

A Study on the Operating Mechanism of Masculinity from the Perspective of Patriarchy through the Theory of Misogyny

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Abstract. The proposal to prevent the feminization of young men has caused a great deal of controversy on social media. With endless and heated discussions about "masculinity", more and more people are beginning to reflect on the logic behind "masculinity" from a patriarchal perspective. However, at present, the research in the field of masculinity is rarely combined with feminist theory and rarely from the perspective of feminism. Therefore, this paper uses theoretical analysis methods through the theory of misogyny to deconstruct traditional masculinity, to analyze the operating mechanism of masculinity from the perspective of a patriarchal society, and to put forward suggestions on how to escape from the trap of masculinity. The study found that under the operation of masculinity norms, gender discrimination has had a reasonable foundation, the logic of misogyny has been strengthened, and the ruling order of patriarchal society has been further consolidated; the prevalence of masculinity in society has led to the extreme of advocating force and violence. Therefore, breaking the mechanism of masculinity requires individuals to have a clear awareness and profound understanding of the logic of misogyny.

Keywords: Misogyny; masculinity; gender discrimination; sexual subject.

1. Introduction

In early 2021, a member of the CPPCC National Committee put forward a proposal to prevent the feminization of male teenagers. In response to this proposal, the Ministry of Education said: "It should appropriately improve the teaching methods and forms of PE teachers and pay more attention to the cultivation of students' masculinity [1]." As soon as this proposal was published, it caused great controversy on the Internet, and the topics of "masculinity" and "sissy" sparked a heated discussion. More and more netizens joined this Internet discussion—deconstructing and reflecting on masculinity from the perspective of patriarchy. Chizuko Ueno wrote in "Misogyny": "The unity between people who recognize each other as men is established by excluding women and people who have not become men. A man's fear of "homosexuality" lurking in his group is the fear that he may be treated as the object of sex, that is, the loss of the status of being the subject of sex [2]." Therefore, to consolidate the dominant position of men in the patriarchal society, every male individual is disciplined by "masculinity" from birth—their thoughts and behaviors are tightly restricted by "masculinity". This concept permeates everything, echoing through their language, tarnishing their power structure, and troubling their every action and thought. Toxic masculinity is a chronic disease, and once they are infected, they carry it with them all the time [3]. In the process of discipline, men who do not meet the standards will be excluded and suppressed by male groups. They are either under pressure to compromise to this standard and meet this set of rules, or they can only bear psychological pressure and pain silently. The study of the formation logic behind traditional masculinity is helpful to see the background and causes of "masculinity" and to understand the influence of "masculinity" on individuals in the patriarchal society, to better deconstruct the "masculinity trap". So that each individual can have more courage and freedom to live as he really is, this paper uses theoretical analysis methods to analyze the operating mechanism of masculinity from the perspective of patriarchy through the feminist theory of "Misogyny".

The study of contemporary masculinity appeared in the second wave of the feminist trend of thoughts around the 1970s. Cornell, according to men's different identities and personality characteristics, divides "masculinities" into four types: dominance, subordination, collusion, and marginality. He believes that masculinity is a kind of construction in practice [4]. However, Cornell

mainly examines masculinity in the western capitalist society, and the masculinity of the Third World is placed in the marginal discourse of ethnic minorities [5]. Cornell's theory of "Dominant Masculinity" lays the foundation for the study of contemporary masculinity. Inspired by Cornell, McInnes, a British sociologist, looks at masculinity from the perspective of modernity and believes that masculinity is the last ideological defence of men and a way for modern people to imagine gender identity. In fact, masculinity, as an individual's wealth, traits, and identity characteristics, does not exist [6]. From the standpoint of the Strauss School, Mansfield of the United States strongly criticizes "gender-neutral society" and "feminism", believing that feminism has entered the whirlpool of "nihilism" and that manliness means to develop firm stand and the characteristics of virility [7]. Among the above theories, only Cornell's theory is used most, and the others are in the marginal position, which shows that the theoretical research on masculinity is little and the research angle is single. The above studies construct the basic types of masculinity and point out the essence of masculinity, but these discussions do not pay attention to the differences between different schools of feminism and do not combine with the background of a patriarchal society. In particular, the results from the perspective of patriarchy are regarded as incentives. Therefore, in the study of masculinity, this paper creatively introduces the feminist theory of "misogyny", deconstructs traditional masculinity from the perspective of "misogyny", and reflects on the logic behind masculinity.

2. The Feminist Theory—Misogyny

According to the Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women, "Misogyny is a systematic hatred of women culturally and ideologically, and it is expressed openly and covertly all over the world"[8]. That is to say, the expression of "misogyny" not only points to extreme violence, such as witch-hunting in the Middle Ages but also includes discourse structures that seem neutral but imply sexism, such as the construction of female images in traditional literature and the materialization of women in modern advertising [9].

Japanese sociologist Chizuko Ueno points out that misogyny is deeply rooted in the gender order of the gender binary system. In this order, no one, whether man or woman, can escape from misogyny. It pervades this order, like the gravity of an object, and makes people almost unaware of its existence. Moreover, misogyny is not symmetrical in men and women. It is shown as "female contempt" in men and "self-loathing" in women. This study found the female subject identity, which was often ignored before, that is, the behavior subject of "misogyny" refers not only to men but also to women. Under the disciplinary gaze of the traditional cultural order, women inevitably complete deep self-discipline. In a patriarchal society, the value of men is determined by the struggle for hegemony. Men like to let their strengths be recognized, evaluated, and appreciated by other men. The strong bond between men is male homosocial desire. To ensure the homogeneity of the men's group, that is, to ensure that each member is the subject of sex, they will conduct a rigorous search for homosexuality, which is called homophobia. Men's fear of homosexuality (that is, a man like a woman) lurking in their group is the fear of losing their subjective status in sex—they may be regarded as the object of sex [10].

Kate Manne, an American scholar, redefines misogyny with ethics. She argues that misogyny means to evaluate women by ethical norms, forming a coercive force similar to that of law enforcement departments, which is used to supervise and implement the governance norms and expectations of patriarchal order. Under the influence of misogyny, the gender economy, in which men get, and women provide, has been rationalized. Power, influence, money, identity, and other things are defaulted to be male resources, which can be used by men at any time. On the other hand, women should not compete with men for these resources, deprive men of these benefits, and damage their male pride. If such norms are broken, there will be common misogynistic attacks. The main function of the misogyny complex is the supervision of female behavior and the punishment of bad women, and the system of punishment and reward often works together. Women are rewarded when they comply with gender norms and expectations and participate in certain forms of virtue declaration common in the patriarchal system, such as participating in slut humiliation and blaming the victim;

conversely, when women's behavior does not conform to the norm, they will be punished. Similarly, men who defy the norms of masculinity will be supervised and punished. In the context of misogyny, men who dominate women often benefit from positive and forgiving attitudes and measures, which means male perpetrators are always forgiven, and female victims are always suspected [11].

Wang Xiaodan and other Taiwanese scholars believe that misogyny is the masculine control of interpersonal networks. In the misogyny network, people with misogyny, with a masculine attitude, take it for granted to define and decide on other people's affairs. They even use social discourse to rationalize their behavior, claiming that they are acting in the best interests of others. Therefore, many people are controlled by the protection and control of the intertwined love and disgust, and they are prone to self-confusion and even damage, so they are unable to make breakthroughs in thinking and action. Through cultural construction, such misogynistic networks have an impact on people's level of self-cognition and even infiltrate into the demarcation of the relationship between themselves and others. Interestingly, misogyny has not declined because of the rise of contemporary feminism but has become popular again because of the change in media, communication, and community patterns. To change the story of misogyny, we must loosen the binary structure of male/female, strong/weak, and masculine/feminine. The individual's choice of self-identity is not all or nothing, and individuals do not have to fully accept the whole set of masculine/feminine logic. To break the misogynistic logic of binary opposition, the individual must repeatedly bargain between submission and freedom when constructing the subject [12]. The commonality of these studies is that they no longer regard "misogyny" as a concept of "past tense" but think about the contemporary form of "misogyny" and its connection with social culture [13].

3. Masculinity from the Perspective of Patriarchy

3.1 The Physiological Expression of Masculinity

In the hierarchical order of the patriarchal society, the male as the sexual subject naturally stands on the side of the gaze, gazing at the women in the position of the sexual object in an all-round way, requiring all aspects of women to cater to this set of gaze standards. Therefore, loving making up and paying attention to appearance and image has gradually become the exclusive label of women. On the other hand, men in the dominant position of sex rationalize their indifference to appearance, informality, and even sloppiness as masculinity, which in turn encourages men to show their masculinity by not paying attention to their appearance. No man wants to be called a "sissy" because once he is called a "sissy", everything he has in common with the average man is ignored, and part of his "feminization" becomes his symbol [14]. In this environment where masculinity is well thought of, men who like to dress up like women are regarded as "oddballs" and "traitors" to men's group, and they are subjected to malice and attacks from the whole environment. Male idol stars such as Cai Xukun were bullied online because their style and stage performances did not meet society's expectations of masculinity. In September 2021, the Beijing Radio, Film and Television Bureau published an article on its official website, demanding that the aesthetic orientation of "sissy" should be put an end to from the aspects of actor selection, performance style, dress and makeup, and the propaganda and campaign of "sissy" should not be participated in. This requirement has caused much controversy on social media, and it is widely believed that this requirement is a blind worship of masculinity and reinforces inherent gender stereotypes. It may even encourage violence based on gender stereotypes. In this way, the encouragement of single masculinity and the suppression of multi-gender qualities make more individuals unable to choose the way of life they want and to be themselves truly and freely.

3.2 The Psychological Expression of Masculinity

People tend to understand patriarchy as a cultural and institutional form in which men dominate women while ignoring that men as individuals are also the oppressors of patriarchal culture [15]. In the evaluation system of the patriarchal society, a man with strong, brave, and responsible

characteristics is "masculine" and reliable. Such men are more likely to achieve secular success, have money, status, and resources, and are more likely to gain affection, a good reputation, and popularity. The delicate, sensitive, and other characteristics are engraved with the words "exclusive to women". Moreover, they are far lower than masculinity, such as bravery and responsibility in the order of social evaluation, and they are often regarded as unnecessary and affected. Therefore, boys have such a yardstick of masculinity hanging from their heads from birth, and their every move will be compared with this set of standards. Only words and behaviors that meet the standards will be allowed and encouraged. The performance that does not meet the standards will receive an evaluation—"like a girl", which is gradually internalized into their hearts and become their discipline. Therefore, for men, their emotional education is missing—"men do not cry easily", sad emotions must be put up with, and a sensitive and fragile appearance can not be allowed. Men should not feel pain, and even if they feel pain, they are forbidden to talk about pain with anyone else [16]. Gradually, this part of their emotion is castrated, and their perception of emotion becomes more and more weakened. In fact, many men known as "sissies" have femininity such as seriousness, patience, and delicacy. People with good qualities, both masculine and feminine, tend to have stronger social adaptability [17].

4. The Operating Mechanism behind Masculinity

In the gender order of the gender binary system, the subjectivity of men can be confirmed by objectifying women. When the subject of sex consistently regards women as the object of sex, they can confirm and unite with each other. In the case of men falling in love, men become the object of sex, that is, "feminized", and the loss of men's sexual subject status will arouse the greatest fear of the male group. Therefore, to maintain the stability of the subjectivity of the male group, it is necessary to exclude homosexuality—men like women. Male homosocial desire is maintained through homophobia and discrimination against women [18]. The most intuitive manifestation of contempt for women and gay men is the encouragement and appreciation of masculinity and the belittling and suppression of femininity. Brave, strong, and other excellent traits are classified as masculinity, and it seems that men are born with these traits, they are born with men. When a woman shows these traits, she will be rated as "like a man", just as a woman steals a quality that belongs exclusively to men. At the same time, these defined "masculinity" are constantly highly valued and respected in the social discourse system. On the other hand, gentleness, sensitivity, delicacy, and other qualities are always associated with women. Moreover, their role as an important component of the human emotional system is often ignored and even stigmatized as "troublesome", "artificial", and "need to be overcome". The "gender economy of morality and social labor" in the logic of misogyny means that men and women bear their social expectations, play differentiated social roles and abide by different social norms. Through coercive force, this set of morality strengthens the suppressed position of women and consolidates male hegemony [19]. The binary-opposite gender order of male/female continues to the binary-opposite structure of masculine/feminine, in which masculinity occupies the position of the absolute subject. In the patriarchal society, the "masculinity test" is carried out all the time, so the male group can quickly and effectively identify and rule out the individuals who destroy their sexual subject status. Only in this way can male groups ensure their homogeneity and thus achieve unity and stability.

Misogyny is the masculine control of the interpersonal network. People with misogyny take it for granted to define and interfere with others and use social discourse to rationalize their behavior, glorifying their behavior as thinking of others. The specific operation mode of misogyny logic is a "two-handed strategy"—distinguish "good woman" from "bad woman" and rule them distinctively, which means ingratiating good women and punishing bad women. In the process of operation, whether women are sad because of being punished or proud of being ingratiated, it consolidates the moral code and the patriarchal system of setting moral norms [20]. The object of this reward and punishment mechanism is not only women but men will also be involved under certain circumstances—when a man defies the norms of masculinity, he will be defined as a "traitor" to the

male group and punished by the mechanism. In this case, he will be censured and criticized by the whole patriarchal society—be bullied and attacked by other male members of the male group and be satirized and ridiculed by women until he can not bear these pressures to compromise with masculinity norms and force himself to show masculinity. If he is still firm in his choice, he can only bear such pressure and pain silently. Therefore, the patriarchal society expels the "disobedient" men through the operation of the reward and punishment mechanism under the logic of misogyny, forcing more men to obey the norms of masculinity and further consolidating the core position of masculinity.

5. The Negative Effects of Masculinity and Suggestions

In the patriarchal society where misogyny logic prevails, a "normal" man must be masculine, and a "normal" woman must be feminine. Both men and women are bound by gender-based norms, and their every move needs to be carried out within their gender framework. In such a rigid gender perspective, an individual is no longer himself/herself but more like a walking gender symbol. The differential evaluation of male and female temperament provides the basic conditions for gender discrimination. The existence and operation of masculinity continue to strengthen gender discrimination, making it natural and reasonable. In many cases, gender discrimination works by naturalizing gender differences and justifying the social framework under the logic of patriarchy. Gender discrimination, as an ideology, should be regarded as the "Dialectical Department" of the patriarchal order, playing the role of rationalizing and justifying patriarchal social relations [21]. Therefore, the prevalence of masculinity continues to consolidate the logic of misogyny, thus maintaining the ruling order of the patriarchal society.

The worship of masculinity is easy to go to the extremes of advocating force and violence. As society constantly emphasizes the value of masculinity and belittles the value of femininity, individuals who pursue masculinity pay more and more attention to the display of physical strength and disdain for empathy and sensitivity. They are also more accustomed to using force and violence to resolve contradictions and conflicts. People who pursue toxic masculinity are addicted to postures that show physical strength and are willing to participate in and commit violence. They show a lack of emotion to all emotional fluctuations, pain, or discomfort [22]. It can be seen that there are endless incidents of gender-based violence in society. The brutal violence of seven men against a woman caused public outrage during the beating incident in Tangshan in 2022 [23]. The violent, overbearing, and ferocious male image in the incident is impressive, and it also makes people begin to reflect on the impact of traditional masculinity narration on male individuals and society. In such a social environment, women's sense of insecurity is more and more intense—they are afraid of going out alone at night and exposing their state of living alone. Therefore, extreme masculinity is more likely to lead to social order chaos and social instability.

To stop the operating mechanism of masculinity, the most important thing is to be aware of the hidden misogyny logic and the patriarchal system. In the social context, we should give full play to the propaganda advantages of the media—deconstructing masculinity, justifying femininity, showing more encouragement and support for LGBTQ groups, and creating an inclusive social atmosphere. In terms of self-choice, we should be fully aware of the "masculinity trap", break the limitations of the gender framework, explore more self-possibilities, and live true to ourselves. Besides, we can have a more tolerant attitude and receptive perspective towards others' choices.

6. Conclusion

Through the research, this paper finds that under the logic of misogyny, men maintain their sexually dominant position by suppressing and discriminating against women and gay men. This is evidently reflected in the patriarchal society's appreciation and support for masculinity and the humiliation and contempt for femininity—masculinity is highly respected in the social discourse system, while femininity is constantly denigrated. The binary gender order of male/female derives

from the binary gender quality of masculinity/femininity. The logic of misogyny is still consolidating the gender order through the operation of a special reward and punishment mechanism. When a man throws off the shackles of masculinity norms, he will be punished by this mechanism. He will be surrounded by the whole patriarchal society and criticized and attacked from all sides. In this way, the status of masculinity norms can be consolidated and stabilized. Under the operation of masculinity norms, gender discrimination has been strengthened and strongly supported, and then the logic of misogyny has been cemented, and the ruling order of the patriarchal society has been maintained. In addition, the prevalence of masculinity can easily create a social environment advocating force and violence, causing chaos in social order and social instability. Therefore, to avoid the trap of masculinity requires awareness of the logic of misogyny and patriarchy—to deconstruct masculinity on a larger scale by using the communication and propaganda functions of the media; to cast off the shackles of gender order and live out own style freely.

The main contribution of this paper is to enrich the research field of masculinity, make up for the gap in the combination of masculinity research and feminist theory, and provide a reference from a feminist perspective for the study of masculinity. By using the theory of misogyny, this paper deconstructs the "trap of traditional masculinity" and puts forward suggestions for breaking the mechanism of masculinity, which is helpful for researchers to choose more feminist theories to study masculinity in the future. This study does not comprehensively apply the misogyny theory but only combines some of the research results of the misogyny theory, and there are more perspectives under the misogyny logic that can be used. With the continuous enrichment and development of misogyny theory in the future, future research on masculinity can deconstruct and analyze masculinity from more aspects.

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