

University of Nevada, Reno

The Power of Penetration

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
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By

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Abstract

Women's social and economic situation has improved to some degree in the last few decades. However, some cultural attitudes have proven difficult for women to overcome. Researchers have described rape as "natural" to explain the persistence of violent sexual abuse towards women (Thornhill and Palmer 2000). This Thesis contests the argument for rape as natural and offers an alternative explanation. In an effort to provide some clarification for the persistent inequality women face, I argue that rape is a core component of gender socialization for both men and women. Men have come to associate their masculinity with violence (sexual and otherwise). Women have survived by submitting to men when attacked, as well as seeking men to be the protector. Ultimately, this relationship between men and women has established a power structure built upon rape and sexual violence. In order to alter the current misperceptions people have in regards to the "nature" of rape, it is important to make accurate representations of rape more available to the public.

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Preface:

As a female, there are obvious reasons as for my interest in gender inequality and instances of rape. While attending college, I had two experiences that, at the time, seemed like completely independent incidents. But after having read Susan Brownmiller's book *Against Our Will* (1975), I began thinking that these two experiences may not have been so distinct from one another after all.

During summer break between college semesters, I applied for a job as a manager at a local jet-ski rental place. I had known the people that ran the beachside rental company because I frequently conducted business with them while I was employed as a concierge at a near-by hotel. It was an ideal job for a college student, minus the long hours. I worked at the beach with a bunch of guys who surprisingly appreciated my "manager" position at the rental office. I had the experience and I was constantly told that the place had never run so smoothly. There was a sense of pride that I gained from doing my job to the best of my ability. When the summer was winding down, my supervisor approached me and asked me if I planned on returning the following summer. I told him that I had not yet decided, and he took the opportunity to inform me that I would be getting paid the hourly rate I should have been paid all summer.

The truth that I was the first female manager of that branch of the rental company and that I had been paid less for a job that I was more than qualified for was discouraging. Needless to say, despite the fact that I enjoyed the overall experience of working on the beach, I did not return the following summer. This experience never sat right with me.

Years later, I was living near the university when a 19-year-old girl was abducted, raped and killed just block away from my home. The university sent out emails warning females to not walk alone and promoted campus self-defense classes. Though all of that seemed valuable, I could not help but feel frustrated by the fear and anxiety I felt walking to and from my classes. I constantly told my live-in boyfriend and his brother that they needed to lock the door when they came home at night, and I was always asking to be walked from one place to another out of fear that I may be the rapist's next victim. Looking out my window at night the streets were empty. I could not help but think that the one girl who was brave enough to walk alone would not be heard or seen by anyone if she were to be attacked because everyone was frightened off of the streets.

After that thought festered, I began demanding that my boyfriend walk with me at night so that we could at least be a presence on the street, just in case. My boyfriend and the boyfriends of my friends all felt suddenly protective over each of us. The "band-together" mentality was charming, but when it was analyzed from the outside it was also very male dominating.

I read Susan Brownmiller's book and suddenly found her associations between rape and fear very significant. I have been and am the girl who is afraid of becoming a victim of rape. I was scared into my home and I let my boyfriend become my protector from the "other" men. I learned that this was a very vulnerable position to be in and I did not like it, so felt compelled to explain it.

Both of these incidences were occasions where I was disadvantaged and inconvenienced because of my gender. After a great deal of research, presented here, I

have concluded that gender inequality is disproportionately based on a frequently overlooked factor: the socially constructed hierarchy built off of the first primal rape.

Introduction:

Women have battled from the beginning of time for equality. How can we understand the core of their persistent subjection? The issue of equality between men and women cuts much deeper than equal pay and has roots beyond what many of us would not consider consciously on a daily basis. This paper suggests that the physical threat and subconscious fear instilled by acts of rape and the victimization of women, is at the heart of male dominance and power over the female gender. Susan Brownmiller first addressed this theory in her book, *Against Our Will* (1975), which generated the thought that the issues of inequality are grounded in something much bigger. Brownmiller's theory suggested that women are in a state of fear that they will become a victim, and therefore, seek male companionship for safety and protection from other males. Essentially, women are perceived as the weaker because they depend on men to provide and protect them from the threatening consequences of independence, and this concept is the foundation of the stereotypes that have evolved into the male strength and power and female weakness and passivity. The role rape has played historically was socially constructed, permeating society and undermining equality. Women's victimization is not a natural occurrence due to physical weakness, but a socially constructed mechanism that maintains male dominance and power.

Acknowledging the threat of rape at the heart of women's persistent inequality may facilitate change in women's status that has proven elusive. For example, in studies

of workplace inequality many researchers have concluded that women typically fall behind in the pursuit of higher paying jobs and promotions because they may take a maternity leave (Harrison 1964), have less education and leave work in pursuit of a family (Naff 1994). Some research has concluded that equal pay and equal opportunity can solve the problems that women face in the work force (Bremer & Howe 1988). These same problems and conclusions have been reported for decades, so one may suggest that there is more to the inequality than the ethics of the organizations that offer employment.

Elizabeth Brimelow (1981) alludes to the problems women face economically due to their strong association with the home. In contrast, men have been able to distance themselves from domestic responsibilities. Brimelow suggests that women and men must be equal in society before they can ever have equality in the workplace. She then poses the question: why are women still not equal in society? To begin to answer this question, it may be helpful to consider theories of the origins of sexual inequality and the negativity surrounding the female role in reproduction. Susan Brownmiller, in her path-breaking study of rape (1975), suggests that the “first rape” caused women to fear men and fall into a subordinate position in society and also seek men to protect them from victimization. Fear of men spread among all women who wanted to protect themselves from becoming victims of (Brownmiller 1975). The rape of women and the violence that women suffer at from men may go to the heart of the inequality women face in both the workplace and the public sphere.

To pursue the concept of rape as a method of subordination, it is necessary to do a historical analysis of rape and demonstrate its development as a social construction. An

analysis of literature, mythology, news reports and scholarly studies will provide insight into the history of rape and how rape has played a part in establishing and maintaining gender roles. The male “dominant” and the female “passive” roles have integrated into social stereotypes. Modern writings on the subject of rape and recent research will be used to identify the current interpretations of rape. One important study of importance is that of Baron and Straus (1989), showing the impact of rape on the socioeconomic status of women in the United States. Other scholars, such as Catharine MacKinnon and Michael Kimmel provide extensive commentary on male and female roles in society, where societal pressures affect both sexes.

To further understand how rape can be used socially as a means establishing a power structure, prison rape scenarios will be used as examples of the dynamics of rape in a controlled environment. Though the prison rape examples will primarily be of males building dominance among other men by the use of forced sex (Hensley 2002), the scenario can be compared to the destructive creation of sexual crimes against women who dare to advance socially or economically in a primarily male dominate public sphere. The example of males in prison to exemplify power built upon sexual dominance provides insight into the use of sex to establish the hierarchy found in heterosexual society on the outside. I will argue that men will protect their position of power by sexually victimizing, and therefore “feminizing”, other men. When a man or a woman is threatening another man’s power, he will do whatever it takes to maintain his power (Mill 1870).

Not all men must be rapists to “benefit” from the power gained by the subjection of women. Sexual harassment, film, television and advertisements are social tools that

keep the threat and fear of rape fresh and in the face of all women and men, acting as propaganda. From this perspective, men have taken the power women have relinquished and never looked back. Women will continue to be the most frequent victim of sex crimes, because men have become entrenched in their self-made position in society and are not willing to relinquishing their power. Contrary to studies that use biology and evolution to explain rape (Thornhill and Palmer 2000), I will argue that rape is in fact a tool that maintains and perpetuates inequality. Because gender inequality was established centuries ago, it affects the way humans perceive rape today. Rape is not a natural occurrence within the human species, but a socially constructed fear, which results in the gender inequality seen in society and the workplace.

Women in the world are still suffering from male dominance and are looking for the root of the problem of inequality. It may be possible to find a new way to overcome the preconceived notions that many have to face on a daily basis. Comparing the erection of a power structure where sex is a weapon among men in prison-rapes and the effects of rape on women's persistent dependence on males for protection in society suggests forced sex can be understood as a method of suppression and oppression of the general female population, of which 17.6 percent are raped in their lifetime (NIJCDC 2000). Ultimately, identifying the primary causes of inequality will provide men and women the opportunity to develop new solutions to the persistent problems women face. Understanding of the history of rape and its impact on society could lead to a new diagnosis for gender inequality and, in turn, new remedies could be prescribed to invoke change in the treatment of women socially and economically.

Chapter One: History of Rape and Underestimated Fear of Rape

From the first rape to the most recent, women have been victims of male domination by force. Historically, rape was used for three purposes: to punish women for acts committed against men; maintain women's submission; and as a vehicle for proving a man's love for a woman by "taking" what was his (Kimmel 2003; Mills 1870; Judeo Christian Bible). It is necessary to review situations throughout history where rape consumes not only the primary victim, but also secondarily the women who learn about the rape. In many cases, women will grow to fear the threat of victimization and will restrict their own lives, allowing men to have psychological as well as physical control (Riger and Gordon 1981). Places with a higher percentage of rape also demonstrate characteristics of greater gender inequality (Baron and Straus 1987). According to Brownmiller "the first rape" established female dependency on men, laying the foundation for the social stereotyping, which directly contributes to gender inequality.

Susan Brownmiller in *Against Our Will* (1975) describes the effects of the first, primal rape scenario. The first occurrence of rape was not necessarily documented, but it is symbolic of the beginning of the victimization of women. In Brownmiller's scenario, humans differ from other animals because humans do not have a biological mating season (1975). Because men and women do not have a specified time to procreate, the act of reproduction is left up to the individuals and this is where communication can be misunderstood and lead to the potential for rape. Imagine a young female in prehistoric times. For the sake of an example, she is doing the laundry in a near-by lake, when a male from her tribe approaches her. When he feels a physical attraction with that particular girl, he begins to court her. Despite her attempts to ward him off, he becomes

more persistent and forceful and eventually tackles her to the ground. Once she is on the ground, he forces sexual intercourse with her and because he has a penis and she has a vagina, the act of forced penetration makes the girl rape-able and the man able to rape (Brownmiller 1975). In Brownmiller's example, she describes the woman's fight,

In the violent landscape inhabited by primitive woman and man, some woman somewhere had a prescient vision of her right to her own physical integrity, and in my mind's eye I can picture her fighting like hell to preserve it. (1975, p. 14)

Eventually, the man leaves the young woman alone by the lake. She is scared, weak, bleeding and has a sense of violation and fear, which compels her to run home to her family. In the refuge of her home, she tells her sister what happened to her. The fear then spreads to her sister because she never wants to experience the same violation that elder sibling encountered. As word spreads throughout the village about what happened to the girl, many of the tribe's women are fearful of being raped as well. The women begin to stay within the confines of their household and avoid going to the lake alone. Older women stand behind their husbands for protection and the younger girls look to their fathers and brothers for security. The daily lives of all the villagers changed in coping with that first rape.

The first rape establishes a man's ability physically to overpower a woman, which makes her the victim. Brownmiller writes, "Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times..." (1975, p. 14). When men discovered the fear women experienced after being raped or at the thought of becoming a victim of rape, they placed women in a vulnerable position where they both feared men and sought them for protection.

Brownmiller explains, “For if the first rape was an unexpected battle founded on the first woman’s refusal, the second rape was indubitably planned” (1975, p. 14). Women sought after males who would be able to protect them from the violence of other males, and in the process, many females would become the victims of their protectors. The gender relations that evolved out of the fear described by Brownmiller drove the women to hide and reside in the home and opened the door to society a bit wider for men. Men and women were cut from the same mold, but when men first used their sex to diminish women, they uncovered the means to becoming the dominant sex in society. In knowing women’s vulnerability, men were able to use the threat of rape as a method of maintaining submissive women.

Other instances of rape have been noted in literature and art for centuries. Notably, Greek and Roman mythology told many tales of women being forcibly seduced by gods such as Zeus. One of the legendary myths places Europa, a young woman, in a field when a white bull emerges. This bull is actually Zeus in disguise and when she approaches the bull, he abducts her and swims her to the island of Crete. Europa is then “seduced” by Zeus after he reveals himself to her (Smith et al. 2004). In this tale of rape, Zeus uses to his advantage the woman’s love of animals and the fact that she is alone. He takes her to a place where she is unreachable by others, and exploits his godly status to indulge himself at her expense (Smith et al. 2004). Painters have used this story of the rape as inspiration for centuries (Titian 1562). The imagery usually did not completely capture the horror that the victim was more than likely experiencing, but rather beautified the occurrence and made the story symbolic of the man’s strength and power rather than the tortures of the rape (Smith et al. 2004). High profile rape myths and stories empower

men and act as reminders to women that no woman is completely safe from becoming a victim and rape culture is perpetuated.

The worshipers of the polytheistic religions learned the myths and read the examples of the benefits of the gods' power and persuasion. The Greeks and the Romans did not condemn Zeus for raping Europa, but admired his strength and masculinity. Women living in a society where the gods could get away with rape must have had a negative impact on the role of women. The myths often began with an unattended virgin being captured and taken to a secluded area where the god had his way with her (Smith et al. 2004). The role of the masculine figure in these myths is unmistakable as dominant and commanding over the female sex, and frequently the women become submissive to their attacker or their rescuer.



Titian's *The Abduction of Europa* (1562)

Another Greek myth also discussed in Brownmiller's book, has a young girl being raped and abused by another strong God:

The young girl Kainis, raped by Poseidon, chose an unusual and highly personal solution to her problems. She asked Poseidon to change her into a man in order to avoid future violations. Kainis the girl promptly became Kaineus the warrior, who worshiped his spear. (Brownmiller 1975, p. 283-284)

This myth provides an interesting twist, but also demonstrates the girl's strong desire to protect herself. Strangely, Kainis did not ask Poseidon to become a mere warrior to provide the strength she needed, but she requested to become a male warrior. The fact that she worshiped her spear after becoming a man is symbolically laden. A man's genitalia became his weapon when he discovered his ability to rape (Brownmiller 1975), so Kaineus' spear was symbolic of the new weaponry with which he was now equipped.

Greek and Roman mythology was not the only form of theology telling of rape. Instances of rape occur throughout the Judeo Christian Bible. The book of Genesis 34 tells the tale of Dinah. She is a young virgin who is raped by a prince, Shechem. The rape of Dinah was Shechem's attempt to win her over and he tried to convince Dinah's father, Jacob, for her hand in marriage. In trade, Shechem and his father offer their women and men (from the village) for marriage to the people in Jacob's village, so Shechem can have Dinah's hand. Jacob's sons do not find it easy to forgive Shechem for raping their sister and wrongly taking something that is not his. Dinah's father and his sons determine that Shechem's offer cannot be met because the men from Shechem's village are not circumcised. In an act of desperation, Shechem returns to his village and insists that all the men get circumcised. Once they have all undergone the procedure, Jacob's sons descend on the villagers while they are still recovering. Dinah's brothers kill every man in the village, freeing her from Shechem. They steal the women, children, cattle and anything else of value that they could find. Jacob's sons cannot stand by and

watch their sister be treated like a prostitute to the prince, so in their anger they destroy the village and their father's reputation to boot.

This biblical story conveys the expectations of women in a social setting. The early placement of this story in the Bible indicates its historical significance and its influences can be read throughout the remainder of the Bible. Dinah is not portrayed as the victim: her father and her brothers are. The victims of rape in the Bible are rarely vocal about the atrocity that ruins their lives. Often a woman disappears from the text after she has been victimized (Smith et al. 2004). In the timeline of rape, Dinah's rape occurred after the first rape so Jacob had already accepted the role as protector, provider and "owner" of his daughter's life and virginity. The issue has become not about the rape from Dinah's perspective, but about the girl's virginity being taken from her father. Dinah was considered the property of her father and brothers, and when she was defiled they were the victims of the crime. There were no laws protecting Dinah's rights. When a man is responsible for the safety of a woman and he fails to protect her, it is an insult to his manhood and his honor. The Bible suggests that rape evolved from an attack against a woman to an attack against the woman's representative in society, her man.

Mythology and the Judeo Christian Bible are two cultural sources that people rely upon for guidance and worship. Influential texts and legends are latent with tales of rape and male dominance; the stories begin to act as a form of propaganda to remind women that they are vulnerable to the power of men. No woman wants to become a victim of rape, so reading the stories of women like Europa and Dinah teaches women not to leave the home alone and to obey the men in the family. Modern studies, such as Stephanie Riger and Margaret Gordon's (1981), indicate that women who read stories of rape

become fearful of victimization, and women grow wary about challenging their male protectors or any other man that they come across. Another study shows that, “At an individual level, fear of rape has been found to be associated with self-imposed behavioral restrictions among women...” (Bohner and Schwarz 1996). Women are perceived as weaker, but they are being held captive and out of society because of their debilitating fear of victimization and rape.

Rape was often a tool used to conquer a city or village. The men would claim the women and rape them to “cleanse” the race or ethnicity of the defeated once the victor had been determined in the battle (Brownmiller 1975). The rape of the Sabine women is a well-known, historical example of a wartime mass rape. Giambologna and Nicholas Poussin are just two of the artists whose subject matter was “inspired” by the rape of hundreds of women in the town of Sabine. The Romans had attempted to negotiate intermarriage between the Roman men and Sabine women, but after the negotiations failed the Romans invaded the town, taking the women that they desired (Brownmiller 1975). Again, the men of Sabine were killed and humiliated by their inability to protect their women.



Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine Women* (1574-82)



Nicolas Poussin's *Rape of the Sabine Women* (1634-1635)

The women were often considered to be the prize or the “booty” for the winning side in a war. As Brownmiller puts it, “Rape was a weapon of terror” (1975, p. 32). All people were affected when the women were raped. It is commonly believed that in a time of war rape is inevitable: “When men are men, slugging it out among themselves,

conquering new land, subjugating new people, driving on toward victory, *unquestionably* there shall be some raping” (Brownmiller 1975, p. 31). Rape is a display of power and dominance, so when a battle persists rape is not far from the fighting.

Though there is an agreement amongst the United Nations to outlaw rape as a war tactic, rape is still prevalent in battle zones and camps currently. Unfortunately, raping for power and dominance in order to instill fear in a population is not uncommon. Even today, as reported through numerous media outlets, the rapes of women in the Congo are ongoing and more violent than the attacks against the Sabine women centuries ago. Journalists and researchers are not entirely sure what is motivating the rapes, but whether it is a political or military issue, the villagers are terrified to be alone or out at night (Gettleman 2009; Bosman 2007). This is a perfect example of a country being debilitated by the fear of sexual victimization.

The number of women in the Congo being brutally raped has increased steadily for about a decade (Gettleman 2009). It is not uncommon to read reports of women and young girls who have been gang raped so severely that they have lifelong reproductive and digestive problems. The brutal use of inanimate objects to penetrate and damage these females is a frequent method of physical mutilation and destruction. There is speculation that this is a complex case of men who are out to completely destroy the security of women in the Congo (Gettleman 2009). As the rapists go unpunished, the government implicitly condones the sexual aggression and brutality against women. Without punishment, the rapes persist with escalating numbers. The mass rape of women in the Congo reflects modern issues of gender inequality and rape becoming not only an effect but also a cause of rape (Baron and Straus 1987; Sanday 1981). The

growing number of rapes creates a greater fear of rape among the female population, and women fall deeper and deeper into an oppressive state.

Sexual inequality began with the first rape and evolved into the essence of males maintaining social and economic power with the continual threat of rape. Rape levels are higher in societies that lack an expectation of equality among genders (Baron and Straus 1987; Sanday 1981). The violence of rape perpetuates men's place at the top of the societal power structure, and maintains it because women are threatened with rape as punishment for challenging a man's authority (Kimmel 2003). Michael Kimmel writes, "In many societies, rape was a common and legitimate punishment for all sorts of perceived crimes against men" (2003, p. 229). Because rape has become known to invoke fear in humans, it has historically been implemented as a means to deter individuals from committing crimes. If a woman was to, perhaps, steal money from a man she could be raped to remind her of her place in society, below that of any man.

Men and women have adapted to their expected roles in society, which correlate with the roles of males and females in the rape dynamic. Men are expected to be the strong, more aggressive and providing figure, whereas women are expected to be weak, passive and caring. These stereotypical characteristics of both men and women could very well be derived from the initial man as predator or protector from other predators, and woman as vulnerable victim and in need of protection. The "natures" of men and women appear to be socially constructed from the history of rape and the use of rape to create a dominant and powerful gender in society.

The history of rape has developed into a social acceptance of women as submissive in society. Because of the effects of the first rape, women have been placed

in the domestic realm so as to protect them from threats of victimization. Men have diminished the power women formally held in society, and have maintained that power by suspending women in a state of fear. The social development of rape as a means to fear has placed men in a powerful and dominant position; and because humans have used this practice for such an extended period of time, it is thought to be a “natural practice”. However, through the history it is revealed that the affects of the first rape, and ever rape since then, have persuaded society to favor patriarchy and male domination.

Chapter Two: Theorist and the “Nature” of Women

Whether it is the nature or the history of individuals, theorists have always written about a human’s place in society and class structures. The history of thought has a great influence on how individuals perceive themselves and others in the social hierarchy. A review of Aristotle, Niccolo Machiavelli, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx will provide some background information about the way of thinking at certain points throughout history. Each theorist will be analyzed in the context of the theory of rape as a social construction. Aristotle observed the “nature” of women in society empirically, believing what he saw to be nature. Centuries later, Machiavelli also used empirical methodology, trusting his observation of history to teach him about nature. Mill, a nineteenth century theorist, challenges the concept of nature and viewed women as capable of independence. Mill’s writings lend themselves well to the discussion of gender equality and he begins to articulate the social influence of a women’s position in society, calling the nature of women “artificial” (1870). The history of human behavior influences Mill and Marx to draw on theories centered on social construction. Marx’s theory of the Fetishism of

Commodities (1867) is an example of human's assigning value to products, but over time losing sight of their hand in establishing that value. The shift in thought from nature to social construction has changed the way humans interpret behavior, in regards to rape it is important to analyze the progression of thought in how theorists have explained and understood gender hierarchy.

Aristotle's method was based primarily on observation. He did not necessarily have access to modern scientific technology, but he observed that there were attributes that made certain people masters and others slaves, in that males have "natural" characteristics and abilities that make them dominant over females (Aristotle 1992). In *The Politics, Book I*, Aristotle writes of the obvious "nature" of social hierarchy, of which slaves are inferior to their masters and women are inferior to their men. In the quotation below, Aristotle is emphasizing the "nature" of power:

This much is clear: suppose, that there were men whose mere bodily physique showed the same superiority as is shown by the statues of gods, then all would agree that the rest of mankind would deserve to be their slaves. And if this is true in relation to physical superiority, the distinction would be even more justly made in respect of superiority of the soul; but it is much more difficult to see beauty of the soul than it is to see beauty of the body. It is clear then that by nature some are free, others are slaves, and that for these it is both just and expedient that they should serve as slaves. (1992, p.69)

Aristotle believed that people were naturally born either into slavery (to be ruled) or meant to be a master (to rule). Women were innately inferior to men in society.

In *Book II of The Politics*, Aristotle seems to contradict some of his ideas in *Book I*. He expresses his outrage with the lack of command the Spartan men have over the Spartan women (1992). Men were living harmoniously in the city where women were free to live life "...intemperately, enjoying every licence and indulging in every luxury"

(Aristotle 1992, p. 142). In *Book II*, the Spartans became an example of men and women living equal lives because they were given the opportunity. This challenges Aristotle's contention in *Book I* that women are naturally inferior to men.

Associating females with natural inferiority was for centuries a common explanation for gender discrimination. Niccolo Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* (Mansfield 1998), a handbook, on how to be a respected and powerful prince. The entire book discusses topics of commanding respect and maintaining power, and frequently Machiavelli calls for force and acts of violence. Similarly, he implements the same displays of authority to maintain female submission. In the passage below, he addresses fortune and power:

I conclude, thus, that when fortune varies and men remain obstinate in their modes, men are happy while they are in accord, and as they come to discord, unhappy. I judge this indeed, that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because fortune is a woman; and it is necessary, if one wants to hold her down, to beat her and strike her down. (Mansfield 1998, p. 101)

In order to keep women submissive and respectful of authority, Machiavelli writes that using physical force is appropriate. This theory suggests that abuse is necessary to maintain the submission of women, and this process is in some regard natural and expected.

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin addresses Machiavelli's negative and critical attitude towards women in her book, *Fortune is a Woman* (1984). The importance of Pitkin's analysis of Machiavelli's work is in her detailed emphasis on the role of women and identifying his "contempt for the 'weaker sex'" (1984, p. 109). Pitkin goes on to write:

As a counterpart to his concept of *virtú*, no epithet is more frequent or more powerful in Machiavelli's vocabulary of abuse than "effeminate."

What men and states avoid at all costs is resembling women. (1984, p.109-110)

It is clear that Machiavelli did not view women as having the same status as men, and perceived womanly characteristics as “dumb, fearful, weak, indecisive and dependent” (Pitkin 1984, p. 110). All of these stereotypical characteristics of women are, for the perspective of this thesis, outcomes of the vulnerability women feel due to their fear of rape. These assumed characteristics of women, theoretically define women as incapable of achieving power. Aristotle and Machiavelli made this argument based on their observed “nature” of a woman.

Centuries after Machiavelli viewed power in an over masculinized world, John Stuart Mill was advocating for the equality of women when many men still did not think women deserved equality (1870). Mill acknowledged the extreme measures men took to maintain their wife’s submission. The threat of rape was one method of instilling the fear that could be used to keep women below men in the social hierarchy. Though marital rape was not a term used in the nineteenth-century, Mill addressed the issue of unwanted sex within the confines of marriage. Because men’s protection of the women in their lives translated into “ownership” of their wives, they would often require a woman to do her wifely duties for her husband. Mill did not sugar coat the expectations of wives in a marriage when he wrote,

...however brutal the tyrant she may unfortunately be chained to – though she may know that he hates her, though it may be his daily pleasure to torture her, and though she may feel it impossible not to loathe him – he can claim from her and enforce the lowest degradation of a human being, that of being made the instrument of an animal function contrary to her inclinations. While she is held in this worst description of slavery as to her own person... (1870, p. 57)

Though women may required protection from potential predators, this need can backfire. Then they end up married to a person by whom they are constantly threatened. That is to say when the first female was raped and sought refuge in male security, she and all other women that felt the threat of victimization gave men a sliver of power over them. Since men knew what women needed from them and what women feared of them, men had all the ammunition they needed to keep women quite and submissive.

The stereotypical generalizations about both men and women reflect the effects of rape on society. The woman is the victim, while the man is the aggressor. The feminist writer, Catharine MacKinnon, suggests that women have been socialized and taught to be passive and submissive in order to avoid “injury and humiliation” (1989, p. 177). Women “submit to survive” (MacKinnon 1989, p. 177). In many ways, Mill and MacKinnon share a similar perspective on why women fail to challenge male authority. Mill wrote,

All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favourite. They have therefore put in practice to enslave their minds. The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience, on fear; either fear of themselves, or religious fears. The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience, and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission and yielding to the control of others. (1870, p. 27).

Though all men did not ask for the power to dominate women, the acts of a few men stole the control from women for the first time while some men have participated in the use rape to maintain female oppression as a threat to women’s equality. It is important to acknowledge that not all men are rapists, nor do all men want to have a

heavy hand with women, as Machiavelli had suggested. However, all men benefit from the work of a few men. Women's fear of being victimized by rape keeps them isolated in the home (Riger and Gordon 1981), leaving more opportunities for the success of men in society and in the workplace. Similar to the concept of "white privilege," where all whites have an advantage in society because of the oppression some forced on non-whites (Haney Lopez 2006); men benefit from a general "male privilege," where all men have an advantage socially and economically because of female submission and objectification.

The examples of rape in chapter one are instances of sexual violence being used to establish a social power structure and hierarchy, not "natural" human behavior. Contrary to Aristotle and Machiavelli, John Stuart Mill argued that the roles of women cannot be natural:

If men had ever been found in society without women, or women without men, or if there had been a society of men and women in which the women were not under the control of the men, something might have been positively known about the mental and moral differences which may be inherent in the nature of each. What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing – the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others. (1870, p. 38-39)

Even in the 1800's there was reason to believe that women were not awarded the same opportunities that otherwise would have been within their grasp. Mill is right when he says that the expectations for women are "artificial," and implies that there is an element of social construction in human behavior. While Aristotle and Machiavelli were observing the ways men and women interact and writing it off as "human nature," they were oblivious to the history of male, female interaction. The history of rape and the growth of stereotypes based on the gender roles within rape may not have been

considered as a potential influence in the power struggles among the sexes. Men and women placed themselves in the position of gender inequality based on their own interpretations and expectations of the opposite sex.

This concept of humans constructing their own a social structure and social identities leads the discussion towards Karl Marx. Marx's theory of the Fetishism of Commodities, where he best lays out his argument that human history constructs the values it then assumes are "natural" (1867). In *Capital: Volume One*, Marx defines the term "commodity,"

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. (1867, p. 320)

The description of this relationship between man and the objects he creates parallels the theory of rape as a social construction of men's power over women. Marx continues to address a man's relationship with "his" objects:

...productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (1867, p. 321)

When men took the aggressive step towards knowingly raping a woman for the purpose of placing her in a state of fear, he was "producing" subordinate women. Over time, men have developed a perceived ownership over women. This sense of entitlement over women's bodies was not innate, but the result of forced male domination. The ownership and violence that drives men to slaughter villages (Sabine and Nanking) is the result of

centuries influence from historically derived male expectations. The act of rape created male dominance over women and drove men to attach themselves to their “commodity.” The human advent of rape led to this “artificial nature of women,” as Mill put it (1870, p. 38-39), and humans have forgotten that they are responsible for establishing gender inequality.

The practical implication of Marx’s Fetishism of Commodities is that if humans constructed the problem at hand, humans have the ability to turn it all around. Acknowledgement that humans gave commodities value, reminds us that products only possess the value its maker ascribes to it. In society, people are given the value that other humans assign to them. Rape became an act of one sex against the other and contributed to the construction of social stereotypes. These stereotypes became the foundation for the “nature” of men and women and the justification for discrimination, because one sex was assumed more powerful than the other. However, as described in chapter one, the history of rape, sexual violence and threatened victimization has altered women’s accessibility to the public sphere. Fear led women to relinquish power to men and men have grown comfortable with their power, and have begun defining their manhood and masculinity by the power they have in society. The human Fetishism of Inequality is entrenched in social practices, but not without growing frustration from the subordinate party, women.

Centuries of theory began by justifying women in a submissive role through the observed “nature” of females, but as time passed women have gained greater recognition and increased their demands for equality. Modern theorists have begun addressing and explaining why women are in inferior social and economic roles, and seek alternative solutions and explanations to the problems of gender inequality. Women have come a

long way, but the majority of the battle is still uphill. The concepts and ideas presented by Aristotle, Machiavelli, Mill and Marx span centuries and the perspectives have only changed slightly over such an extended period of time. Acknowledging rape as one of the cornerstones in the tomb of gender inequality is a step in the direction towards a more balanced society. The transition of thought from “nature” to social construction opens the door to change and progress, which grants women opportunities they “naturally” would not have been given.

Chapter Three: Overestimated “Nature” of Rape

Human behavior is frequently defended or explained because of the “nature” of the human species. Two evolutionary biologists, Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer published research that suggests men rape because of their primal need to procreate with females (2000). Their theory also implies that women can be held responsible for attracting men by the way they carry themselves and dress. Race and gender inequality have both been defended because of human nature, beginning with Herbert Spencer’s Social Darwinism, but humans tend to overlook their role in determining the “nature” of their own species. Perhaps humans have overestimated the “nature” of the social problems they have produced. When science has been used to explain differences in race and ethnicities, the result is most often used to justify inequality and condone racism. It is often simplistically explained as violent “boys will be boys,” but its ability to influence social behavior in response to its threat has not been systematically studied. The “nature” of rape, especially in regards to Thornhill and Palmer’s argument, will be challenged with by using the examples of rape for power in male prisons and homicidal rape.

Defending men who rape because of a male's "naturally" overactive sex drive and need to "spread his seed," is reminiscent of the explanations given for the "nature" of racial inequality and the inferiority of African Americans. The scientific evidence of the 1800's to the early 1900's concluded that races other than white were "naturally" and biologically inferior (Roediger 2005, p. 23). White scientists began to study the inferiority of races other than white and began concluding that Social Darwinism and eugenics could explain the social status of different races. There is an element of Spencer's "survival of the fittest" in early American interpretations of race, and now it is becoming more prevalent in regards to gender.

It was commonly argued that American slaves were not smart enough or socially evolved enough to be independent, functioning members of society. People forget the role of masters in the stunting the development and progress in the slaves. They were not taught to read or write; generally this was done to prevent slaves from challenging authority not because they were incapable. Maintaining the social weakness of African Americans during slavery, and to some degree during the Civil War, was essential to remaining dominant over the large population of slaves. African Americans were strategically kept ignorant and out of the public sphere, and as a result scientists interpreted their "nature" as inferior. Similarly, women have faced scientific excuses for their inferiority. In their pursuit of athletics and careers, women are often categorized as not being able to perform as well as men. For decades it has been argued that women cannot compete at the level of men, and without having been raised in the same sport motivated and competitive environment as men it is difficult to determine where

women's abilities have been malnourished. Having been kept out of the public sphere for so long, it is difficult to enter in and compete equally with men.

Modern science still suggests that "human nature" and evolution are to blame for the fact that some men rape (Thornhill and Palmer 2000). This "natural impulse of men" lends itself to the justification of male behavior. In that context, when a woman becomes a victim of rape, she is continuously asked to defend her "passive" role in the rape. Despite the fact that women are stereotyped as being the "passive" partner in sex and in nature (Filipovic 2008, p. 18), she is questioned as to what she did not try to prevent the rape from taking place. What was she wearing? What time of day was it? Was she alone? Was she a virgin before she was raped? Did she actively defend herself? All of these questions leave room for the victim to be partly responsible for the rape that she endured at the hands of an aggressive male. Suggesting that rape is within the natural course of human behavior is giving men the opportunity to justify their actions with science (Thornhill and Brownmiller 2000). Randy Thornhill and Craig Palmer's theory on the evolution of rape in humans is harmful to the modern understanding and legislative progress that has been made in regards to rape (2000). Women are once again put in the position of defending their honor in rape trials because the fault of rape may be that she was in public wearing something that made her seem "available".

In an interview on National Public Radio (NPR 2000), Susan Brownmiller and Thornhill debated the research Thornhill and Palmer present in their book, *A Natural History of Rape* (2000). Thornhill and Palmer imply that the fault of the rape could partially lay in the victims dress and behavior. In the interview, Brownmiller countered this point by sarcastically asking Thornhill whether women should wear burkas, so as not

to tempt men. Part of the issue with Thornhill and Palmer's research surrounds the nature of rapes, as they understand them. If the motivation to rape has roots in the male need to procreate and spread his seed, then it is difficult to explain males raping other males as well as men raping and then killing their victims. Michael Kimmel also refutes Thornhill and Palmer when he addresses the unproductive "nature" of homicidal rape, "To murder or assault the person you are trying to inseminate is a particularly unwise reproductive strategy" (2000, p. 244). Kimmel raises a valid point here. The act of rape is often in conjunction with abuse and murder, so suggesting that rape is a means to procreation does not consider these additional acts of violence. In addition to killing one's victim, rape has also been a tool implemented by men against other men.

In prisons, men are in a social situation. For the purpose of this research, prison rape is used as a test case of rape among social beings as a means to a socially constructed hierarchy. The value of rape in achieving unchallenged authority and power is what makes men successful in their superior position in society. Rape is a tool for establishing power and dominance over both men and women. In order to challenge the argument that men rape out of natural urges (Thornhill and Palmer 2000), prison rapes are observed to interpret the use of sex in erecting a power structure. The controlled-test environment of a prison is an instance where a group of men are incarcerated and often fight amongst themselves in order to determine who has power within the group.

Within the prisons, men have been known to use sex against one another in order to establish dominance amongst one another (Wooden 1982). If there is a man who enters the general population of the prison and poses a threat to an authoritative male, he may very well become a victim of rape so as to keep the new inmate at bay and in line.

When a man does fall victim to a rape while incarcerated, Daniel Lockwood discovered, “The most common change in life-style is some degree of self-isolation...self-imposed isolation is a voluntary response to the threat of victimization” (1980, p. 72). This is a similar response women have when confronted with the threat of rape or the act of rape, as suggested by various studies (Riger and Gordon 1981, Buss and Malamuth 1996). All men who are sent to prison enter the system as men, which implies that they have been raised in and grown accustomed to a “male privileged” society. However, when they enter a world behind bars they enter a new society, where the means of achieving power and authority are the same as they are in general civilization. Rape forces males to be submissive to one another and sex is used to maintain dominance and a sense of fear amongst the inmates, similar to the relationship among men and women in general society.

Wayne Wooden, who did extensive research on prisons, introduces “Barry,” an individual who entered the prison system and fell victim to threats and, eventually, persistent rape (1982). He was considered more feminine and therefore, cast in the role of a woman in the homosocial atmosphere of the prison. Brownmiller also addressed the violent use of rape in prisons as a means to gaining or losing power,

Prison rape is generally seen today for what it is: an acting out of power roles within an all-male, authoritarian environment in which the younger, weaker inmate, usually a first offender, is forced to play the role that in the outside world is assigned to women. (1975, P. 258)

Men in prison, even those who classify themselves as heterosexual, may have physical male relationships in prison so as to prove their dominance over an individual (Wooden 1982). Men who rape, the penetrators, are the manly and masculine men in the prison

and also have the most authority. It is not uncommon for a “kid,” usually a straight male that is the receiver during sexual assault, to exchange sex for protection from other inmates (Wooden 1982, p. 3). Both in prison and the outside world there is an added component of protection that comes from willingly allowing rape from one partner, so as to have protection from other potential predators. Within the prisons, having “protection” is much like having a pimp. Brownmiller shares the story of a young man who was raped during his short stay in prison,

Martin was promised protection from further assaults by two of his violators. The next night his “protectors” initiated a second general round of oral and rectal rape. The pair stood outside his cell and collected packs of cigarettes from other prisoners wanting a turn. (1975, p. 259)

“Barry” was a young man who became a “kid,” so as to avoid the violence of rape from multiple inmates, but consequentially became the property of a fellow inmate. The threat of losing one’s manhood is thought to be one of the most horrific experiences for a man, and when a man walks into a prison his masculinity and male authority is the one thing he stands to lose.

There is obviously no way that procreation can be achieved by men raping other men or by men raping and then killing their victim. The rape of other men is not exclusive to prisons. In fact, the rape of males by other males is frequently initiated by heterosexual men (Pinar 2001). Many other hierarchical institutions have been known to implement rape and sexual abuse as a means to scare or force domination over new or incoming groups. Male dominated groups, such as high school athletic teams, fraternities and the military, are known for hazing and inducting its members with sexual violence (Pinar 2001). Men are frequently subjected to being feminized and reminded of his role

in the hierarchy developed within the institution. William F. Pinar writes of the fraternity hazing reaching sexual exploitation:

At one fraternity as a large midwestern university, hazing resembled the verbal harassment evident in many prisons. Rush participants were called “girls,” and “wusses,” during a week of intense hazing. During this time they were compelled to perform in exaggerated female stereotypes. Finally, they were directed to “do to women what we did to you to get your manhood back” (Funk 1994, 17; quoted in Scarce 1997, 54). (2001, p. 847)

The level of sexual abuse used while establishing a power structure is thought to be demasculinizing and harmful to the male ego. In an attempt to regain their masculinity, the fraternity boys were told to subject women to the same abuse that they had undergone. These boys learned the power in sex-forced-submission, meaning that they experienced the humiliation and fear associated with sexual abuse, and gained knowledge of its effectiveness.

The history of rape, as understood through this research, suggests that some men have raped in order to achieve power and dominance over more than half the population. Scientific explanations have not always had the purest of intentions in determining what types of behavior are “natural” and which behaviors are “unnatural”. It is important to acknowledge the consequences of rape being “naturalized” in society, and the blame victim can endure for wearing the wrong thing or being out at the wrong time when she was selected to be a victim of rape (Thornhill and Brownmiller 2000). Using the excuse of raping because of biology negates the accountability of the destructive social implications of the rape. Homicidal rape challenges the argument that men rape for procreation, as does men raping men in prisons. Prison rape is an example of rape being used to establish power and dominance among members of the same sex. There is an

element of sex involved in sexual assault in prison, but there are obvious signs of forced sex resulting in fear and cooperation of those who do the raping. Rape can and has been used as a weapon to place men at the top the social power structure.

Chapter Four: Maintaining Male Dominance in Society

Clues throughout society suggest that some men unknowingly conform to the ancient practices of instilling the fear of victimization in women causing women to seek protection from men. The cycle of domination begins with taking the power, progresses into implementing that power and then using all available means to maintain a dominant position in society. In addition to the theory that rape has been socially constructed to establish power and dominance in civilization, men are also able to maintain their position of power socially and economically by means of female exploitation and harassment (Filipovic 2008). Some examples of the tools implemented to secure the power of masculinity are education and media reminders, sexual harassment, domestic violence and threats of rape. These examples are all social, everyday aspects of the power and domination created when rape is used as a tool of destruction.

Historically, extreme measures have been employed to protect masculinity and the manhood of certain groups. In chapter one, Dinah's brothers fought an entire village because they had appeared weak in their inability to protect their sister, and to avenge the property stolen from their father. Society has come to associate masculinity with power and protection. If any person attempts to challenge the manhood or masculinity of an individual, many men will seek violence to defend their position in the world. Feminist John Stoltenberg writes, "The male sex is socially constructed. It is a political entity that

flourishes only through acts of force and sexual terrorism” (1989/1990). It is opinions, like Stoltenberg’s, that influence the argument that men and women have become victims of stereotypes. Both men and women are pressured by society to conform to the roles prescribed in rape. Masculinity absorbs the role of the aggressor and femininity becomes the passive receiver of male aggression.

Betty Freidan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1973) and Michael Kimmel’s *The Masculine Mystique* (2006) both reflect the unwanted stereotypes of men and women. Paralleling Freidan’s writings on “the problem with no name,” the women’s movement brought persistent issues of women’s inequality to the forefront of American minds (1973). Organizations, like the National Organization of Women, pushed for men to aid in the household and attempted to prop the door open for women to be employed as something other than a secretary (Kimmel 2006). Women pushing for better jobs and higher pay made men feel pressure to relinquish power in the workplace, which resulted in males feeling as though women were requesting a piece of their manhood. Men’s roles evolved from companion to protector to breadwinner. With those transitions all men became affiliated with characteristics such as strong, aggressive and powerful. When women asked to become equal to men, men did not think of it as sharing power, but losing it to the weaker sex. Kimmel suggests that men took this shift in feminist thought as a direct blow to their masculinity. Some males had become so comfortable with their authority and dominance over the public sphere that the threat of women regaining the power taken over the centuries since the first rape was a huge threat to their manhood. Kimmel writes,

Animated by these fears, by the antipathy for women's entry into the public sphere, and by growing resentment of any demands that they change, many men resisted women's efforts to either open up the public sphere or to transform the private sphere. (2006, p. 181)

Women were pushing to regain their sexual independence, which made men defensive of their manhood to the extent that they began to resent women (Kimmel 2006). As described in *Manhood in America* (Kimmel 2006), men felt compelled to create a world where women were paid, posed and printed in magazines like *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. Certain publications portrayed women as sexy teases for male disposal, which is symbolic of securing male masculinity and his confidence in attracting women. The dominance of men has come to be defined by their strength, power and degree of manliness, which is based on socially developed concepts of what it means to be a man. As much as men and women attempt to be individuals, it is difficult to deny that males and females adapt to the gender specific identities, which are ascribed by society.

Men and women would not be in the positions they are today without the mindless maintenance of inequality performed by a few men. Pinar, a modern theorist, addressed the issues of men in society and their tendency towards violence in general (2001). Men and women have violent tendencies, but it is men who tend to capitalize on their violence, in part because society expects men to fight and be aggressive in order to achieve their goals. In one of his chapters he writes,

Hearn acknowledges that all men are not violent all the time, nor it is only men who are violent. But it is men who dominate the business of violence, men who seem to specialize in violence. (2001, p. 823)

Violence is associated with the essences of masculinity. It is true that not all males rape and abuse, but it is true that all men have gained privileges by being considered easy to

provoke into a violent state. Kimmel is in agreement with Pinar's observations. Men have been raised in a culture where boys are pushed to be tough, competitive and aggressive. In many ways, power has become another adjective to describe men in society. Filipovic "men maintain power by not being women" (2008, p. 19). This has become a slogan for men to live by.

In order for men to secure their strong position in society, men as well as women have been guilty of using the fear and anxiety associated with rape in advertisements and other media outlets. Television shows, such as *Law and Order: SUV* (Special Victims Unit), focus on sexual assault cases, where women are frequently the victims of horrific rapes and occasional homicides. These shows are not necessarily in production to scare women, but subconsciously they remind women that they are frequently cast and portrayed as the victim. The television program may be meant to inform the viewer of a high drama scenario, in which a woman becomes the victim of a violent rape but by the end of the program the viewer tends to feel a little unnerved about the violent society in which she lives. There have been studies of the affects of a rape story being told to women and how they respond by acting more isolated and slightly more fearful of the world around them (Riger and Gordon 1981; Bohner and Schwarz 1996). Stephanie Riger and Margaret Gordon found that women who have been told of a campus rape would change their behavior by not going out alone or by "wearing shoes that permit one to run" (1981, p. 83). To keep women out of the public sphere and out of the competitive workplace rape is portrayed as "...something that happens outside of the woman's home and enforces the idea that women are safe in the domestic realm, and at risk if they go out" (Filipovic 2008, p. 22).

Advertisements placed on billboards and in magazines also contribute to the oppressive social construct of rape and inequality. Fashion company Dolce and Gabbana is known for their controversial advertisements, but the image below steps beyond controversial and into propaganda. It gives the impression of a gang-rape scenario, where the clothes are the last things examined in the advertisement. Gucci is also known for its advertisement placing women beneath the bulge of male superiority,





Both of these advertisements are listed on the NOW (National Organization of Women) website of offensive advertisements (2010).

The modern day advertisements and propaganda have replaced the painted and sculpted masterpieces created centuries ago. The blatant display of women's submission by force is insinuated in both of these images. Much like living in a culture where the Greek and Roman gods are able to get away with rape, the oppressive nature of modern advertisements effectively reminds women of their place in society as the submissive victim. The Dolce and Gabbana advertisement portrays the rape and moment where female power is lost; the Gucci advertisement is what happens socially after the rape has taken place. This vulnerable position beneath men is kept constantly before women, to keep them fearful of the "weapon" being held above them. In the same regard, it could be argued that men feel obligated to stand firmly in the dominant position in society not only because women sought male protection after having discovered the horrors of rape, but also because men have come to associate their masculinity with controlling others.

The control men have grown accustomed to in society as well as the workplace has caused them to feel the need to protect their place in society from the rising competition from women. Over the decades, women have made attempts to gain power in the public realm and they are met with a great deal of resistance from men. During women's suffrage, an all male legislature did not initially think women deserved the right to vote. When women began to seek power, it was thought of as "unnatural" for a woman to hold public office (Mill 1870, p. 23). This is not to say that women are not capable of power, but just denied the opportunities to gain authority in a society that has been forced into the hands of males. As mentioned in chapter two, John Stuart Mill was an advocate for women's rights; and although this excerpt from *The Subjection of Women* (1870) suggests that women are inferior in body to men, Mill acknowledges the possibility that women are capable of participating in politics and battle.

In the feudal ages, on the contrary, war and politics were not thought unnatural to women, because not unusual; it seemed natural that women of privileged classes should be of manly character, inferior in nothing but bodily strength to their husbands and fathers. (1870, p. 23)

For the time, this quote contradicts the social beliefs of women's character and abilities. This acknowledgement is necessary in the theory of domination by rape because it grants women the benefit of the doubt. In many ways it is saying this, "when you extend human rights to women, they act like human beings with individual needs, ambitions, and desires – just like men" (Filipovic 2008, p. 17). The thought of women having similar ambitions and desires as men was and is discomfoting to many men. Some men have felt threatened by women gaining power socially and economically because they have reason

to believe that women are capable of the same things as men. Kimmel addresses this concept in *The Masculine Mystique* (2006). He states,

Of course, such sentiments [by NOW] had enormous implications for American men, because feminism demanded that men change – that men cease abusing, raping, and battering women, that men begin to share in daily chores around the household, and that they accept that women were working right alongside them. (Kimmel 2006, p. 181)

Knowing that change meant opening the door of opportunity to let women into the public sphere and require men to participate in the private sphere was a direct blow to masculinity. If men had thought this request to be impossible due to the passive “nature” of women, why would they prevent and resent women for attempting the impossible? The fact is that women posed a threat to the life to which men had grown accustomed.

In order to keep women out of the workplace, sexual harassment is implemented as a means of causing discomfort to women who pose a threat to a male dominated workplace. Catharine MacKinnon writes about the experience of women in the workplace and sexual harassment in her book *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: a case of sex discrimination* (1979). Frequently, films and television programs insinuate that women have “slept their way to the top,” which is not necessarily the case. If it was the only way women could gain promotions, than it would be an example of males abusing their power of authority and sexually assaulting a co-worker. As far as the women in society are concerned, “harassment is a method to remind women that they do not share a man’s freedom to move through the public sphere the same as men do” (Filipovic 2008, p. 22-23). Women were and are unwelcome in the public realm. Their “freedom” is constantly threatened by the possibility of victimization. College campuses,

the workplace, and the home have all been places where male authority has been challenged or tested and women have become the victims of abuse.

The high unemployment rates during the current recession have marked a noticeable increase in domestic violence. The Los Angeles paper, Daily News as well as other local news reports, published statistics that showed a correlation between the recession and the number of reported domestic disputes. The journalist, Dana Bartholomew, reported,

Since the recession began in December 2007, the number of families seeking help at the center has doubled. The number of serious domestic violence cases being prosecuted by the City Attorney's Office has jumped 10 percent. Women, experts say, have borne the brunt of anger and frustration over lost jobs, foreclosed homes, repossessed cars and overdrawn bank accounts. (9/29/2009)

It can be gathered from these numbers that when males lose their means of income they are not only dealing with the financial stress, but also the emotional stress of this challenge to their masculinity. Not being able to provide for one's family has become a greater issue recently. It would be interesting to see if women were shifting into the role of "breadwinner" during this current position and men were unsettled about this transition or if the increase in domestic violence is rooted in issues of male masculinity.

The first rape has been nurtured into a monstrous power structure. Humans, both men and women, have played into the roles assigned to them in rape scenarios. Recent feminist movements have attempted to change the stereotypical roles of males and females by pressuring male authority and attempting to shatter the glass ceiling when met with resistance. In times of male vulnerability and threats to masculinity, the public reminders of the consequences of rape become more necessary. Tools of propaganda,

harassment and violence have acted as means to secure and maintain the socially constructed hierarchy. The effects of such a powerful tyrant as rape has misled and misdirected its subjects in such a way that humans have become oblivious to the damage they have done to themselves. The threads that have woven the fabric of gender inequality stemmed from the cultural affirmation of masculinity and the discovery of power in sexual assault.

Conclusion:

At the root of gender inequality, is the under-acknowledged and essential fear of rape. Women have been placed at a persistent disadvantage in society because of their debilitating fear of becoming a victim of rape. Men have found the key to power and domination over a civilization, which has granted them a great deal of authority in the world. Male power spawned the child of masculinity and manhood. All of the components listed above are currently working together to make men the aggressive and women the passive members of society. Humans have created a social structure by which they live. It is greatly influenced by male citizens because of the control they have seized over women and by the power women have relinquished to men. This socially created system has placed, potentially pressured, men into a position of opportunity and growth, where as women have been stunted by their initial fear and oppression.

The history of rape and the historical examples presented here offer insight into the development of inequality. The power that was established by individual men has transitioned into an abuse and domination of one sex over the other. The effects of the fear of victimization have lasted into the modern era and persistently kept women a notch

below men. By identifying the beginning of rape and its influential stories, such as those in the Bible and mythology which people have referenced for moral guidance, we are better able to understand the ways in which the rape, the victim and the consequences have impacted women's lives for centuries.

Some of the challenges in writing on such a controversial topic are the opposing positions to the theory of power and rape. It does not take long to realize that Thornhill and Palmer's research rejects Brownmiller's claims that rape is an act to gain power. They argue that men rape women in order to procreate despite the rejections of the female (2000). Thornhill and Palmer offer their two reasons as to why people have not been able to stop rape,

- Most people don't know much about why humans have the desires, emotions, and values that they have, including those that cause rape. This is because most people lack any understanding of the ultimate (that is, evolutionary) causes of why humans are the way they are. This lack of understanding has severely limited people's knowledge of the exact proximate (immediate) causes of rape, thus limiting the ability of concerned people to change the behavior.
- For 25 years, attempts to prevent rape have not only failed to be informed by an evolutionary approach; they have been on explanations designed to make ideological statements rather than to be consistent with scientific knowledge of human behavior. (2000, p. 2)

The research presented in this paper offers an alternative to the evolutionary biologists' theories and other "nature" based arguments. The reason societies have been unsuccessful in their attempts to put a stop to rape is because men have learned that by raping they gain authority and power, which makes them the superior sex. Rape is a socially constructed tool implemented to erect a power structure based on the premise of fear and the threat of rape, as well as sexual and physical domination of one sex over the other. The affects of the first rape taught man that he could use forced sex as a means of

domination, and in that he saw his ticket to power. Prison rapes have become an integral part of this research because it is an example of rape being used within a controlled population of men in order to gain power and domination. It also has the conceptual component of the protection that is offered by men to women in society. Men cannot procreate physically together, so rape cannot be explained by the “spreading of the seed” theory.

The economic status of women and the disparities in financial compensation for males and females were a motivating factor in this research. Uncovering the origin of gender inequality would provide an opportunity for women to gain higher pay and equal opportunities in the workplace. Currently, women are estimated to have an average weekly earning of \$657, where as men has an average of \$819 (IWPR 2010). The persistent inequality in pay must have foundations in the social inequality women face today. Women have been blamed for their lack of career opportunity because of their maternity leave (Harrison 1964), insufficient education, lack of experience and personal desire to pursue a family (Naff 1994). Most of these excuses for women’s inequality are derived from the expectations men and women have for the lifestyle women are “supposed” to lead. However, in the context of this theory, women were told that it was safer in the home which allowed men to convince women that they would be better off staying home and allowing the man of the house to be the social face of the family.

This dynamic left women without a need for formal education, work experience in occupations not pertaining to the household and a lack of confidence in their abilities beyond their front door. Pressure to stay within the private sphere stunted women’s social and economic growth. Men were successful in permeating a fear of victimization

throughout society, which was so debilitating to women that they were able to seize control of public realm. With time, male masculinity became associated with their work in society and men grew protective of their place in civilization. In order to maintain their control and authority, they were able to educate women on their vulnerabilities by reminding them of rape and victimization. Through harassment and persistent violence, humans have created a hierarchical power structure that is dominated by men.

The social construction of manhood and masculinity is a core reason why the power structure humans live under is still fully functional. The social premise can be boiled down to this. If masculinity were socially derived from human history and expectations of the male sex, than it would be reasonable to conclude that Stoltenberg was correct when he wrote, “The male sex is socially constructed. It is a political entity that flourishes only through acts of force and sexual terrorism” (1989/1990, p. 27). This component of the thesis is important to determine that humans have reified rape and made it appear natural and unchangeable. If rape were in fact natural, there would be no hope for the future of equality. Fortunately, notion that rape is a human reification suggests that changes can occur in the direction of gender equality.

There is still a tremendous amount of research that could be done to test the theories presented here, as well as a variety of scientific methods to test the affects of rape on a population. For instance, the rape of homosexuals by heterosexual men, individual case studies of rape, and the surveyed affects of campus rapes on female coeds, etc. To move in the direction of a less theoretical discussion, it would be beneficial to do empirical analysis of marital statistics and co-habitation rates correlated to rape and harassment statistics to test the theory that women may wed or cohabitate in

order to secure protection. The possibilities are vast, and it would be interesting to conduct further research and testing of this theory. There are many integral parts to the mechanism that has infected human culture, but it is time to uncover the secret to inequality and push in the direction of equality.

The changes in social behavior will not change quickly, but with time and mutual acceptance of the sexes there is an inkling of hope for change. It will take men coming to terms with the idea that women are capable of working in the same environments as men and are willing to embrace a fair portion of domestic responsibilities, it will be difficult for women to climb the power ladder (Freidan 1997). The power gained by women would mean a shared power with men, and unfortunately relinquishing and sharing power is not an easy task. Over time, man has come to value the power and the aggression it took for him to seize authority and he named it “manhood” or “masculinity”. In order to maintain his self-imposed prison of manliness, men have effectively utilized the threat of rape and propaganda to maximize female submission. Females, too, have become trapped in their personal gates of fear because they have come to depend on men for protection and to some extent material necessity. Both sexes have unconsciously fallen victim to a system of hierarchy, which we have forgotten that we in fact created. Bring the origins of rape and the affect of rape to light can bring awareness and possibly understanding so people can begin moving in the direction of repairing the relationships between men and women that have been destructive for so long.

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