

Chapter 1

Sleep Is for Sissies: Elite Males as Paragons of Wakefulness

Sleep is an absurdity, a bad habit. We can't suddenly throw off the thralldom of the habit, but we shall throw it off.

—Thomas Edison, 1914

Sleep is for sissies!

—Shelley Ross, ca. 2005

Denigration of the critical need for rest has deep roots in American culture. For more than two centuries, a chorus of influential voices, virtually all male, has proclaimed sleep a vice and sleep deprivation a virtue. This attitude has remained both prevalent and relatively constant up to the very recent past. To be sure, some in elite circles have contested this dismissive stance and defended moderation. But on balance, potent promoters of sleep deprivation have done more to shape values and assumptions. The resulting habitus has governed thinking on sleeping time for the American workforce in the modern age.

Americans have long striven to emulate those who have won (or at least appear to be winning) the race of life. Even in the preindustrial era, important figures in the business community decried the amount of time squandered at rest. With the onset of industrialization, time discipline tightened, and allocating scarce time to dozing came under tougher criticism. As Max Weber observed, by the early twentieth century the business corporation had displaced the military as the preeminent institution instilling discipline in modern society. Accordingly, throughout the past century, corporate leaders occupied a highly privileged position in setting norms for rest, mainly through self-reports on their own behavior. Luminaries in other major

realms of endeavor joined captains of industry in casting aspersions on those who lay unconscious when they could be up and doing. The pronouncements and practices of the successful received extensive and usually adoring attention from the mass media. A recurrent theme in this discourse of heroic wakefulness has been the unmanly weakness associated with indulging in a reasonable amount of sleep.¹

During the preindustrial and industrializing eras, moral opposition to any idleness informed a Protestant work ethic that celebrated perseverance at one's vocational calling and implicitly denigrated sleep as a form of idleness. As anthropologist Matthew Wolf-Meyer has observed, influential Puritan cleric Cotton Mather "equate[d] sleep with the avoidance of divine service and a lack of consciousness of one's earthly obligations." Protestant values and the ready availability of opportunities for white men drove the strenuous pursuit of social and economic advancement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many advanced, and some of the biggest winners and those who closely studied their habits were happy to share the secrets of success. In explaining the rags-to-riches formula, business leaders and their admirers repeatedly commended sleep deprivation as a significant asset in personal strategies of upward mobility. These narratives spoke of male experience to a male audience, capitalizing on opportunities to portray sleep as an effeminate indulgence.²

Probably the most famous American of the eighteenth century, Benjamin Franklin, was a wealthy publisher and popular author before he became an inventor and Founding Father. His *Poor Richard's Almanack* was a huge best seller in annual editions from the 1730s through the 1750s, outselling the Bible and eventually appearing in over a hundred reprint editions in seven languages. The almanac's maxims constituted a compendium of instructions on the way to get ahead, predicated on the fundamental assumption that qualities of personal character—integrity, diligence, thrift, industry, and the like—were the main determinants of upward mobility. Franklin's wide-ranging advice on self-discipline naturally extended to rest and wakefulness. The most famous piece of advice, of course, was this 1735 contribution: "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." Reinforcement of the first part of that recommendation came seven years later: "He that riseth late must trot all day, and shall scarce overtake his business at night." In his own life, Franklin from early young adulthood embraced not extreme sleeplessness but rather moderation. In the 1730s he followed a schedule that called for sleeping from ten P.M. to five A.M. as part of a comprehensive plan

for every hour of the day. This plan and its rationale were set forth in an autobiography that went through fifty-five editions between 1794 and 1833 and reached a wide audience of young working-class men, among others. While residing in France in the 1780s, the whimsical old statesman amused himself and readers of the *Journal of Paris* with a fanciful proposal that the city's residents sleep from eight P.M. to four A.M., at which time the ringing of all local church bells would awaken them, with cannon fire as an additional alarm, if needed. In both his minor and major writings, Franklin emphasized the virtues of moderate amounts of sleep, upholding a standard in the range of seven to eight hours a day in a way that balanced rest and wakefulness.³

However, this embodiment of American success also undercut his basic message by casting sleep in a negative light. The 1741 edition of *Poor Richard* carried this harsh exhortation and admonition: "Up, Sluggard, and waste not life; in the grave will be sleeping enough." Two years later, the almanac told its readers that "the sleeping Fox catches no poultry." In *Poor Richard Improved*, Franklin sharpened the point further by noting "how much more [time] than is necessary" was lost to sleep by those who forgot those two maxims. His admiring sketch of John Calvin, the leading formulator of the Protestant ethic, pressed the critique further: "He . . . slept but very little; and as his whole time was filled up with useful action, he may be said to have *lived* long, tho' he died at fifty-five years of age, since *sleep* and *sloth* can hardly be called *living*." It is not clear which association was meant to be more damning—sleep and death or sleep and sloth.⁴

In the period before charismatic capitalists came to dominate the popular imagination in lifestyle matters, military leaders held a more privileged position as role models. In the early nineteenth century, Napoleon fascinated Americans. *Gunn's Domestic Medicine*, a popular manual, extolled the sleep pattern of the French emperor. The guide to self-care and healthful living approvingly reported that Napoleon slept only four hours a night when engaged in an active military operation and five hours at less exciting times. Using an alarm watch, Napoleon arose at two A.M. to begin his day. John Gunn held that anyone could follow a similar schedule by applying himself to breaking old habits and forming new ones. Over the course of the nineteenth century, alarm clocks came into common use to cut sleep and enforce abstemious routines.⁵

Clock time became a central component of the time discipline necessitated by industrialism. Employers had to drill masses of workers recruited to the textile mills and other early production sites from agrarian backgrounds.

On the farm, natural rhythms based on the availability of daylight and the changing seasons had always governed work activities. The quest to impose mechanical time relied not only on clocks but also on general alarms. Factory and plantation bells alerted workers to arise before dawn and begin preparing for their responsibilities. Managers sanctioned employees who nodded off on the job. In Philadelphia cotton mills in the 1830s, for example, historian Cynthia Shelton found that “children would often fall asleep at their jobs and had to be struck or strapped to be kept awake.” Masters saw themselves as inculcating in their subordinates a stricter discipline that would become internalized as self-control, a virtue deemed essential to economic progress. But across the class divide, many workers saw only a hard authoritarianism, deep exploitation, and challenges to ethnic and occupational customs; and they often resisted vigorously. In this initial stage, the struggle was over setting and meeting novel standards of regularity. Workers were to resemble as closely as possible the tireless machinery that drove innovative production processes. Sleep practices were expected to complement metronomic regularity in performance on the job. In many industries and occupations, this expectation of mechanical reliability remains the primary criterion of self-management.⁶

In some lines of work, however, an additional requirement soon appeared on the horizon. Advancing industrial capitalism increasingly needed not merely workers as dependable approximations of machines but workers as acrobats, possessed of boundless agility and flexibility in maintaining their alertness. Of the several organizational and technological factors that prompted this intensification of work discipline with its powerful implications for sleep practices, probably none was more important than the advent of electric lighting. Artificial illumination by candles or other means had permitted some work between sunset and sunrise, but the feasibility of regular night shifts and other extended operations increased enormously after 1880 with the availability of affordable, durable forms of lighting using incandescent-bulb lamps. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to consider the full range of transformative change that electric lights brought to American ways of life, it is necessary to consider the rethinking regarding sleep that occurred in elite circles in the wake of this historic innovation.⁷

Thomas Edison created much of this bright new world. With regard to the changing relations of work to sleep, the inventor of practical incandescent lighting was not only the father of the night shift. He also took a prominent part in criticizing and even ridiculing sleep as an inefficient and immoral

indulgence. This was a role for which he was uniquely qualified by stature and experience. Edison was perhaps the most famous and widely admired American of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a hybrid celebrity renowned for his imaginative genius and his entrepreneurial acumen. Authority to hold forth on the topic of sleep rested on his well-established personal practices, constituting a sort of heroic wakefulness. A tireless self-promoter whose greatest invention was himself, Edison spent considerable amounts of his own and his staff's energy in publicizing the idea that success depended in no small part on staying awake to stay ahead of the technological and economic competition. As the founder of General Electric, he had a vested interest in any wakefulness that sold light bulbs. But beyond that, Edison saw himself as a man on a mission to enlighten American men on his approach to self-advancement through endless work and minimal sleep. To that end, he cooperated with numerous journalists in varied revelatory exercises and exhibitions. Long after his death in 1931, he remained the paragon of modern sleeplessness to legions of journalists, historians, and other commentators. No American has done more to cast sleeplessness in hegemonic terms. None did more to frame the issue as one of a simple choice between productive work and unproductive rest: the wizard stayed up not to play but to create value in the laboratory.⁸

Edison ascended to prominence with the invention of the phonograph and with his substantial contribution to the invention of the telephone in the 1870s. To enhance further his growing reputation, he made himself readily accessible to the press. In April 1878, the *Chicago Tribune* presented a rhapsodic report on a "wonderful genius." The newspaper noted Edison's "willingness to work at all hours, night or day," his unwillingness to interrupt his work "for more than a few hours two or three times a week" during his 1873 honeymoon, and his policy of selecting subordinates based on "their physical endurance." In perfecting a printer for stock prices, Edison "gave himself scarcely any time for sleep," at one point toiling nonstop for sixty hours to overcome a design defect. In this early installment of the saga of superhuman sleeplessness, the hero did admit to dozing for thirty hours or more to recuperate from extended wakeful spells, a practice that would disappear from future narratives. In November 1878, *Potter's American Monthly* lauded the man with 150 patents as "an incessant worker, taking neither food nor sleep when the fever of a great invention is upon him." That same month, *Scribner's Monthly* prefaced a piece with a drawing of the inventor strolling in the dark. The caption read, "Three A.M.: Going Home

from the Shop.” Eight months later, *Scribner’s* disclosed that Edison celebrated a breakthrough on telephone sound transmission “by forgetting all about his supper and remaining at work until the dawn of day reminded him that sleep as well as science demanded a portion of his time.” This initial wave of publicity introduced a theme that would be extended and embellished for half a century.⁹

Uncritical media attention soared in the wake of Edison’s work on electric lighting. In late 1879, he made the most dazzling individual discovery in this monumental project—finding a durable filament to sustain incandescent light. Unable to rest on his laurels, Edison and his team forged ahead over the course of the following decade to invent and develop for practical application a comprehensive practical system for generating, distributing, and using electric power for illumination. To that end, he and his coworkers repeatedly engaged in marathon work sessions with only minimal rest breaks. These exertions were not kept a secret from curious members of the press, whom Edison continued to host with charming good cheer and apparent modesty. He indicated his preference for working at night and admitted his tendency to become so absorbed in his research that he often kept at it all night. In 1885, Sarah Bolton’s *How Success Is Won* reported on a sixty-hour sleepless stint of problem solving and conveyed the estimate that the inventor had worked eighteen hours a day for the past ten years. Bolton marveled at Edison’s capacity for nocturnal diligence and his ability to sleep soundly in a chair. She proclaimed him “the very embodiment of concentration and perseverance.” In 1889, *Scientific American* published an interview in which Edison claimed that he seldom slept more than four hours a day, a claim that *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Godey’s Lady’s Book* passed along to their readers. This interview also gave a glimpse of the investigator as a stern manager of his nocturnal operations: “At first the boys had some difficulty in keeping awake, and would go to sleep under stairways and in corners. We employed watchers to bring them out, and in time they got used to it.” Adaptability had already become the watchword in the embryonic stage of industrial research and development.¹⁰

Just as Edison set the pace for his employees and showed the way to success for adult men in general, he served as a role model for the nation’s male youth. Imparting lessons of sleep discipline to the young had been a theme in the American popular literature since Franklin wrote his autobiography for the purpose of instructing his son on making his way in the world. Horatio Alger’s classic *Ragged Dick*, published in 1868, reinforced the message to boys

that sleep restriction was an ingredient in success. Nonfiction success manuals, which also aimed primarily at young male readers, decried dormant potential and lionized entrepreneurs like Horace Greeley, whose ascent in the newspaper business depended on dividing the day into twenty hours of work and four of sleep. As early as 1891, Edison was being held up as a paragon of industry in a moralistic piece appearing in the *Reformed Church Messenger*. In a fictionalized conversation, a bored boy complains of having nothing to do, only to receive a sharp scolding from his aunt. She advises her lazy nephew that “Mister Edison, the great inventor, limits his hours of sleep to four or five daily, because he has so much to occupy his time.” The chastened youth dutifully agrees to start working himself to exhaustion. In 1900, *Youth’s Companion* described how as a student the great inventor Nikola Tesla won a job at Edison’s laboratory in Paris by surviving a two-week probationary period in which he worked constantly, sleeping less than four hours a day to prove that he fit the Edisonian mold. Four decades later, Francis Miller’s *Thomas A. Edison: An Inspiring Story for Boys* gave its subject a hagiographical treatment that highlighted a regular schedule of twenty-hour workdays, multiday sleepless stretches, and catnapping in the workplace. The juvenile motivational text featured a photo of Edison with a group of workers identified as his Insomnia Squad.¹¹

Adult audiences had an array of full-length biographical studies to ponder. All purveyed essentially the same adoration of the restless genius. In 1894, William Dickson, a veteran of the Edison crew at the Menlo Park and Orange facilities, and his wife, Antonia, produced the first major insider’s account. Unsurprisingly, sleep deprivation featured prominently in this volume. One anecdote, presented as benign evidence of the inventor’s seriousness of purpose, concerned an early troubleshooting effort involving his stock printers:

Edison immured himself on the top floor of the factory, together with a handful of scientific devotees, and conveyed to his followers the pleasing information that there he proposed to have them remain until such time as the printer was in smooth working order. “Now, you fellows,” said the determined inventor, “I’ve locked the door and you’ll have to stay here until this job is completed.” And they did stay. Sixty hours of physical and mental work ensued, unbroken by sleep and scarcely by food, at the end of which time the difficulty was discovered and rectified.

The Dicksons took indefinite imprisonment of employees not as a display of authoritarianism in the form of peremptory sleep denial but rather simply as proof of the great man's "extraordinary powers of physical endurance." They assured readers that Edison's "severe and protracted labors owe their sustained brilliancy to no artificial stimulus" and stated flatly that he never resorted to cocaine.¹²

The Dicksons took pains to celebrate the boss as one of the boys, a regular fellow whose "kindly humor and unostentatiousness were calculated to call forth the best qualities in those around him." This characterization extended even to Edison's informal sleeping practices. Consider this sketch of the late-night scene at the Menlo Park lab:

Men [were] lying in attitudes more suggestive of ease than elegance, taking what sleep they could on tables, benches, and floor; others plying their labors with tense brows and bloodshot eyes, while the master was calmly slumbering amid the general turmoil, his unkempt head supported by a stick of wood, round which an overcoat was carelessly flung. Thirty men were usually at work in this room, sometimes for forty and sixty hours at a time. These abnormal tests of endurance were generally enlivened by choice selections on the organ. . . . Jokes scintillated, yarns were spun.

Pranks and horseplay were other integral parts of a dense shop culture. In one instance, a worker set the clocks ahead several hours while Edison was napping. When he arose and believed it was four A.M., he told the crew to quit for the night. Upon discovering that he had been duped, the Wizard of Menlo Park "indulged in a hearty and unresentful guffaw." Overall, the Dicksons presented Edison as a natural leader who led his gang of sleepless men by example and force of personality.¹³

Subsequent biographical studies filled in the details of this picture of manly wakefulness. In 1908, Francis Jones delivered a breathless account of a "sleepless wonder" conducting endless experimentation sessions. At Menlo Park, Edison "was accustomed to his chief assistants working with him for two and three days at a stretch without rest." The author described the cot that the inventor kept in his lab for naps and marveled at his efficiency in falling asleep instantly. "He has the ability to accommodate himself to circumstance," Jones concluded, "and if he had to sleep on a fence or a telegraph wire, he would probably secure a very refreshing rest and awake fully

recuperated.” Jones was sure that Edison’s exertions had not undermined his health, asserting that “he looks twenty years younger than his age, and he can still work twenty or thirty hours at a stretch without feeling unduly fatigued.” Overall, this biography characterized its subject as a superman capable of the most prodigious feats of overwork.¹⁴

The most fervent expression of hero worship came in a two-volume popular biography published in 1910 by Frank Dyer, general counsel for the Edison Laboratory, and Thomas Martin, a prominent electrical engineer. Dyer and Martin gathered numerous close observations from Edison’s colleagues. Francis Upton provided an admiring assessment: “He could work continuously as long as he wished, and had sleep at his command. His sleep was always instant, profound, and restful.” Samuel Insull (who later became a senior executive at GE) recalled the indefatigable leader interviewing him as a job applicant at around four in the morning. But leaving little to chance, Edison himself prepared extensive notes to guide the authors. Dyer and Martin reported their subject’s recollection of napping on a pile of iron pipes in the cold, dank cellar of his New York City power station, with an overcoat as the only bed linen. This tale, like others that featured Edison sleeping on floors and lab benches, served to fill out the legendary image. These stories of this sort made the hero a hardy pioneer, roughing it with manly disregard for the discommodations of the workplace and of civilization. The authors dutifully quoted Edison’s own account of the treatment accorded a new employee, a refugee from Wall Street, during the early years in Newark:

The second night he was there he could not stand the long hours and fell asleep on the sofa. One of the boys took a bottle of bromine and opened it under the sofa. It floated up and produced a violent effect on the mucous membrane. The broker was taken with such a fit of coughing he burst a blood-vessel. . . . But the broker lived, and left the next day.

This episode of horseplay suggested that his subordinates freely bought into the master’s commitment to protracted wakefulness and had made it so much a part of their collective identity that they disciplined themselves. Immediately following that story, however, Dyer and Martin made clear that there was more than workers’ camaraderie involved. Here again, they relayed Edison’s recollections of his methods: “Each man was allowed from four to six hours’ sleep. We had a man who kept tally, and when the time came for

one to sleep, he was notified.” Undeterred by contradictory evidence, Dyer and Martin uncritically celebrated the high jinks and merriment surrounding Edison’s hardy and energetic gang. In that vein, they described the use of a noise-making device to jolt awake workers who snored too loudly and revisited the convivial festivities of the midnight dinners that broke up all-night work sessions. This authorized work illuminated a rough-hewn masculinism prevailing in Edisonian shop culture.¹⁵

Over the course of his career, Edison’s stance gradually shifted with regard to feeding the public’s curiosity regarding his life and labor and their meanings. To a great extent, he became less the observed and more the observer. The famous man began to emphasize his strong opinions about the expendability of sleep. Engaging in what biographer Randall Stross called “pontificating on demand,” Edison sometimes came out as stridently judgmental in his denunciations of more than a minimal resort to slumber. Moreover, he pressed for making his own behavior the societal norm, just as he had sought to naturalize his biologically unnatural method of working at night. Countering worshipful biographers who presented him as an exceptional phenomenon, Edison maintained that anyone could emulate his productive wakefulness. The aging magician found a comfortable niche in a Progressive Era obsessed with the pursuit of efficiency—technical, societal, and personal.¹⁶

Edison’s judgments were sweeping. Sleep was needlessly lost time, a self-imposed hindrance to productivity. In 1895, the *Congregationalist* magazine reported that “Mr. Edison claims that people do not need several hours of continuous sleep, and that a few minutes, or an hour, on unconscious rest now and then is all that is required. He says that the habit of sleep was formed before the era of artificial light when people had no other way of spending the hours of darkness.” Ten years later, Edison declared that his fellow Americans slept and ate too much and worked too little and that reversing these tendencies would work wonders. Bolton Hall’s 1911 book on sleep issues reconfirmed and publicized Edison’s beliefs that most people wasted too much time dozing and that his long-observed practice of four hours’ rest a day was sufficient for others as well. Hall disclosed that one reason for his subject’s firm conviction on this matter was that experiments on his own factory workers had convinced both him and them that they slept too much and could make do with less. A 1913 piece in *Hearst’s Magazine* gave Edison a platform to issue a warning: “I have no doubt whatever that eight hours of sleep is harmful. An invalid, or a semi-invalid, may require eight hours, but

no well man does.” On this occasion, he went on to insist that the body could repair itself fully with only five hours’ rest.¹⁷

In 1914, the thirty-fifth anniversary of the invention of the incandescent light provided another occasion to hold forth. Edison castigated sleep as “an absurdity, a bad habit” and damaging to one’s health if indulged in for seven or more hours a day. He contended that “humanity can adjust itself to almost any circumstance” and announced that he and eight associates had recently spent more than a month working 145 to 150 hours a week. Framing the question as one of progress toward fulfillment of human potential, he predicted a radically different future: “Everything which decreases the sum total of man’s sleep increases the sum total of man’s capabilities. There really is no reason why men should go to bed at all, and the man of the future will spend far less time in bed.” As a step toward minimizing this anachronistic habit, Edison proposed that all Americans sleep one hour less per day. Because of their provocative nature and the esteemed status of their source, provocative comments of this sort attracted considerable attention, usually solicitous or at least respectful (but sometimes quite skeptical), throughout the early twentieth century. In 1918, efficiency expert Edward Purinton extolled the indefatigable seventy-year-old who was still putting in seventeen-hour days. “Edison has learned how to work, how to relax, how to sleep . . . , how to regulate his whole mental-physical-social-industrial-moral machinery so as to produce three or four times as much work as the ordinary man can turn out,” Purinton effused. If nothing else, Edison sowed further doubts about the value of unconscious rest.¹⁸

In the last decade of his life, Edison finally faded as a leading American celebrity. Nonetheless, even in semiretirement he remained a champion of sleeplessness who continued to criticize reasonable rest as a wanton habit. In 1925, he boasted that he had suffered no extended illness in the last fifty years because he did not “drug his system with too much sleep.” In 1930, Henry Ford, who built a replica of the Menlo Park lab at his Dearborn Village historical site, contributed to the legend with his lavish praise in a book devoted to their friendship. Upon his death in 1931, the obituary in the *New York Times* drew on biographer Francis Jones’s characterization of the man as a “sleepless wonder.” Long after passing from the scene and indeed up to the present, the great inventor has remained the standard of wakeful industry.¹⁹

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh supplanted Thomas Edison as the foremost embodiment of manly sleeplessness in America. Although the outcomes of his activity were often quite dramatic, the midwestern inventor had always

presented an image of plodding persistence in his pursuit of practical objectives. In contrast, the dashing Lindbergh linked sleep deprivation to daredevil adventure. Unquestionably, his achievement was a sensational one—an unprecedented transoceanic flight of thirty-six hundred miles in a craft barely fifty feet long, with neither crew nor communications equipment nor even a thermos of coffee to assist him. The flight posed the most elemental challenge of wakefulness: falling asleep meant almost certain death. The Lone Eagle's romantic style of heroism, very much in tune with the ebullient spirit of the twenties, captured and held the public imagination long after he landed at Le Bourget airfield in Paris. His solo flight across the Atlantic made Lucky Lindy the object of international adulation. In this country, he became the recipient of numerous prizes, medals, proclamations, and other official awards; the honoree at countless banquets, parades, and other celebratory mass events; and the subject of songs, poems, editorials, and other florid expressions of admiration. Perhaps as remarkably, his subsequent adventures made him a leading celebrity for a decade after his pioneering flight.²⁰

When Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field on Long Island on the morning of May 20, 1927, he launched the biggest news story in American history. Sleeplessness immediately became an integral part of the storyline. While the flyer was still aloft, Floyd Bennett, who had flown over the North Pole, told the *New York Times* that the crucial question was going to be Lindbergh's ability to remain awake, not the weather or the functioning of the airplane. Bennett believed that such a strong, energetic young man would pass this test. In the same edition of May 21, Harry Knight, one of the pilot's backers, confidently predicted that Lindbergh's resilient constitution, ample long-distance experience, and rigorous self-discipline had "made him nearly impervious to ordinary physical fatigue." The newspaper that day added further to the drama of the event by reporting that Lindbergh had slept for only an hour or two prior to departure.²¹

The pilot's seemingly easy victory over the lethal risk of unconsciousness while spanning an expanse of open ocean figured prominently in the journalistic outpouring following his safe arrival in France late on May 21. The day after the historic landing, the *Times* gave over its first four pages to coverage of the flight of the *Spirit of St. Louis*. An editorial reminded readers that "all his faculties, his strength, his skill would count for nothing if he lost consciousness in the vigil or could not endure the ordeal." The fresh new hero himself did not see the experience as an ordeal, however. At the airfield, he told Henry Wales, a reporter from the *Chicago Tribune*, "I had no

trouble keeping awake.” The awe-struck journalist did not challenge this assertion, even though he described Lindbergh as groggy upon landing. At his first press conference, held at 2:30 A.M. of the twenty-second, that is, less than five hours after his arrival and before getting any sleep, Lindbergh stated, “I didn’t really get what you might call downright sleepy, but I think I sort of nodded several times. In fact, I could have flown half that distance again.” In an exclusive report to the *Times* appearing the next day, Lindbergh stated that he was “not sleepy at all” while flying overnight and that he was tired but not exhausted at the conclusion of his journey. Another article in that edition suggested that the aviator might have inherited his wakeful tendencies from his father, a longtime Minnesota congressman who had often been seen entering the Capitol in the predawn hours. However, that piece was juxtaposed to another entitled “Trained to Fight Sleep,” which claimed that preflight practice sessions involving staying up for as long as forty-nine hours, not just genetics, had enabled young Lindbergh to maintain control of his aircraft.²²

Besides enjoying the adulation of the newspapers, Lindbergh won praise from many other sources for his conquest of sleep. In ceremonies at the Washington Monument on June 11, President Calvin Coolidge lauded the pilot’s energy and alertness. *Time* hailed Lindbergh’s freshness at the end of his flight and later named him its Man of the Year. Despite his own genuine modesty and lack of interest in capitalizing on his fame to gain personal enrichment, Lindbergh did contribute to the frenzy of hero worship, from a desire to promote aviation. Two months after his flight, he produced an autobiography in which sleep deprivation before, during, and after his transatlantic adventure received no notice at all. The plain implication was that this topic did not merit any discussion. Instead, consistent with his self-effacing manner, Lindbergh hailed the nonstop efforts of the manufacturers of his plane earlier that year, when “it was not unusual for the men to work twenty-four hours without rest.” In his world, men with important work under way naturally pressed forward without stopping. The protagonist’s extraordinary stamina did, however, receive attention in a lengthy appendix to his volume written by Fitzhugh Green. A poetry contest that drew several thousand entries resulted in a volume full of superlatives for the modern Viking hero. One ode dramatized the battle to maintain consciousness: “Will the wearied body yield/To fatal lullaby of wind and sea?/Ah, no! He rouses him and mounts again/To heights from whence the mocking waves are still./Thus passed the crisis.”²³

Before the year was over, Dale Van Every and Morris Tracy put out a

biography that shed additional light on the hero's habits. Van Every and Tracy portrayed a man of boundless energy, too busy to sleep. Lindbergh's demanding schedule as an airmail pilot had seasoned him for long solo trips undertaken after little rest. They also found that the quiet and seemingly withdrawn young man was a lively fellow among his colleagues, up late in the pilots' dormitory amusing or tormenting them with practical jokes, a staple of masculine mischief making. In this account, during the months leading up to the transoceanic trip, Lindbergh systematically tested the limits of both his wakefulness and the alertness that would be necessary to carry out his mission. Thus prepared, the flyer had no need to use caffeine or other stimulants. Van Every and Tracy expressed the glowing consensus of American opinion that Lindbergh represented "the epitome of what every man of today could wish himself to be."²⁴

After a decade of immense popularity as a national hero, Charles Lindbergh's reputation crashed in the late 1930s. He fled to England in 1935 to escape relentless media scrutiny and to recover from the traumatic kidnapping and murder of his son. Beyond an isolationism that he shared with many Americans prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he also engaged in a disastrous flirtation with the fascist regime in Germany. In a widely publicized ceremony, he accepted the Service Cross of the Order of the German Eagle with Star from the Nazi leadership in 1938. When the United States and Germany became world war adversaries, the revered aviator plunged into disgrace. In the postwar era, Lindbergh, who had returned to his native country in 1939, undertook a long campaign to restore his reputation, mainly by assisting the air force.²⁵

A key component of Lindbergh's efforts to rehabilitate his image was his retelling of the story of his epic flight. Published in 1953, *The Spirit of St. Louis* was a best seller that won the Pulitzer Prize and returned its author to a place of honor in American culture. The book also became the basis for a big Hollywood movie. *The Spirit of St. Louis* offered a revisionist account of the sleep loss involved in the transatlantic adventure. Gone was the dismissive attitude of the superhuman hero unbothered by extended alertness while operating a small aircraft alone. The 1953 interpretation presented instead a more human actor, locked in a life-or-death battle to stay conscious. In his desperate struggle to escape disrepute, Lindbergh seemingly spared no dramatic detail of his ordeal. Resetting the circumstances of his departure, he now revealed that an untimely interruption had thwarted his attempt to get a couple hours' sleep prior to takeoff. He began to feel sleepy around

the fourth hour of the thirty-three-hour flight. Drowsiness mixed with dread of the greater strain to come: experience as an airmail pilot had taught him “what torture the desire for sleep can be.” Before the trip was even one-quarter over, still in daylight over eastern Canada, Lindbergh had already fallen into a precarious state: “Sleep is winning. My whole body argues dully that nothing, nothing life can attain, is quite so desirable as sleep. My mind is losing resolution and control.” After nightfall, he resorted to singing, shaking himself, stamping his feet, prying his eyes open with his thumbs, and exposing himself to cold air. At some point in the predawn hours, he found himself “asleep and awake at the same moment, living through a reality that is a dream.” By early morning of the second day aloft, he was getting advice from “ghostly presences” in the plane. But at the conclusion of his expanded story, Lindbergh claimed that he felt wide awake when he touched down in Paris after being awake for sixty-three hours. Miraculously enough, the hero, still larger than life, managed to defeat hallucinatory exhaustion and the associated desire to sleep. Lindbergh’s cursory explanation was that he kept himself functioning by his ability to concentrate on the danger at hand and the fatal consequences of losing consciousness. The pioneering pilot emerged from this revised narrative as even more of an icon of manly sleeplessness. As the only person present to witness this journey, Lindbergh of course became the authoritative source for subsequent biographical studies of this episode.²⁶

Lindbergh never attempted to hold himself up as a role model for the common working man. The Lone Eagle preferred to stand out as a singular figure. But a variety of other modern advisors stepped forward to argue for the expendability of sleep, much as Thomas Edison had done in urging his fellow citizens to rest less and work more. For the most part, these experts based their legitimacy not on their own record of success but on their scientific expertise. Authorities trained in the biomedical and behavioral sciences used their advanced skills largely to interpret the patterns of sleep and work evident among those who had won fame and fortune. Psychologists came to occupy an especially prominent place within the growing ranks of sleeplessness specialists.

Foremost among the emerging authorities was Donald Laird, a professor of psychology at Colgate University. With a jargon-free writing style palatable to a mass audience, Laird carved out a place for himself as a popularizer through an efficient strategy of minimal research and maximal publication. Over the course of a long career, Laird’s agenda sprawled across several areas of applied psychology, including leadership, productivity, and employee

relations. The topic of sleep deprivation in its relation to practical business behavior recurred in his prolific writings, many coauthored with his wife, Eleanor, from the very beginning of his long career. In 1925, Laird opened his first major book, *Increasing Personal Efficiency*, by damning the existing literature on business success for its ignorance of psychological principles. After dismissing fatigue as primarily an imaginary phenomenon, Laird devoted a chapter of the tome to sleep. In what would become a regular gambit, he invoked a familiar legendary leader: “We find Edison saying that no healthy person requires more than two hours of sleep a day.” He went on to note that German philosopher and diplomat Wilhelm von Humboldt slumbered only three hours a day. Laird calculated that 99 percent of cases of sleeplessness were a blessing rather than a curse. In his estimation, “the majority of individuals sleep longer than they need because they do not know how to sleep properly.” The applied psychologist proceeded to offer guidance on sleeping techniques, such as establishing habits of evening relaxation and ensuring quiet places to rest. He also promoted naps as an efficiency measure, asserting that a half hour of dormancy after lunch delivered the same restorative value as three or four hours’ sleep taken in the early morning. Without providing specific details of the intervention, Laird reported that he was currently experimenting on an individual who had reduced his daily sleep quota from nine hours to six, with plans to reach four hours within a few weeks. Subsequent editions of this popular how-to text gave no follow-up on this experiment. However, the fourth and final edition in 1952 still announced Edison’s supposed two-hour standard and retained the emphasis on sleep hygiene.²⁷

Laird’s views may have been consistent through successive versions of his personal-efficiency guide, but in other writings he swerved about. In 1926, he announced that his investigation of mental work done after one to three sleepless nights had found no significant decline in performance. Then four years later, the psychologist, with collaborator Charles Muller, brought out *Sleep: Why We Need It and How to Get It*. As its subtitle indicated, the authors took a more appreciative view of the necessity of dormancy. Embracing the tradition of moderation and regularity, Laird and Muller invoked Benjamin Franklin’s early-to-bed, early-to-rise adage. But the temptation to draw on the authority of great men at every turn remained irresistible, creating a contradictory message. Immediately after declaring that most people needed eight hours’ sleep, the authors relayed the elderly Thomas Edison’s latest self-report of dozing little more than three hours a day. On the other hand, Charles Lindbergh’s airborne feat was attributed not to preflight train-

ing in extended wakefulness but rather to his reserves of stamina acquired by regularly sleeping seven to nine hours. Adding further to the confusion, Laird and Muller held that the strenuous manual labor of a lumberjack or longshoreman required a daily allowance of only four hours' sleep, in contrast to the executive's need for double that amount.²⁸

In later writings, Laird stressed the quality, not quantity, of sleep, with additional suggestions about behavioral and environmental changes and new ones about the importance of maintaining a calm emotional state. His preoccupation with the habits of the famous continued. In this pursuit, he offered anecdotes about both short and long sleepers to reinforce the point that individual needs varied widely. The catalogue of sleep-cutting tips contained the fact that Founding Father John Jay cut a hole in his window shutter to allow the earliest rays of the sun to awaken him by shining on his face. Overall, the self-help advisor provided no single recipe for success but rather a variety of possible ingredients, with sleep restriction still very much in the mix.²⁹

Other would-be authorities continued to advocate sleeping less than eight hours. In 1938, *Sleep! The Secret of Greater Power and Achievement, with 101 Tips from Famous People* by Ray Giles promised that any number of behavioral changes might well yield sleep of sufficiently higher quality to permit wasting less time in bed. The same year, in his guide, *How to Be Strong, Healthy, and Happy*, wealthy barbell manufacturer and magazine publisher Bob Hoffman shared the secrets of a system that promised not merely greater muscularity but a prosperous life. Hoffman worried that too much time in bed led to lethargy. Beyond the obligatory reference to Edison's short-sleep regimen, he suggested that "many great men of the past are reported to have slept only a fraction of the time that average persons spend in 'wooing Morpheus.'" The champion weightlifter declared that he generally slept only six hours, had slept only five for months while preparing for the 1936 Olympics, and had recently thrived during stints of four hours per night. This paragon of masculinity propounded the vague notion of "fast sleeping," which enabled disciplined men to get by on an hour or two less slumber. How one actually accelerated the restorative processes involved in sleeping remained a mystery in Hoffman's formulation, however. All-out mobilization during World War II led management consultants at the Arthur D. Little firm to review favorably the abandoned experiments of futurist R. Buckminster Fuller. Interrupting his architectural and other design work for short naps, Fuller had gotten by for two years on a ration of two hours' slumber a day, while purportedly performing proficiently. Even after dropping this approach because it could

not coordinate with his colleagues' schedules, the visionary adopted variants of this plan that gave him only three or four hours' daily rest. However, neither Fuller nor his promoters at the Little firm appear to have convinced anyone to work this way. Shortly thereafter, Dale Carnegie, self-help mentor to millions of middle-class men, celebrated the strenuous work style of eminent Wall Street attorney Samuel Untermyer. In his best seller *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, Carnegie attributed the successful lawyer's prodigious productivity to insomnia. Untermyer "read half the night and then got up at five A.M. and started dictating letters. By the time most people were just starting work, his day's work would be almost half done." Carnegie concluded, "We don't know how many hours of sleep each individual requires. We don't even know if we have to sleep at all!" This agnostic stance hardly concealed the suggestion that getting enough sleep was not something for strivers to worry about.³⁰

Most experts on self-improvement took men as their primary target audience. For women, the experts assumed that female success meant something altogether different from reaching the corporate executive suite, the medalists' platform at the Olympic Games, or the Oval Office of the White House. A physical appearance attractive to a winning male partner remained the key to feminine success, and proper sleep habits played an important role in attaining that goal. A steady refrain urged American women not to skimp on their beauty rest. As early as 1906, physician Emma Walker, writing in *Ladies' Home Journal*, deployed the term "beauty sleep" in discouraging young women from late-night activities: "As a rule, girls do not realize what a very important element of beauty is the early bed-hour. It is not until they begin to see the lines coming and the dark circles appearing that they wonder if late hours have anything to do with these fingermarks of time." Women's magazines continued to play on fears that excessive wakefulness would undermine good looks. In 1933, *Good Housekeeping* warned that inadequate slumber meant not only the dreaded circles under one's eyes but also lifeless hair. Three years later, *Ladies' Home Journal* added "nervous tension at the side of the mouth" to the list of concerns. Donald Laird's 1937 book *How to Sleep and Rest Better* offered this counsel: "Truly beautiful women also know the secret of relaxation, and their beauty naps . . . do wonders in easing the mental and emotional tension that destroys both youth and beauty." The gender divide regarding sleep and success could not have been much wider.³¹

After World War II, triumphalism bred moderation. Extreme sleep deprivation seemed an unnecessary sacrifice—a vestige of a bygone age—to much

of the nation's increasingly complacent corporate leadership, insulated from international competition by the wartime devastation of their rivals and often enjoying cozy oligopolies in the domestic marketplace. In one chapter of *The Organization Man*, "The 'Well-Rounded' Man," William Whyte in 1956 captured the transformation in attitudes: "Overwork may have been necessary once . . . , but business now sees that the full man is the model. What it needs is not the hard driver but the man who is so rested, so at peace . . . that he is able to handle human relations with poise and understanding." The same year, the *New York Times Magazine*, always a reliable register of the values and practices of those at the commanding heights, announced that the exclusive and exclusively male New York Athletic Club was setting aside a darkened nap room with fourteen beds for its members. Shortly thereafter, *Business Week* encouraged its readers to get "plenty of sleep." Adding further to the reorientation but also shedding light on the persistence of unhealthy habits, the mass-circulation health magazine of the American Medical Association in 1957 printed an attack on "the suicidal cult of 'manliness'" by Lemuel McGee, a corporate medical director. McGee's article presented a series of vignettes of sleep loss:

A business man fills a day with conferences, passes up lunch. Accompanied by two younger associates he takes passage on a plane at dusk, works out of his brief case during half the night, dozes a few hours, and then dashes from appointment to appointment on a tight schedule during the following day.

A salesman matches his customer drink for drink during the evening, announces at two o'clock in the morning, "It's just the shank of the evening; I know where there's a wonderful floor show." At a convention he feels that he must point to the number of nights he has not been to bed. A comfortable chair and another highball is enough for him, he is constrained to point out. Sleep is a waste of time.

The good provider sends his family to the shore for the summer, adds to his working day working evenings in the office, repaints the game room at home during the middle of the night, and Friday drives all night to join the family.

McGee saw these men not as role models of industry and self-discipline but as self-abusers headed for heart attacks. The founder of General Electric, who expected to find this sort of scurrilous attitude espoused only by

union troublemakers, would have been shocked and dismayed by this want of manliness.³²

Reasonableness was but a short-lived interlude. America confronted a mounting challenge to its economic supremacy from the 1970s onward. In response, a resurgent commitment to going all out, in business and in other areas of endeavor, swept across the upper reaches of an insecure society. Global competition intensified the time demands placed on corporate leaders. Reports of phenomenal overwork in Japanese corporate culture, including numerous cases of managers literally working themselves to death, circulated widely. Sleep became again a luxury that those intent on winning the global contest would have to minimize.³³

Scientific authority bolstered the enthusiastic claims by and about the latest winners in the marketplace. Journalists selectively sampled the growing biomedical and psychological literature for evidence of sleepless success. In his 1979 book, *Sleep Less, Live More*, Everett Mattlin put on a long parade of corporate, political, and military leaders and other “Super-Achievers” who slept little, to be sure. But Mattlin devoted the bulk of his book to recent research findings that refuted the “eight-hour myth” and promoted “sleep efficiency.” In the same vein, a 1981 article in *Harper’s Bazaar* invoked the work of Ernest Hartmann, a Tufts University sleep psychologist. This piece broadcast Hartmann’s judgment that those who slept six hours or less were “more energetic, confident, successful, happier and less introspective.” It also noted that “many sleep researchers believe you can train yourself to shorten sleep hours just the way a dieter forces himself to eat less” and that “some researchers maintain that sleep is largely an anachronism.” It went on to summarize a University of California study in which participants gradually cut their slumber time from around eight hours to five hours and maintained that level for a year. The old doctrine of righteous self-discipline took on deeper, scientific legitimacy, bolstered especially by psychology, the fundamental science of the modern middle class.³⁴

Charismatic executives set the pace for the sleep-deprived Second Gilded Age. The nondescript bureaucratic type that had prevailed in corporate America was replaced by a colorful new breed. At Wal-Mart Corporation, the biggest business firm in the world by the end of the century, the cult of personality enveloping founder Samuel Walton extended to his stamina. The founder’s preparations for his legendary weekly staff meetings, held on Saturday at seven A.M., began at two or three A.M. with an exhaustive review of his stores’ performance statistics. Company loyalists cherished a tale about

the sleepless homespun hero appearing at one of his distribution centers at 2:30 A.M. to surprise the crew on the loading dock with a batch of donuts, an episode recounted in 1982 in management guru Tom Peters's immensely popular *In Search of Excellence*. When Walton took buying teams to New York in the 1970s, the work day began with a meeting at six in the morning and ended after midnight. In later years, top-level managers at headquarters in Arkansas put in ninety or more hours a week, trying to keep up with Walton, who was often in his office by around four A.M. The requirement that managers be available for very long hours translated into a policy not to promote married women, discriminating out of respect for their traditional and apparently inescapable domestic responsibilities. With the extra time he gained by sleeping only four hours nightly from 1982 on, Benjamin Plumb Jr. launched a software company, acquired a fresh wife, and wrote a book advising others how to cut down their dozing.³⁵

Women who wanted to compete against men in the business world had to play by their rules, of course. Media powerhouse Oprah Winfrey boasted of getting by on four hours' rest per night. Martha Stewart, another prominent entertainer and entrepreneur, made no secret of her need for only five hours in bed. In a 1996 article in *Redbook* titled "How to Feel Rested on Too Little Sleep," successful author and working mother Tamara Eberlein advised striving women to cope by ingesting caffeine and protein and by using weekends to catch up on forfeited rest. Eberlein reminded her readers that "we've got a society in which the ability to survive on minimal sleep is a badge of dynamism, while lying down brands us as lazy." With men still holding nineteen of every twenty senior corporate management positions at the end of the millennium, ambitious women could help themselves reach the executive tier by demonstrating sleepless stamina. A recent self-help manual aimed primarily at striving managerial and professional women carried the taunting title *Balance Is a Crock, Sleep Is for the Weak*. The female authors' advice to emulate their tough male counterparts included skipping any opportunities to use spare moments on business trips to catch up on lost rest, with the tired reminder that "you can sleep when you're dead."³⁶

No one embodied the highly masculine executive style of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries more than real-estate and gaming entrepreneur Donald Trump. From his first appearance on the national scene in the 1980s, this flamboyant self-promoter cultivated an image of superhuman energy and drive. His series of popular books publicized an ability to function at the highest level despite little sleep. His first best seller, *Trump: The Art*

of the Deal, began by announcing a regular practice of arising “very early” to launch a daily whirlwind of dynamic deal-making that “never stops.” At this point, the celebrity capitalist admitted to sleeping about six hours a night. That amount of time out of action later became excessive for the quickening pace of the new millennium. In *Trump: Think Like a Billionaire*, released in 2004, the author claimed that he slept from one A.M. to five A.M. and that this plan gave him a decided advantage over competitors. Trump advised aspiring billionaires, “Don’t sleep any more than you have to. . . . No matter how brilliant you are, there’s not enough time in the day. You may be wondering: Why do you need a competitive edge? You don’t if you’re happy to be an also-ran in life.” Snoozers, in Trump’s unvarnished estimation, were simply losers. In *Trump: How to Get Rich*, also published in 2004, he assured his audience that he was “still making deals around the clock.” Trump stressed the need to work harder than one’s employees and reiterated his practice of starting his work day at five A.M. One indication that the popular author and television host was getting his message across appeared in an entry on the website *The Business Student* in 2007. Student Jason Lamarche grasped Trump’s attitude that sleep was “for the weak” and inferred that his twenty-hour-per-day wakefulness generated a powerful image of omniscience. Lamarche vowed to try this winning approach. In his latest autobiographical work of career counseling, *Think Big and Kick Ass in Business and Life*, Trump has seized on one of the buzzwords of the moment. After declaring that “passion is more important than brains or talent,” the entrepreneur again moved easily from his own behavior to a general prescription: “I’m so passionate about my work that I only sleep three or four hours every night. I can’t wait to get up in the morning and go to work because I love my work so much. If you love what you are doing, you are probably not going to sleep more than three or four hours.” Sleep deprivation thus returned as a hallmark of a strongly masculine style of dominance, one that aimed not only to pursue passion but to “crush the opponent.” Wakefulness served to intimidate potential prey of the relentless competitor.³⁷

Professional football, America’s civic religion by century’s end, played out a hypermasculinity of old-fashioned physical violence. (Unlike Donald Trump, on occasion football players actually did crush their opponents.) Head coaches who dominated in the National Football League attracted considerable attention, often becoming exemplars of leadership. Albeit in a less salient role than that of star players, coaching icons helped make football a significant (though not unquestioned) force in identity formation for Ameri-

can males. A growing number of winning coaches considered sleep deprivation essential to their winning ways. The prototype for the overworking team leader was George Halas, who built and ran the Chicago Bears while serving as coach and then principal owner from more than sixty years until his death in 1983. George Allen, one of Halas's former assistants, took his obsessive style to further extremes during his tenure as head coach of the Los Angeles Rams in the 1960s and the Washington Redskins in the 1970s. Besides regularly putting in workdays of sixteen hours or more, Allen began the practice, subsequently widely emulated, of sleeping in his office night after night. He expected a similar dedication from his subordinates. According to former player Deacon Jones, the coach told his teams, "Leisure time is the five or six hours you sleep each night." Allen set a standard others felt compelled to try to meet. One subsequent Washington leader, Joe Gibbs, also became known for taking his scant rest on an office couch. When Gibbs returned for a second stint with the team in 2004, he reverted to that system and inflicted it on his assistants. Redskins staff had work sessions Monday through Thursday that lasted until three or four in the morning, followed by two or three hours of sleep. Gibbs's subordinates were free to go home and have dinner with their families on Friday nights. More than enough obsessive underlings aspired to reach the top rung of the coaching ladder to perpetuate this system.³⁸

A few NFL coaches used their time in the media spotlight to hold forth on their self-disciplined devotion to overwork. Capitalizing on his triumph in the 2003 Super Bowl, Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach Jon Gruden immediately published *Do You Love Football? Winning with Heart, Passion and Not Much Sleep*. On the second page of this volume, Gruden proclaimed, "I'm up at 3:17 A.M. most days." He went on to detail a driven devotion to work during twenty to twenty-one wakeful hours every day. Justin Peters's 2006 examination of the abstemious behavior of several NFL coaches speculated that more than a strictly functional desire to find a better game plan fueled such exertions: "For these overachievers, sleep is for the weak. . . . Endurance is a way for someone like the miniscule Jon Gruden to prove his masculinity. Maybe he can't bench-press 500 pounds, but Gruden can go without sleep for a week." As he prepared for his first season handling the Green Bay Packers in 2006, Mike McCarthy explained his socialization: "I've done the sleep-in-the-office routine two or three nights a week. I did that in 1999 when I was here as the quarterbacks coach, and that's kind of the way I was brought up in coaching. You outwork everybody." After declaring himself "not a believer in sleeping in the office," McCarthy stated that lately he had been doing it

again. Despite minimal acknowledgment of the damage overwork does to family life, many NFL coaches have persisted in cheating themselves of sleep and letting the world know about their powers of endurance. Presenting their sleep deprivation as a sacrifice and as compensation for a lack of genius makes these luminaries appear to regular working-class males, and to others across American society, as admirable regular fellows.³⁹

Even where colorful individuals did not rise to prominence, the business world held an aura of excitement for many Americans in the late twentieth century. Hostile takeovers and other tense battles raging in many industries captured much attention. In particular, Wall Street and the financial sector as a whole gained newfound visibility as an economic force and cultural presence. In 1978, Citibank launched an advertising campaign with the theme “Citi Never Sleeps.” The campaign, meant to convey the firm’s boundless energy, ran until 1996; it was revived, with a five A.M. announcement by its chief executive officer, in 2008. A 1988 report that attempted to depict chronic sleep deficits as problematic, not exemplary, had to concede its weak position in the national conversation:

Ours is a society with an antisleep bias. We look down on societies like Mexico and the countries of the Mediterranean world where the afternoon siesta is a tradition. On Wall Street, mergers and acquisitions specialists boast of working 18-hour days. Small wonder that cocaine, a hyperstimulant, has become the drug of choice among Wall Street types and fast-track executives. The message: Real men don’t sleep, and to be tired is to be a wimp.

Nine years later, the *New York Times Magazine* shed further light on the uphill battle to reframe sleep deficits in negative terms, even as evidence mounted of their damaging effects. “Visible fatigue is an acceptable pledge of earnestness and ambition,” Verlyn Klinkenborg concluded, “and there is a profound reluctance in the business world even to acknowledge the subject of sleep loss.”⁴⁰

The dawn of the twenty-first century found movers and shakers continuing to reject the body of solid science critical of inadequate sleep. In the legal profession, associates at big firms knew that running up their billable hours promised the surest path to the coveted objective of partner status. These young employees on multiyear probation still enter into a game that severely disadvantages women. The American Bar Association’s Commission

on Women in the Profession portrayed the situation prevailing in 2001: “In the view of many supervising attorneys, extended and unpredictable schedules are part of the way of life in the law. If women want to be ‘players,’ they should be willing to play by the existing rules. . . . From this perspective, the choice resembles one that leading litigators are famous for putting to associates in high stakes cases: ‘Would you rather sleep or win?’” In 2011, Will Meyerhofer, a refugee from high-powered business law at a prestigious New York firm who became a psychotherapist, characterized socialization into the legal fraternity in unsparing terms: “The process begins with sleep deprivation—plain, simple sleep deprivation. Not sleeping. Staying up all night and facing sarcasm if you plan to take the following day off. . . . Sleep deprivation is like binge drinking. There’s a machismo around staying up all night, night after night—like doing ten shots of tequila.” The growing oversupply of legal talent has served to perpetuate the professional culture of deprivation.⁴¹

In its in-house legal departments, executive suites, and other realms of business leadership, corporate America in the new millennium has clung to the unhealthy masculine code. In 2001, Harvard medical professor Jerome Groopman observed, “In the corporate world, of course, to be able to get by on five hours of sleep or less is a badge of honor, a sign of the Olympian executive who can straddle the time zones, bridging the Nasdaq and the Nikkei.” With the accelerating globalization of finance, and of business more generally, the need to deal with foreign markets in the middle of the American night intensified. In 2011, the *New York Times* announced, “The nest of night owls is growing more crowded. Senior executives at the Pacific Investment Management Company, the giant bond-trading house, awake at 1 A.M. in Southern California, to check . . . for updates from their colleagues in Europe.” Meanwhile, in northern California one hallmark of the high-tech creative style is a refusal to sleep. One sociological study found that hard-driven Silicon Valley software engineers “compare themselves to some real or mythic person (male) who works when they are asleep.” Aspiring tech innovators happily tolerate the spartan accommodations in crowded “hacker hostels” in San Francisco and Menlo Park in part because they spend so little time trying to sleep. The race for status and riches has continued to fascinate masses of spectators who have eagerly consumed television programs, movies, books, and Internet offerings featuring overworking, undersleeping entrepreneurs. Tens of millions of viewers of the 2010 film *The Social Network* took in the all-night programming sessions of Mark Zuckerberg and the team that designed Facebook. In Ben Mezrich’s *The Accidental Billionaires*,

Zuckerberg's monomaniacal approach to invention echoed that of Thomas Edison: "Eduardo [Saverin, his partner,] was pretty sure Mark hadn't slept much in the past week. He had been working around the clock, light to dark to light. He looked beyond exhausted, but it didn't matter. At the moment, nothing mattered to Mark. He was in that pure laser mode." This breathless account delivered yet another reminder that taking the world by storm depended less on a moment of inspired genius than on a marathon of grinding concentration.⁴²

Throughout American history, prominent men have devised and promoted a number of sleepless work styles, each exhibiting a variety of attributes, most of which have carried masculine markings. Benjamin Franklin made wakefulness a measure of self-control and righteous industry. Thomas Edison made restlessness synonymous with dogged perseverance and brilliant innovation. Charles Lindbergh gave it an association with courageous daring and resolute self-reliance. Donald Trump made sure that his own brand of alertness reflected brash aggressiveness and unblinking vigilance. Taken together, these iconic figures, along with many others, fashioned a tradition of heroic manly sleeplessness that valorized wakefulness.

These luminaries also overlooked the manifold dangers of overextended consciousness. All remained oblivious to the damage inflicted by chronic sleep deprivation. Not even such studious observers of natural phenomena as Franklin and Edison admitted to paying any price in well-being for the neglect of rest. In part, this blithe disregard may have followed from a sense that success simply necessitated overwork and sleeplessness, as well as many other unhealthful behaviors. As psychologist Will Courtenay has observed, "The social practices that undermine men's health are often the instruments men use in the structuring and acquisition of power." Powerful leaders could rationalize engaging in excessive sleeplessness and promote it as beneficial. Working-class men, who faced different prospects for and definitions of success, had reason to doubt the value of such prescriptions. But those who doubted or rejected this approach had to contend with authoritative voices proclaiming sleep optional and sleepers weaklings.⁴³