

Book Review

Ukockis, G. (2019). *Misogyny: The new activism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

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Misogyny is about rage, disgust, and hatred, according to Dr. Ukockis. As I read this book, I was reminded of Carl Jung's idea of the shadow, the hidden part of the self. One might equate misogyny with society's shadow. *Misogyny: The New Activism* describes this phenomenon, bringing its characteristics into the light of consciousness. Dr. Ukockis not only describes aspects of the shadow, she also offers corrective 'action steps' at the end of each chapter. *Misogyny: The New Activism* allows the reader to understand how subtle and deeply ingrained misogyny has become in today's society.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the remainder of the book by comparing examples of misogyny from the not-so-distant past to the current cultural conversation. For example, the author tells the story of a woman who worked as a secretary in the early 1960s. She was invited to dinner by her married boss. He expected her to say yes; after all, he was the boss. When she said no, he turned the tables by saying "it's only dinner" (p. 5), implying that she thought the invitation was something more than that, which was very plausible! The woman said she felt very small, but her boss's behavior made a lasting impact. She remembered the situation in vivid detail for fifty years, so it obviously had an impact on her life.

Current media efforts have begun to turn around expectations and clichés that objectify women by turning the clichés into slogans that empower women. Examples such as 'a woman's place is in the house...and the senate', and 'the best man for the job . . . may be a woman,' expand the role of women beyond traditional stereotypes (Chapter 1).

Chapter 2 describes misogyny on three levels: gender violence, hate speech, and in mainstream communication. Gender violence is not only sexual assault, rape, and sex trafficking but, it is also the objectification of women and girls that can lead to gender violence. Mainstream idioms subtly put women in their 'place' as sex objects, by labeling assertiveness as bad behavior, and by reinforcing social conventions such as "don't be pushy; don't 'cop' an attitude, and pretend to like sex" which, in effect, supports the stereotype of women as passive and inadequate (p. 35).

Chapter 3, "A Closer Look at Misogyny," focuses on the mainstream ways of silencing women through disrespect. For example, Hillary Clinton experienced a plethora of insults, both personal and professional, during her time as first lady and as a presidential candidate.

Chapter 4 continues to look more closely at the ways the objectification of women is intensified when other identities, such as race, age or gender preference, are present. The intersectionality of biases increases the force of misogynistic attitudes of hatred and disgust. Chapter 4 concludes by suggesting that solidarity amongst small groups of people who support each other's causes can initiate significant changes in society.

One of the important changes that the feminist movement initiated was the exposure of toxic masculinity; toxic masculinity begins with hyper-masculinity that eventually becomes toxic. Holding hypermasculinity as the ideal to which a male must aim fosters objectification and dehumanization

of women. By minimizing women, the ideal man, at least theoretically, becomes better, bigger, and more capable of leadership and success in the eyes of society. The divide between women and men therefore widens, and the idea that men are good, and women are bad, is perpetuated.

The idea that man is good and woman is bad, can be seen in the myths around rape. Our political system minimizes the harm inflicted on the victim, thereby diminishing women by perpetuating the illusion of consent. No woman ever consents to be raped. One of the cases Dr. Ukockis relates is the trial of Brock Turner. He was convicted of rape and portrayed by the defense attorneys and the media as a Stanford swimming star. The judge sentenced him to 6 months in jail after the jury's recommendation of six years in prison.

While minimizing the harm to the young woman, the Turner case illustrates the idea that men should make decisions about a woman's body. Reproductive rights of women, which include access to feminine hygiene products, menstrual leave, and abortion are all politicalized topics. Dr. Ukockis writes in detail about the controversy around whether women who have abortions experience post abortion

syndrome, a syndrome defined as “. . . agonizing mental condition caused by guilt and sadness” (pp. 192–193). Longitudinal studies show that 95% of women who have had abortions have no regrets.

How do we stop perpetuating the hatred in today's cultural currents? According to Dr. Ukockis it is both an inside and outside job. We, as social workers and concerned citizens, need to identify our own biases through self-reflection; and at the same time, we need to develop the ability to respectfully communicate with people who are different from us.

Misogyny: The New Activism alerts us to the sometimes hidden behaviors and attitudes that encourage hatred, rage, and disgust in our society. I highly recommend this book for all who are concerned about creating a better, kinder, and more accepting society for both men and women.