



# Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation

*Lorri Glover*

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Between the generations of Thomas Jefferson and Jefferson Davis, the culture of white Southerners experienced significant changes, including the establishment of a normative male identity that exuded confidence, independence, and power. *Southern Sons*, the first work in masculinity studies to concentrate on the early South, explores how young men of the southern gentry came of age between the 1790s and the 1820s. Lorri Glover examines how standards for manhood came about, how young men experienced them in the early South, and how those values transformed many American sons into southern nationalists who ultimately would conspire to tear apart the republic they had been raised to lead.

This was the first generation of boys raised to conceive of themselves as Americans, as well as the first cohort of self-defined southern men. They grew up believing that the fate of the American experiment in self-government depended on their ability to put away personal predispositions and perform prescribed roles. Because men faced demanding gender norms, boys had to pass exacting tests of manhood?in education, refinement, courting, careers, and slave mastery. Only then could they join the ranks of the elite and claim power in society.

Revealing the complex interplay of nationalism and regionalism in the lives of southern men, Glover brings new insight to the question of what led the South toward sectionalism and civil war.

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