
The Male Privilege Checklist

An Unabashed Imitation of an article by Peggy McIntosh

In 1990, Wellesley College professor Peggy McIntosh wrote an essay called "[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)". McIntosh observes that whites in the U.S. are "taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group." To illustrate these invisible systems, McIntosh wrote a list of 26 invisible privileges whites benefit from.

As McIntosh points out, men also tend to be unaware of their own privileges as men. In the spirit of McIntosh's essay, I thought I'd compile a list similar to McIntosh's, focusing on the invisible privileges benefiting men.

Due to my own limitations, this list is unavoidably U.S. centric. I hope that writers from other cultures will create new lists, or modify this one, to reflect their own experiences.

Since I first compiled it, the list has been posted many times on internet discussion groups. Very helpfully, many people have suggested additions to the checklist. More commonly, of course, critics (usually, but not exclusively, male) have pointed out men have disadvantages too – being drafted into the army, being expected to suppress emotions, and so on. These are indeed bad things – but I never claimed that life for men is all ice cream sundaes.

Obviously, there are individual exceptions to most problems discussed on the list. The existence of individual exceptions does not mean that [general problems](#) are not a concern.

Pointing out that men are privileged in no way denies that bad things happen to men. Being privileged does not mean men are given everything in life for free; being privileged does not mean that men do not work hard, do not suffer. In many cases – from a boy being bullied in school, to a soldier dying in war – the sexist society that maintains male privilege also does great harm to boys and men.

In the end, however, it is men and not women who make the most money; men and not women who dominate the government and the corporate boards; men and not women who dominate virtually all of

13. If I seek political office, my relationship with my children, or who I hire to take care of them, will probably not be scrutinized by the press.

14. My elected representatives are mostly people of my own sex. The more prestigious and powerful the elected position, the more this is true.

15. When I ask to see "the person in charge," odds are I will face a person of my own sex. The higher-up in the organization the person is, the surer I can be.

16. As a child, chances are I was encouraged to be more active and outgoing than my sisters. ([More](#)).

17. As a child, I could choose from an almost infinite variety of children's media featuring positive, active, non-stereotyped heroes of my own sex. I never had to look for it; male protagonists were (and are) the default.

18. As a child, chances are I got more teacher attention than girls who raised their hands just as often. ([More](#)).

19. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether or not it has sexist overtones.

20. I can turn on the television or glance at the front page of the newspaper and see people of my own sex widely represented.

21. If I'm careless with my financial affairs it won't be attributed to my sex.

22. If I'm careless with my driving it won't be attributed to my sex.

23. I can speak in public to a large group without putting my sex on trial.

24. Even if I sleep with a lot of women, there is no chance that I will be seriously labeled a "slut," nor is there any male counterpart to "slut-bashing." ([More](#)).

25. I do not have to worry about the message my wardrobe sends about my sexual availability. ([More](#)).

26. My clothing is typically less expensive and better-constructed than women's clothing for the same social status. While I have fewer options, my clothes will probably fit better than a woman's without tailoring. ([More](#)).

27. The grooming regimen expected of me is relatively cheap and consumes little time. ([More](#)).

28. If I buy a new car, chances are I'll be offered a better price than a woman buying the same car. ([More](#)).

29. If I'm not conventionally attractive, the disadvantages are relatively small and easy to ignore.

30. I can be loud with no fear of being called a shrew. I can be aggressive with no fear of being called a bitch.

31. I can ask for legal protection from violence that happens mostly to men without being seen as a selfish special interest, since that kind of violence is called "crime" and is a general social concern. (Violence that happens mostly to women is usually called "domestic violence" or "acquaintance rape," and is seen as a special interest issue.)

32. I can be confident that the ordinary language of day-to-day existence will always include my sex. "All men are created equal," mailman, chairman, freshman, he.

33. My ability to make important decisions and my capability in general will never be questioned depending on what time of the month it is.

34. I will never be expected to change my name upon marriage or questioned if I don't change my name.

35. The decision to hire me will not be based on assumptions about whether or not I might choose to have a family sometime soon.

42. In general, I am under much less pressure to be thin than my female counterparts are. ([More](#)). If I am fat, I probably suffer fewer social and economic consequences for being fat than fat women do. ([More](#)).

43. If I am heterosexual, it's incredibly unlikely that I'll ever be beaten up by a spouse or lover. ([More](#)).

44. Complete strangers generally do not walk up to me on the street and tell me to "smile." (More: [1](#) [2](#)).

45. Sexual harassment on the street virtually never happens to me. I do not need to plot my movements through public space in order to avoid being sexually harassed, or to mitigate sexual harassment. ([More](#).)

45. On average, I am not interrupted by women as often as women are interrupted by men.

46. I have the privilege of being unaware of my male privilege.

(Compiled by Barry Deutsch, aka "Ampersand." Permission is granted to reproduce this list in any way, for any purpose, so long as the acknowledgment of Peggy McIntosh's work is not removed. If possible, I'd appreciate it if folks who use it would tell me how they used it; my email is barry-at-amptoons-dot-com.)

(This is a continually updated document; the most current version of The Male Privilege Checklist can always be found at amptoons.com/blog/the-male-privilege-checklist . To see posts discussing the Male Privilege Checklist and various items on it, [please visit this archive page](#)).

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Related link

For another feminist list with a different thematic approach, see Andrea Rubenstein's "[Think We've Already Achieved Equality? Think Again.](#)"

A [list of links to many other "privilege lists."](#)

761 Responses to

701

Jake S id says:

August 13, 2013 at 10:41 am

| Edited to add: *Wow! Comment number 700!*

... is only 38 away according to the numbers that appear next to the comments on my screen.



702 **Jake S** **id**

religion might make sense in a confessional state, for example, but not in secular America. I also agree, with Yeats, that it's more important to have 'good men' in office than 'representative men'. That said, we aren't really talking about excluding people here. I think women should have every right to run for office. I also think that, because of innate biological differences (being less competitive, less dominant, less status seeking, less risk taking, etc.) women are likely to be less interested in running for leadership roles than men, and less well suited for leadership, so in a fair world without preferences for either gender, most political leadership positions would be occupied by men. That doesn't particularly bother me.

I'm with Ampersand, of course, that the dominance of government by rich people is a moral scandal.



707

Am e and says:

August 13, 2013 at 2:06 pm

Hector, at one time people gave exactly the same explanation as to why there would never be a significant number of women becoming doctors and lawyers. And yet...

708

Hec o _S _Cla e says:

August 13, 2013 at 2:49 pm

Re: Hector, at one time people gave exactly the same explanation as to why there would never be a significant number of women becoming doctors and lawyers.

The medical field depends on IQ and conscientiousness more than social dominance, and it is the very opposite of a high-risk endeavour (if you have the skills). Same with my field, biology (most undergraduates in the field are women right now, and I think a majority of graduate students as well). Lawyering is a bit different, but still, it's not as weighted towards the androgen-linked traits as politics is.

I don't know if you or I will be around in 50 years, but I'd be happy to take a bet that most countries will still have male dominated governments by then.

709

da id b e says:

August 13, 2013 at 3:56 pm

I think both sides of the argument about male/female dominance have been somewhat simple minded. I suspect that most social scientists would agree with something like this: for any given variable related to dominance drives,

1. Numbers of men and women are not allat8cm B.6 (d) -0.-0.6omlt8ai (ia) 1.3 . 0 0 Tm /2-0.0

As to what to do about it, I think most Americans would be OK with the goal of society that, so far as possible, didn't push people one way or another based on their sex chromosomes. Accomplishing that is the hard part, and there are no perfect solutions. I could live with gender-based leadership quotas, but the Supreme Court and a majority of Americans couldn't. You can get the same effect with much less opposition using random selection of leaders, an idea that probably won't work very well for top executives but actually has great potential for legislative functions using what are known as "policy juries."



710 **Hec o _S _Cla e** says:

August 13, 2013 at 4:01 pm

Hi David,

We can test the biology vs. culture hypothesis. we can see whether boys who were exposed to more testosterone in the second trimester womb, exhibit greater leadership ability and social dominance as adults. the answer is that they do.

For example, I have a whole suite of feminized personality traits, most likely linked to low prenatal testosterone, and largely for that reason I a
Would probably be successful if I tried running for elected office.



711 **da id b e** says:

August 13, 2013 at 4:11 pm

Hector-

That's not a controlled experiment—i.e., it was not randomised. (The Nazis could have done controlled experiments on it but didn't.) You do not know what the other correlates of androgen exposure were. Also, you do not know that effects on women are the same as effects on men—in fact we know that reproductive hormones can have paradoxical effects depending on dose and gender. Also you do not know how culture interacts with the biology. What do know is that culture can change not just average outcomes, but also their variances.



712 **Hec o _S _Cla e** says:

August 13, 2013 at 4:16 pm

David,

Correct. Running controlled experiments of this nature on humans would be wildly immoral, so we are stuck with indirect correlational evidence now and probably for ever. That'

Upon reflection, I think that most well-meaning people can be convinced further that:

- a. the causes of these differences are partly cultural and partly biological. They will never go entirely away.
- b. providing equal opportunity is going to require some degree of cultural change.
- c. in some cases you cannot provide equal opportunity without also imposing more equal outcomes. For example, no woman can possibly have equal opportunity for a field or position with no female role models.

Not that that means you're wrong (I don't believe much in treating what 'most scholars say' as revealed truth, outside the hard sciences where there are objective standards of truth- one must actually consider the evidence) but I'm not really sure that was the strongest argument you could have made. (Also, the Padaungs practice some pretty damaging cosmetic procedures on women, i.e. the neck lengthening thing, so possibly not a culture you want to emulate).

Regarding the actual merits of your argument: I think the fact that social dominance / risk taking / competitiveness are clearly affected by androgen/estrogen balances, are pretty good evidence (though of course not conclusive) that the differences in these traits between men and women are mostly rooted in physiology. We can see this by, for example, looking at differences *within* each sex in traits which affect leadership, and then seeing if those differences are correlated with differences in androgen exposure (short version: they are).

Re: (let's face it, a portion of women in the US are raised to try and find a man to support them, are told that the worst possible outcome could be to have to rely on yourself. How much more dis-empowered you could possibly be?).

If women choose that, out of other choices they are free to make (and I think that a large number of women are and always will be happy to depend on a man who supports them), then I don't see what's 'dis-empowered' about it. More importantly, I don't see what's *wrong* with it. It's an arrangement that works for a very large number of men and women: and that, too, I think, is *natural*, not the result of social conditioning.

Re: I am pretty big proponent of nurture over nature to begin with but I feel pretty confident that society and not biology are what keep women from pursuing positions of more power.

I'm sure you are confident, but you also seem to be wrong, as the findings of behavioural ecology tell us. On the other hand, you

I've been restricted from performing my job for new residents and patients before I have met them on the grounds that they 'do not want a man in the house'

My superiors and managers have all been female, without exception

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your experiences of discrimination as a male in a care profession, the assumption that it is a female profession, are that way because patriarchy made it so.

I knew that it was a female profession going into it, and was prepared for the consequences. I get by and I (try to) keep positive. Though I endured them for many years, a lot of those experiences are behind me now as I am now a qualified nurse in a much nicer setting with much more understanding peers and am a respected member of the team.

This is not my contention. I take umbrage with being told that I have privilege based entirely on my gender rather than my circumstance. I find it hurtful, ignorant and counter-progressive.

All too often, particularly since it has become more popular, a person will end a discussion with 'You do not understand, because privilege'. I'm sure you can understand how frustrating and undermining this is, as there is no counter argument to this kind of rhetoric.

On saying that I appreciate what you are saying, especially your acknowledgement of my experiences. Sometimes that is all it takes to help a situation, a little acknowledgement.



725 **Va** says:
August 26, 2013 at 3:46 am

Moi sez: "... are that way because patriarchy made it so."

Your use of the word "patriarchy", instead of what the mechanism really is, "society" and "societal consensus", unfairly blames men for creating these situations.

As an example, one attempt to eliminate "patriarchy" – the bill to get rid of permanent alimony in Florida – was not just opposed by men. Not by a longshot. The disparate impact is obviously on men, since they pay something like 98% of the alimony and even more as a percentage of dollar amounts, but many women did not want to get rid of it. Because



727

Heero _S _Cla e says:

August 27, 2013 at 2:26 pm

Re: Men and women both are responsible in society, not only for laws and regulations, but also for mechanisms such as women desiring to "marry up" financially on the whole.

I don't think that's society, it's our basic biology. Women tend to prioritize high financial/social/educational status in their husband/boyfriend/etc., more than men do. (With many exceptions, of course). I don't think that's a bad thing.



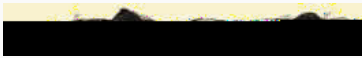
728

Jake S id says:

August 27, 2013 at 3:06 pm

Women tend to prioritize high financial/social/educational status in their husband/boyfriend/etc., more than men do.

Men tend to be more likely to have high financial/social/educational status than women in our culture. It seems likely that were the financial/social/educational positions reversed, men would prioritize those things.

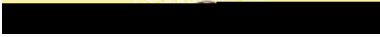


729

Robe says:

August 27, 2013 at 4:42 pm

That's a testable hypothesis, Jake, because there are men in that position – poor men. Do those men show a differential preference for wealthy/powerful/highly-educated high-status females?




730

Jake S id says:

August 27, 2013 at 7:46 pm

I don't feel like it really is testable via your suggestion.



731

Heero _S _Cla e says:

August 27, 2013 at 8:34 pm

Re: Men tend to be more likely to have high financial/social/educational status than women in our culture. It seems likely that were the financial/social/educational positions reversed, men would prioritize those things.

A behavioural ecologist would probably disagree with you, and say that what's going on, at the most basic level, is that 'sperm is cheap, eggs are expensive'. Sex/reproduction involves a bigger investment on the part of females than males, therefore females are generally going to be 1) the more selective sex, and 2) the sex that selects more for status, resources, intelligence, and other traits that can affect the ability to provide for her and the child.

I don't need to tell you which explanation I find more convincing. I'm sure culture plays some role, but that doesn't really solve the matter, because it doesn't show us in which direction culture is distorting nature. It might be that women generally prefer provider/dependent relationships and feminist/capitalist ideology convinces them to think they want equal relationships; or it might be the other way round.



Pingback: [El privilegio femenino | ¿Quién se beneficia de tu hombría?](#)

732 **John Mc amme on** says:

September 10, 2013 at 5:20 pm

I respect your opinions, but i'm just going to emphasize more or so the fact that this is all your opinion. As a male i can really say about half of these "privileges" are true, whilst some of them just flat out aren't. You're assuming way to much. I've had less opportunity because

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