard Gaylin states in The Male Ego, "A real man is strong, sexy, courageous, stoic, beneficent, modest and independent. He must have all the attributes of the long-lost roles of warrior, and the continuing role of procreator." (The Male Ego, p. 28) A similar, yet slightly different answer is given by Terry A. Kupers in The Politics of Manhood. "Traditionally, a real man is strong, brave, independent, relatively unemotional, unflinching, and properly distanced from the female perspective and from identification with women." (The Politics of Manhood, p. 223-224)

All of these statements may provide a good explanation of how one becomes a man, or what makes a man a man. That is where they stop though, they only provide us with an
answer and no real solution to the debate. A boy could work at developing good physical
strength, courage and other of the so-called manly attributes but is it as simple as filling in a
blank to the question?

I feel that there is no real answer to the question of what makes a man a man. Maybe it's
too complex to be answered easily. Sure you can answer it the way society wants you to, but
society has formed it's own opinions over the years as to how to answer the question. I
always thought that conforming to societies stereotypes of masculinity would just be easier
but it always left me feeling empty. I didn't want to live my life as nothing but an image of
a "real man," I wanted to feel more than that. In the next and final chapter, I will provide
some new answers and possible solutions as to what makes a man a man and what society
might be able to do in the future.
Chapter VII

The Afterword

So what are men supposed to do in order to challenge some of the stereotypical notions of masculinity? It's a question that in many respects, doesn't have a simple answer. As Stephen Wicks points out in Warriors and Wildmen, "masculinity depends entirely on an external definition." "Since being human means living from interiority, masculinity is an especially acute problem for men." (Warriors and Wildmen, p. 11) Antony Easthope offers a dismal solution in What a Man's Gotta Do, "men are themselves trapped in structures that fix and limit masculine identity." "They do what they have to do." (What a Man's Gotta Do, p. 7) Another depressing solution comes from George L. Mosse in The Image of Man, "men are supposed to conform to an ideal masculinity." (The Image of Man, p. 6) So what can men really do when there seems to be no hope for a solution. Buying into the same stereotypical notions and ideas is not an answer by any means.

Dr. Willard Gaylin states in The Male Ego, "The rush to quickie solutions is itself a dangerous masculine conceit." (The Male Ego, p. 11) So do men just sit back and wait for evolution to take care of the problem? Gaylin claims that, "What is necessary is a gradual and general blurring of gender roles, with the eventual emergence of a man and a woman still different but equally respectworthy." (The Male Ego, p. 11) I agree with Gaylin completely. If men and more importantly society can adopt a new masculine identity to live by, the world will be a better place to live in. Philip Patterson points out several stereotypes of men in advertising in Images that Injure, the sensitive new age guy, the domestic man, the superman,
the new masculinist, and the rugged individualist. *(Images That Injure, p. 94-95)* There needs to be a blending of these stereotypes so that men are no longer categorized into a single group. I believe that men can still be masculine and be sensitive at the same time. Men just have to learn how to let what’s inside of them come out instead of holding it all in. If the generation of men that are living now can make a change, then the next generation will adopt those changes more easily. I don’t want my children to grow up with the same stereotypes about masculinity that I did.

John Stoltenberg states in *Refusing To Be a Man* that, “What matters is the center inside of yourself, and how you live and how you treat people, and what you can contribute as you pass through life on this earth, and how honestly you love, and how carefully you make choices. Those are the things that really matter. Not whether you’re a real man. There’s no such thing.” *(Refusing To Be a Man, p. 29)* I agree with Stoltenberg completely. You can’t buy masculinity. It isn’t something that you can obtain. It isn’t something that you do for a living. Masculinity is who we become as men, however, the questions remain, how is masculinity constructed and in whose interest does it serve?

The journey into masculinity for me will probably never end. It’s something that I will talk to my children about. What I hope for is that the stereotypical notions of masculinity that have developed over the years begin to disintegrate. With an eventual disappearance of stereotypes, I know that society will benefit greatly. Men will be able to establish their own identity and not be afraid of expressing their true selves. Men that once were criticized for not measuring up to stereotypical standards will feel more comfortable with how they are. These are all big “what-if’s,” but anything is possible.
In closing, the photographs that I have presented in this thesis weren't meant to show my anger or distaste toward societies viewpoint on masculinity. They were made to question or unmask traditional notions which limit our understanding of masculinity. This thesis wasn't meant to have the viewer provide an answer to the question of "what makes a man a man?" It was meant to open up a space to further negotiate men's understanding of themselves and go beyond the conventional stereotypes that no longer have any real currency in contemporary life. The next time that you see an advertisement or movie or anything that stereotypes men or tries to tell men what they have to be like, ask yourself, is that what makes a man a man?
Bibliography


Wicks, Stephen *Warriors and Wildmen.* Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 1996. 11-12, 34.
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