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Book Reviews

Kristin J Anderson (2015) *Modern Misogyny: Anti-Feminism in a Post-Feminist Era*. Oxford University Press.

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In her book *Modern Misogyny*, Kirsten Anderson provides an excellent resource for those who teach high school, college or graduate school, as well as those who are interested in learning more about women's rights – as human rights. Anderson answers the timely question that those who teach feminist courses constantly hear: why do we still need women's movements and courses of study about them? This book is a must read for those students taking classes in women's studies, gender and psychology, victimization; frankly, any class that suggests society still needs a women's movement. Over the past few decades, there has been a backlash against the women's movement as evidenced by individual behavior, print and social media, and public policies. Those who support the backlash essentially claim that the need for a women's movement is over: it has achieved its purpose. The naysayers commonly make statements about what feminism is and argue for its rightful demise, but without citing data or facts to support such claims. Anderson digs deep into books and academic peer-reviewed journal articles to uncover both sides of the story. The evidence is unequivocal: women have not obtained safety in their homes or neighborhoods; nor have they received equal pay in the workforce or justice in the courthouse. Anderson provides a thorough and well-informed overview of why the women's movement is not dead and why it is still needed. She discusses the state of the science on why feminism is good for us all – even men.

Throughout the book, Anderson discusses these important issues across all aspects of women's lives; at individual, relational, communal and societal levels. By addressing feminism across the socioecological model of a feminist's life, Anderson leaves no stone unturned to guide the reader through understanding why feminism is good for everyone. To facilitate this, Anderson thoroughly discusses what it is, and the difference between feminist attitudes and feminist identity. She points out that some individuals espouse feminist attitudes but do not identify as feminist *per se*. The research presented in *Modern Misogyny* suggests that this distinction is real and women should be aware of and understand that difference to make informed choices. Anderson also reviews the five stages of feminist identity development proposed by Downing and Roush: passive acceptance; revelation; embeddedness-emanation; synthesis; and active commitment.

At the individual level, the reader learns that feminists who identify as such are healthier, both psychologically and physically. Anderson discusses Yakushko's study of mostly white US women. In that study, feminists report better autonomy in life, personal growth, and purpose in

life. Anderson also reports on Fisher and Good's (2004) work regarding the 'angry feminist' line of thinking, which shows that, with the exception of those feminists in the revelation stage, feminists report less anger than non-feminists. This sense of self in turn leads to feminists having positive attitudes about their bodies. Feminists also report being more likely to be in (heterosexual) relationships than non-feminists and experience less relationship discord. In the book, the reader is also led through a series of studies that report feminist sexual relationships and sexual health outcomes, which are also more positive as a result of feminists having greater agency. Overall, Anderson does an excellent job of presenting the correlations between women's health and feminism. However, she also raises some important concerns: the large majority of studies are conducted with college-age participants, not community-based samples, and lack participants from under-represented populations.

Anderson goes on to dispel myths about feminists with regard to their relationships: feminists fare better in both their intimate relationships and friendships than non-feminists. While critics of feminism suggest feminists are male-bashing, male-hating lesbians, quite the opposite is true according to studies enumerated by Anderson. Results from the work of Rose and Roades (1987) revealed feminists report no differences in the numbers of, or levels of satisfaction with, male or female friendships. However, feminists report more friendships with other feminist women across the lifespan. In fact, even feminists' male partners report greater relationship stability and sexual satisfaction. Yes, even men report happier relationships with feminists. Perhaps this is due to feminists reporting greater self-efficacy and empowerment, which translates into letting their partners know their needs and wants.

Sadly, Anderson does not report great advantages for women, including feminists, at the community or societal levels. She does an excellent job, however, of relaying accounts of the quagmire feminists find themselves in. Anderson walks the reader through Glick and Fiske's (1999) two types of sexism: hostile and benevolent. This chapter in particular will be helpful to college and graduate students as they navigate the world outside their parents' homes and dorm room walls. Young women experience prejudice during their academic training as well as when negotiating the interviewing process for their first jobs post-college. Some struggle with knowing why they were made to feel uncomfortable. Yet by understanding the two types of sexism, students may be better prepared to identify and label them, and thus compete more fairly in the classrooms and workplace.

Perhaps the most revealing chapters in the book are when Anderson discusses the post-9/11 backlash on women. She describes how the media portrayed helping professionals as male heroes and women as victims and widows. The reality is that both the heroes and victims were comprised of a variety of races, classes, sexual orientations and gender. Anderson paints a complicated picture of those who lost loved ones in the tragedy and who were there to help among the ruins. The growing sentiment that feminism is dead continues, and Anderson suggests that the movement of individualism fuels that sentiment, promoting the proposition that women only need to worry about themselves. Through mass media images of how women are supposed to look and behave, women are thrown into a world where they pay huge amounts of money to become more sexy and are often devalued in the process, believing that advancing themselves through consumerism is a choice. These beliefs persist, despite the erosion of women's real choices regarding their bodies and their lack of equality in many spheres of their lives.

Anderson elucidates how women are situated in relation to the world around them, but she also asks the reader to struggle with, and answer, difficult questions. Few studies Anderson cites included sufficiently large samples of minority participants to allow conclusions about other than white women to be drawn. She aptly notes this limitation of her book is due to a dearth of available research.

One of the most important aspects of Anderson's work is her reflection throughout the book regarding women in different spheres of life, including those in the military, the workplace and athletic playing fields. Women are often treated as a homogeneous group while common sense dictates that each woman is unique and has different, lived experiences. Anderson repeatedly notes how racism and sexism intersect, leaving women of color in a more perilous state than white women regarding their safety in homes and on the streets, and in their treatment in the media. Hopefully, *Modern Misogyny* will inspire emerging scholars to conduct the work that remains to be done. How the feminist backlash has affected women and men of color and individuals who comprise disenfranchised groups remains a gap in the literature. Without recognizing and acknowledging the challenges women face through their multidimensional lives, we will continue to take for granted the work of our feminist forbearers and forget to take up the equality torch and run with it.

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