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**Ethical Erections?
Politics and Desire in Discursive Constructions
Of the Profeminist Sexual Self**

By

Philip W. Robinson

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
In partial fulfilment of
The requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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**Ethical Erections? Politics and Desire in Discursive
Constructions of the Profeminist Sexual Self**

submitted by Philip Robinson, B.A. Hons.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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April 18, 2001

Abstract

This thesis explores the discursive location of the profeminist men's discourse. The relationships posited between patriarchy, masculinities, and sexual relations within the discourse are examined, including theorizations of same- and opposite-sex relations and masturbation. The implications of theorizing sexual relations solely in terms of their perceived relation to structural gender inequality are highlighted, particularly with regards to the tendency within the discourse to prescribe processes of ethical self-reformation. Problematizations of men and the means through which men are induced to recognize and change their sexual practices are discussed in terms of opportunities to resist structural oppressions and subjectivizing practices within the discourse. Foucault's work on governmentality, power, sexuality and the self, along with contemporary work on moral regulation, provide the theoretical foundations for this study. It is my contention that the discourse reifies gender and wrongly equates resistance with standardizing the identities and practices of men.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Overview

1.1 Profeminist Discourse as a Project of Moral Regulation and Self-Reformation

The goal of the project I am undertaking is to critically analyze how sexual relations are theorized within the profeminist discourse with regards to same- and opposite-sex relations, masturbation, and fantasy. The discourse presents sexual relations primarily in terms of the role they are perceived to play in maintaining patriarchy and as a component of the problematic identity and power relations that constitute masculinity. In effect, the discourse presents an essentializing interpretation of male sexuality and its role in structural power relations and then uses this to incite processes of self-formation amongst men. While the processes of self-formation are largely directed towards liberating women, there is simultaneously a tendency to employ the language and techniques of personal growth and self-help literature. The discourse presents male sexuality as a socially constructed singular entity that is dangerous to women, to children, and sometimes to men. The forms of problematization, as well as the solutions offered, are forms of moral regulation that act to incite men to change their thoughts and behaviours. The changes prescribed are a form of retraditionalization (see Hunt 1999:194-5) in that they intend to reinstate more traditional forms of sexual relations but do so for *new* reasons. Further, the divisions constructed between profeminist men, and profeminist men and other men, is reflective of the moral capital that acts as the predominant currency throughout the literature. The degree to which much profeminist men's discourse is saturated with moral currency is indicative of the fact that this discourse not

only incites moral regulation but is also a response to the moral regulation of men's sexuality initiated, in this instance, by feminism. Here it is important to note that my use of the term 'moral regulation' does not inherently imply a positive or negative judgement. I emphasize this because moral regulation projects targeting men's sexual practices are responding to a recognition that sexual violence has caused a great deal of harm to individual women and to the social body. However, the extent to which actual harm, claims of harm, and the proposed remedies coincide is something that needs to be explored further. It is my argument that the profeminist discourse problematizes sexuality in ways that cannot be adequately connected to harm.

The ways in which self-reconstruction is presented as resistance to patriarchy can also be seen as a form of governmentality in the Foucauldian sense in that the ethical self is urged to change according to prescriptive moral codes (1985; 1991a; 1993; 1997). Despite the utopian goal of 'liberation' from power and from patriarchy, the self is tied to new external constraints that are based on limited moral interpretations of sexuality and deduced from structural-based theories. This can become a relation of subjectivization whereby every aspect of an individual's identity and practice is subject to close scrutiny and he is expected to dedicate his life wholeheartedly to new codes that may or may not constitute forms of resistance. In essence, constructing oneself around these codes is as much about obliterating the individual self as it is about constructing a new, predictable and obedient self.

Not only is the profeminist approach a form of subjectivization, but it is an essentializing approach based strictly on one's position within structural gender relations. These structural relations are, for all intended purposes, determinant of the distribution of

power within this framework. Power is all-encompassing in so far as it ultimately provides a means of interpreting everything in one's life. While I agree that structural inequalities and individual practices supporting them are problems, the relationship between gender inequality and lived experience is far more complex than profeminist men posit. In addition, gender inequality's relationship to lived experience may differ from other forms of structural inequalities because interpersonal relations – such as sex – play a different role than, for instance, they do in class-based inequality. Sexual relationships, which are related to but not determined by gender, are difficult to theorize, and it is even more difficult to prescribe remedies that are derived solely from structural gender relations and applied to a diversity of unique lives and circumstances. To outlay the problems and remedies with an entire gender is to reify gender and give it legitimacy when really the gaps, contradictions and abundant exceptions within and between these connections need to be exposed.

1.2 Wanting Change: Problematizations of Masculinity and the Emergence of Profeminist Men

The Western world has witnessed a “radical unsettling of traditional forms and values” (Weeks 1998:40) that began during the latter half of the twentieth century. While the sources of this unrest are numerous and the outcomes uncertain at best, there can be no doubt that gender relations, as well as sexual relations, have undergone a period of rapid transition. Major social institutions that worked to maintain gender divisions, such as the church, the state and the family, have experienced upheaval as their authority has been questioned and their practices subject to increased scrutiny. Major protagonists in these changes have been the rise of feminisms' second- and third-waves and gay and lesbian

equality movements, although peace, anti-poverty, ecology, civil rights and anti-racism movements, among others, have also posed limited and often indirect challenges to the organization of gender.

Feminism and gay and lesbian organizing during the 1960s and 70s not only brought people together on the basis of shared identities, but also emphasized identity and everyday life as important sites for the pursuit of social change (Glick 2000:20). As such, they not only aimed to seek wide-scale change by empowering their membership and challenging oppressive social structures, but they also problematized what was perceived as 'patriarchy's' core elements: men, masculinity and heterosexuality. As many women and gay men were claiming and asserting their identities, many men were increasingly subject to critique and faced with increasing demands from women. At the same time, some men were feeling disillusioned with traditional forms of masculinity as a result of economic changes and events such as the Vietnam War. In short, the organization of social categories was changing and men could no longer take women's identity - or their own - for granted.

It is perhaps not surprising that a 'men's movement' emerged during the 1970s and began a critical discourse *by men* about men and masculinity. Initially this 'movement' consisted of men's 'consciousness-raising' and 'men's liberation' groups, which attempted both to respond to feminist critiques and to challenge the negative effects of masculinity experienced by men. However, it wasn't long before ruptures developed between men who emphasized men's oppression and need for 'liberation' from gender roles and those who wanted to mount a political challenge to patriarchal power relations. The former laid the groundwork for several contemporary trends, including both the

men's rights and the mythopoetic 'movements.' The latter formed what has come to be known as the 'profeminist' or 'anti-sexist' men's 'movement.'

The basic tenet of the profeminist position is that we live in a patriarchal society and that all men are socialized through, implicated in, benefit from and are responsible for its injustices. Masculinity (more recently *masculinities*) is perceived primarily as constructed through and constituted by hierarchical relationships of power over women and sometimes gay men, poor men and men of colour. The pursuit of social justice requires the destabilization and reconstruction of the subject position and identity of men as well as political action that challenges patriarchal structures of power. It is this recognition of the relationship between the personal and the political, or identity and structure, that provides the profeminist movement with a theoretical grounding that encapsulates both macro-theory and practices of everyday life.

It is important to note that while I have used the term profeminist 'movement,' I do so with hesitation. It is not a 'movement' in the sense that social movements are generally understood. The profeminist men's movement is not a group of disenfranchised people trying to overcome oppression. Rather, "the men's movement represents a very particular kind of politics or movement, in which members of the dominant or privileged group mobilise" (Flood 1996b) to overcome other people's oppressions and their own roles as oppressors. Profeminist-identified men are predominantly white, middle-aged, and middle-class (Flood 1996b; Thorne-Finch 1992:246). While Flood (1996b) has estimated that gay and bisexual men constitute between 10 and 30 percent of active profeminist men in Australia, I would suggest, based on my own experience and observations, that a *minimum* of 30 percent of Canadian

profeminist men identify as bisexual or gay. No figures are available for the total number of men who are involved in profeminist organizing or who identify as profeminist, but by all accounts I believe it is fair to say they are a minority of men. However, and although it cannot be substantiated, I agree with Kenneth Clatterbaugh's assertion that profeminist men have been more influential than their numbers might imply (1995:529). This is particularly true in regards to the growth of the literature on men and masculinity, which "remains a politically informed literature without a political movement" (Weeks 1996:755).

Profeminist men's discourse is difficult to situate. It exists across the writings of activists and academics from a breadth of disciplines. Much of the early literature was published outside of academia, while much of the more recent work has occurred within the 'new men's studies.' It overlaps with other discourses, such as those produced within feminism and lesbian and gay studies (the parameters of the discourse will be discussed in more detail in section 1.4). The importance of the discourse, at this point, is that it is intricately connected to the creation of a profeminist *identity*. Ian Hacking coined the term 'dynamic nominalism' to explain how "numerous kinds of human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the categories labeling them" (1986:236). While there were undoubtedly men who held anti-sexist principles or who challenged sexism prior to the 1970s, the category 'profeminist' did not exist. The discursive construction of an identity based on anti-sexism facilitated new modes of resistance while simultaneously requiring boundaries to this new way of 'being.'

The focus on identity is central to much of the literature. For instance, Bob Pease is adamant that masculinity requires deconstruction and destabilization and that men's

subjectivities need to be reconstructed (1996; 1997a; 1998; 2000a); Michael Flood insists that “we [men] are the problem” (1990b); John Rowan writes that “the central problem of our time is how to change patriarchal consciousness” (1987); and socialist-profeminist Jonathan Rutherford has proclaimed that “the reality is that masculine heterosexuality is the biggest problem” because of “the way our sexual identity is tied into acts of sexual violence and the oppression of women and children” (1987). These statements certainly seem to indict men in what Kevin Fandl refers to as “the utter despair and tragedy that exists all around us” (2000).

While the identity men are encouraged to aspire to and the process of acquiring it facilitate forms of resistance, there is also a tendency to impose sameness upon both the problematized version of ‘men’ and upon the idealized conception of the identity to be worked towards. These essentializing tendencies are apparent, I believe, in the way that much of the profeminist men’s literature is inspired by a Marxist framework within which men are a ‘class’ and power is absolute. Male identity – masculinity – is conceived as the product of this power system, and sexual relationships are largely deduced from this conception of masculinity. Within the profeminist discourse, particularly in its treatment of sexual relationships, there is a tendency towards more radical feminist positions.

The profeminist approach to sexual relationships needs to be contextualized within theorizations of masculinity and patriarchy, as well as within a context whereby external constraints on eroticism have declined. For instance, religion plays less of a role in regulating sexual morality and practice, and accessible birth control has quelled fears of pregnancy. Simultaneous to these changes, feminism has brought sexual abuse and the

dangers that can be associated with sexuality to the forefront of debates on sexual morality. Lacking any clear standards on acceptable conduct and ethics, Mariana Valverde has commented on the tendency amongst many women to gravitate towards moralistic systems (1989:248). Profeminist men have also followed this trend, citing sexual assault statistics, the dangers of 'male sexuality' and its role within patriarchy in both their theorizations of sexual relations as well as in their calls for widespread personal change amongst men.

There is no single theorization of male sexuality in the profeminist discourse, but all approaches incorporate a number of tenets that form the basis for the interdictions that follow. First, all men are collectively responsible for rape because all men benefit from it in terms of a 'patriarchal dividend' and because all men contribute to a 'rape culture' through, among other things, their objectification of women. Men's behaviour is 'sociopathic' since all men are implicated participants in a patriarchal system which causes harm to women and yet few men try to change.

Profeminist men support the notion of a 'continuum' of sexual violence, which is used to describe how seemingly innocent acts of fantasy or even consensual sex contribute to the increasingly violent acts located further along the continuum. In order to end widespread sexual abuse, men are encouraged to pursue a process of self-reformation that involves a constant self-awareness, reflexivity and self-critique that will never absolve the need for further work on the self. While authors differ slightly in the specifics of the content of this new sexual ethic, it is important to note that there is a content and hence the position that is desired is not only relational. By this I mean that in addition to general principles for men to consider, specific practices are deemed right,

wrong or suspect. These decrees are often absolute and without specific relational contexts, thereby forming what I have termed the 'content.' Examples of common interdictions that constitute this content include: stop using pornography; stop objectifying women *even in your own imagination* (which often includes prohibitions against masturbation); become more emotionally connected; remove the sexual emphasis from the phallus and from orgasm; and, according to some, stop fucking (Jensen 1998).

1.3 Personal Intentions and Reflections

In recognition that the analysis I am pursuing is both personal and politically sensitive, an overview of my involvement in profeminist organizing and a clarification of my intentions may be helpful. I offer it both as an explanation and as a justification for crossing some of the boundaries that have been erected in the discourse in regards to the limits of men's ability or proper place in theorizing gender. Indeed, I cannot deny feelings of guilt, or a sense in which I feel 'bad' or 'wrong' for questioning aspects of a discourse that has, in many ways, been fundamental in my personal and political development over many years.

It needs to be recognized that addressing men's lives in any way other than one that reduces everything to an effect of patriarchal power does risk losing the support of many feminists, particularly more radical feminists. By focusing solely on men's patriarchal power, many profeminist men have managed to avoid or minimize critiques of their work and, as will be discussed throughout this paper, accumulate moral capital. Many profeminist men have suggested that men should only use feminist approaches in their work, although it is unclear *which* feminism should be followed. Jeff Hearn (1987) and

Flood (1993-4), for instance, have both argued against theorizing men outside of feminism. Flood has argued that those in positions of privilege – men – need to use feminist theory to “develop a critique of men’s behaviour and thinking and awareness of the possibilities of change, not the development of a critique of feminism” (1993-4). I understand his fear of the misuse of feminist theory by, for instance, men’s rights advocates, as well as the widely-held concern that men will dominate feminist discourses and organizations. These are certainly justified concerns, but I understand neither how men can be good allies to women without being active, *thinking* allies, nor how good theory can be developed when the range of legitimate inquiry and epistemological possibilities is seriously curtailed.

My early interactions with feminism occurred informally through my involvement in social justice causes and through personal relationships with women. The former led me to understand sexism as a structural problem, while the latter was perhaps the most influential as I eventually came to identify many ‘masculine’ traits in myself that I was not comfortable with and that inhibited my ability to relate and be emotionally involved with others. Just as many women turn to feminist discourses for guidance, I turned to the profeminist men’s discourse for insight into my own socialization and to search for clues as to how I could construct an identity that felt authentic, fulfilling, and ethical. To further my own growth and to pursue anti-sexist politics, I formed the University of Guelph Men Against Violence Collective and acted as the coordinator for four years. The Collective was dedicated to three tenets that are common amongst anti-sexist men’s groups: profeminism, anti-racism, and being gay-positive.

While I in no way regret my involvement in this organization and I do believe that it accomplished a great deal for the men involved and for the social justice causes we pursued, the notion of securing an identity that was free from the influence of power and gender was a very frustrating task. Like many men (i.e. Cooper 1992:212-3), I came to a point where any 'male' feelings or traits were judged negatively, and I held myself and other men in the group accountable when we strayed from the orthodox position I had developed. My position as representative for the group, as well as my involvement in other groups, furthered this as I was constantly caught between factions of feminists and lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer activists (among others). I spent a lot of time trying to please everyone, which generally meant leaning to more radical positions within which I could find ways of accommodating less-radical positions. This balancing act seemed, in many ways, to require the obliteration or at least minimization of my identity outside of politics.

The constraining identity I felt compelled to adopt became troublesome, particularly, for example, around issues such as sadomasochism and transgenderism. Both of these issues were not only political but were also personal as my long-time roommate and friend became involved in sadomasochistic sex and later began to identify as a man and not a woman. Having someone I loved and cared about deeply insist that not all masculine traits were negative and that sadomasochistic sex didn't necessarily result in harm was significantly troubling for the perspective and identity I had adopted. Even more troubling was witnessing the derogative response my roommate received from many in what was considered a compassionate activist community. In part these responses involved legitimate debates around the location of new claims to oppression,

particularly those of 'sex radicals,' and a subtext in which everyone was suspected of having a 'false consciousness.' For me, the collision between politics and the intense emotional connection shared between my roommate and I revealed the extent to which I had become torn between maintaining a stubborn political position that was acceptable throughout most feminist communities and my willingness to do everything I could for someone I love. This collision, and my decision to re-examine myself and my politics, was very similar to my earlier decision to re-examine my gendered identity and my politics in light of feminist theory and a recognition that the types of relationships I wanted and my love for the women in my life depended on ethical change. In both instances I have tried to let ethics lead me, but, as I hope my work here reveals, the path to an ethical life is by no means clear and requires detailed consideration.

In the Men Against Violence Collective and other activist organizations, there was a great deal of tension and frustration as people felt a need to qualify questionable practices and made silent sacrifices for the good of the movement(s) and to retain our individual positions, and moral capital, within them. There was no overarching magical code of behaviour to conform too, but there were specific interdictions along with general limits or rules that shifted with changing politics and between individual relationships. Showing your purity, your right to belong to the group, often meant distinguishing oneself from others, either those inside or outside the activist community. This perpetuated the tendency to moralize others and oneself. I do not want to suggest that I am somehow a victim of this: I was often amongst the most radical as I tried to protect my own position and reputation (read: moral capital). As such, any criticisms I

make of the profeminist discourse should also be understood as criticisms of positions I have taken myself.

The propensity for people in the activist communities I have been involved in to question everything, to be reflexive about themselves and their undertakings, is laudable. However, there are limits to the ways in which critical thought can be turned into practice. For instance, proclaiming something as tainted with patriarchy does not necessarily mean that everything associated with that thing can or should be eliminated. There are many ways to address that which is deemed problematic; to argue for the eradication of anything that can be associated with patriarchy is reactionary and, if the assumption that everything is patriarchal is accepted, would require destroying just about everything.

In Guelph I was frustrated by feeling suspicious of all men's intentions, thoughts and actions, while I simultaneously worked hard not to become suspect myself. I grew tired, for instance, of defending my choices of TV viewing, the music I listened too, the friends or acquaintances I kept, and so on, as though I was either propping up patriarchy or deluging myself with influences that I could not protect myself from. Nothing has only one meaning or interpretation, and even if I willingly subject myself to things I find disagreeable it is not as though I do not or cannot think about and evaluate them. I have come to a point where I want more freedom to live my life in ways that may not be perfectly anti-sexist (or anti-racist, gay-positive, etc.) in an orthodox way but that are not the backbone of patriarchy either. Any orthodoxy assumes a clear distinction between right and wrong, between transcendence and sin, when it should be clear that such

valuations rely primarily on faith and fail to encompass the complexity of the world we occupy.

Pat Califia has provided an insightful comparison between radical feminism and fundamentalist religious movements, arguing that the overall structure of their arguments are the same. Both offer “reductionist theories about how the world works, what went wrong, and how to fix it” (1997:89) through “positions that are reached instinctively, according to deep-seated, sincere but irrational moral beliefs. They are not reached by experimentation, research, or reasoned debate” (1997:90). Further, the “utopias” that are offered require “unquestioning support” lest any “lack of consensus about the rightfulness and righteousness of their actions becomes just one more proof of the depths to which the world has sunk” (1997:90). In profeminist discourses, which often replicate radical feminist discourses, questioning the authority of accepted interpretations can similarly become proof of the extent to which patriarchy imbues men with a form of ‘false consciousness.’ This is particularly true with regards to sex, where, like both radical feminism and religious fundamental movements, profeminists often “share an obsession with issues of sexual conduct and representation” (1997:89).

The dilemma over what is ethical sexual conduct, in my experience, has been the most difficult aspect of identifying as profeminist. Claiming such an identity and wanting sexual fulfilment have often appeared to be mutually exclusive, particularly since there is a concern within the discourse over men adopting a profeminist image for the sole purpose of acquiring sexual access to women. This is often referred to as “feminist fucking” (Flood 1990b). Theoretically, sexual relations tend to be located at the core of problematized masculinities and patriarchy. Just as many radical feminists do

not believe that sex, particularly heterosexual sex, can be consensual (i.e. MacKinnon 1989), many profeminist writers also question the possibility of non-oppressive sexual relationships of any kind (with the exception, perhaps, of lesbian relationships).

In a context whereby even looking for a heterosexual relationship can be considered predatory and inherently abusive (i.e. 'Brian' 1992:83), it is no wonder that attempts to construct an ethical sexual subject position has required interrogating all desire. My experience was much like that of Hearn (1992:165-7), who is one of only a few who have written on the sexual confusion and uncertainties he experienced when engaging with feminism. His responses included trying to reduce the importance of sex, changing his practices and rejecting the idea of possessing a specific sexuality. In my own experience, and for many of the men I know who have undergone similar processes, the result can be to hate oneself for having desire and for not being able to recast it into something that would be more amenable to the identities we pursued. For both myself and my partners, the constant uncertainty and inability to 'let myself go' became a source of frustration. It was particularly difficult given that the discourse encourages men to challenge reason and to embrace emotionality while simultaneously spurring men to rationally reconstruct their sexuality according to loosely reasoned arguments about the dangers it can pose. For men who are committed to being anti-sexist, at least in my experience, the discourse can construct our understanding of sex, and as Michel Foucault points out, the more sex is dwelled upon the riskier it seems (1986:239).

It occurred to me some time ago that purporting to know the connections between the personal and the political, and exhorting it upon others, represents a degree of arrogance in myself and in the profeminist discourse. If such claims are strategic

political tools, then their use needs to be tentative and remedies should not involve strict codes to live by. When turned into a form of self-formation, little room is granted for difference and alternative possibilities, interpretations and contexts are dismissed. As a result, the degree of agency and choice available for fulfilling lives and for forms of resistance are curtailed. We cannot claim to know the relationship between the personal and the political in any clear manner, nor should we assume that everything done in bed is necessarily political. Furthermore, we need to be more self-conscious in distinguishing between matters of taste and moral issues that can clearly be connected to social harms.

I want to be clear that I am not suggesting that men are oppressed by profeminism. I do not believe that power is irrelevant, nor do I believe that politics and lived experience are separable. Rather, I want to suggest, as Charles Taylor has, that a good – in this instance sexual desire and fulfilment – is not invalid simply because it can cause harm in some situations (1989:519). There is certainly a great deal of harm that has been and will continue to be caused through sex, I do not and will not dispute this. I also do not intend to endorse a ‘sex radical’ position that ironically argues that sex doesn’t cause oppression and that we can all be liberated through sexuality. I agree with Jana Sawicki, who has argued that there are no inherently repressive or liberating sexual practices (1991:43), and I will further suggest that any prescriptive sexuality – including ‘radical sex’ doctrines – is inhibitive to desire. All doctrinaire positions set the means and goals by which individuals are encouraged to live, and as such they serve a regulatory function. To conceptualize gender debates, it is essential to understand that they are inherently about regulating identities and practices. It is erroneous to assume

that any position can promise 'liberation' when it simultaneously encourages the adoption of a specific subject position. While I believe that some degree of regulation is inevitable, its extent and direction is at least somewhat malleable and needs to be a conscious consideration in all social justice initiatives.

In short, my goal is to challenge the profeminist discourse's treatment of sexual relations and suggest that the a priori conflation of men's sexual practices with oppression has done little to illuminate what an ethical subject position could be. In particular, very little room has been provided for positive male heterosexualities. The aim of my inquiry is not to critique profeminist discourse and then to replace it with new prescriptive formulas. Rather, I intend to problematize some of the taken-for-granted assumptions of the literature with the aim of opening up new conceptual spaces for debate around men's sexualities. The approach I intend to take is one which recognizes, as R. W. Connell does, that new gender politics will require new ways of thinking and a willingness to be uncertain (1995c:158). In this regard I hope to explore what Lorraine Code refers to as the "middle ground": that area that resists the confinement of the adversarial paradigm with "an explicit requirement for openness to debate" and that "resists closure and is committed to developing a politics of difference" (1991:322). In such a space, and Foucault would appear to agree with me here (1991c:84), I do not believe that critique requires one to have concrete proposals for change. If Foucault is correct in claiming that the "return of the revolution" is the central problem today, and since gender and sexuality have become sites of contestation and struggle, then my efforts here can be understood as an attempt to "engage in politics" by "try[ing] to know

with the greatest possible honesty whether the revolution is desirable” (Foucault 1988b:122) or, perhaps, what forms such a revolution should not take.

1.4 Content and Structure of the Analysis

The analysis I am conducting here involves a critical reading, or a reading ‘against the grain,’ of the profeminist men’s discourse. This discourse includes writings from anti-sexist activists as well as academics from a range of disciplines. In order to draw boundaries around this analysis, I have looked specifically for men who identify as profeminist or anti-sexist either by self-proclamation or by expressing views in a profeminist forum that locates them within the realm of men trying to combat gender injustice. These forums include profeminist websites and non-academic periodicals as well as academic publications. The more academic and more experiential works are not mutually exclusive as there is a great deal of overlap and influence between them. By including them both I am achieving a more comprehensive overview that aptly covers the more theoretical works as well as the more personal stories and views that come from men involved in men’s groups and/or men who are struggling through these issues. This is important because it provides at least a minimum of access to how self-identified profeminist men experience and construct themselves through the discourse. I realize that I am largely taking their words at face value and that this does represent a limit to the research, but this does not concern me at this point because I am looking specifically at the discourse and not at how men act on the discourse. I also do believe that there tends to be a degree of reliability in the often tortured soul-searchings of many profeminist men.

Another limitation is that I am studying discourse produced primarily in Britain, Canada, the United States and Australia, all of which are either European or have significant European roots. As such, I certainly do not want to suggest that the discourse I am examining is the only one or that it is universal. Other men's movements from the countries I have chosen have also been left out, primarily because I want to focus on the only movement that takes power seriously and that has a social constructionist approach. While this approach itself seems essentializing at times, it avoids problems associated with, for instance, the mythopoetic movement or religious movements such as the Promisekeepers that have foundational beliefs in God- or biology-given masculinity. Such foundations are not only intellectually lazy but they are also very difficult to engage with because the logic employed tends to be so circular and self-fulfilling that a reasoned approach is futile.

The profeminist men's discourse can be understood using Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant's conception of 'fields' of relations. These networks of relations are characterized by objective positions and struggles over a particular type of capital that is tangible within the field (1992:97-8). By 'objective,' Bourdieu and Wacquant are referring to relations between locations within a field where the subjectivity of the occupants does not dictate their location or their structured relation to other occupants in different objective locations. For instance, within the profeminist discourse, academic positions are objective locations despite the subjectivity or behaviour of particular professional academics. The form of capital used within the profeminist discourse is, I will argue, primarily a form of moral capital that is required in order to be recognized as a legitimate participant within the field of profeminist men's discourse and politics.

While I am drawing some boundaries around what constitutes the profeminist discourse, the boundaries of this field are constantly at stake within the field itself and hence its boundaries are dynamic (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:100, 104).

A division within the profeminist discourse that I will use is between the ‘radical’ and what I term the ‘less-radical’ (a further elaboration is provided in Chapter 3). My reason for doing this is that the radical profeminist position does need to be differentiated from other profeminist positions even though the radical position tends to be incorporated to some extent whenever sexual relations are addressed within the discourse. In many cases it is difficult to place an author within any specific profeminist subcategory. There are exceptions to many claims I make about the discourse, and I hope to point these out as much as possible. For instance, there are some profeminist writers who do try and take ‘pro-sex’ stances (i.e. Horowitz & Kaufman 1987).

An outline of the theoretical groundings of this study will be presented in chapter two, beginning with an examination of Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality.’ Foucault’s work on discourse, truth, power, ethics, the self, and the history of sexuality will also be examined, as will some of the limitations of his work. An overview of moral regulation, primarily using the work of Alan Hunt (1997, 1999), will be discussed along with the related concepts of harm, self-formation, moral capital and dividing practices. Providing an understandable account of the theoretical positions is one of the difficulties encountered when writing for an audience that transcends academia and activism. In an attempt to avoid confusion and maintain my work’s accessibility, I intend to provide a thorough overview that, to the best of my ability, does not assume the reader has had prior exposure to the work of Foucault.

In order to provide the foundations upon which profeminist approaches to sex are based, Chapter Three will examine theorizations of patriarchy and masculinities within the discourse, with special attention to the work of Connell and more recent work that attempts to incorporate notions of difference amongst men. Masculinities and patriarchy cannot be theorized without an attendant conceptualization of women, even when it is only implied, and so a consideration of the place of women within the profeminist discourse will also be provided. Additionally, I will examine the ways that 'men's pain' and personal change are presented. Addressing these topics will allow for insight into the 'rules' of the profeminist discourse, or what is permissible to say and what is considered contentious.

Chapter Four will delve more specifically into how the discourse constructs male sexuality as a site of danger that needs to be morally regulated. Sexual relationships between men and women, men and men, as well as masturbation, fantasy, objectification and pornography will be discussed in terms of the dominant problematizations within the discourse.

In Chapter Five I will apply Foucault's four-part approach to forming the ethical self (1985:26-8; 1997:263-5) to profeminist incitements for personal change amongst men. The four components include the "ethical substance," or the parts of the self that are deemed to require being worked on by ethics; the "mode of subjection," which involves the incitements that are used to implore men to change themselves; the "elaboration of ethical work," or the means through which men can work towards change; and the "telos," the type of ethical being to which profeminist men aspire.

The final chapter outlines the main problems I see in the profeminist discourse's approach to sexual relations. I theorize this approach through the perspectives presented in the literature on governmentality and raise questions regarding the extent to which macro-theory can be used to inform individual processes of self-transformation before it becomes unethical and subjectivizing. While I am primarily interested in a critique and do not intend to propose new guidelines for men, I hope the problematizations I put forth will contribute to developing new epistemological spaces within which new ways of approaching problems of sexualized violence and men's identities can be debated.

Chapter Two

Governmentality, Moral Regulation and Practices of the Self: Theoretical Groundings of This Study

2.1 Introduction

The theoretical position that will be used to analyze the profeminist men's discourse draws heavily from the work of Michel Foucault and from theorists who have been influenced by his work (i.e. Hunt 1997, 1999; Rose 1990, 1994; Valverde 1994a, 1994b). Foucault's corpus is large and a comprehensive overview of it is beyond the scope of this effort, but there are numerous interrelated tenets of his work that guide this analysis and require elaboration. Among these tenets, Foucault offers a non-reductionist theory of government that goes beyond the state and explores the myriad ways subjects are constituted and subjectivized through a triadic relationship of power, truth, and discourse (1978, 1980a, 1980b, 1981, 1991a, 1991b, 1993). The term 'governmentality' was coined by Foucault to describe the ways in which external codes and processes of self-formation are intertwined and dispersed beyond the state through, for instance, scientific expertise (1991a). Indeed, the key to modern forms of power according to Foucault is that they claim to know the truth of the individual and limit the range of acceptable identities (1982:214). Foucault has used his approach to explore how sexuality has been constructed and instrumentalized, through discourses of truth, as a conduit for the extension of forms of power into the lives of subject populations (1978). By providing a thoroughly historical account of the construction of sexuality, Foucault offers insights

into possible strategies and sites for resistance against domination and attempts to address the need for both personal subjective change and larger-scale social change.

This chapter begins by addressing Foucault's theoretical approach to government and its attendant conceptions of power, truth and discourse. Purvis and Hunt (1993) provide a critique of Foucault's account of discourse, which will be used to develop a more holistic model of discourse and its interpellation of the subject. Section 2.3 addresses Foucault's conception of the subject, who is conceived as both a participant in discourses of truth and as a power-effect of them. I will address critiques of Foucault's conception of the subject, particularly those critiques originating in feminist discourses (i.e. McNay 1992; Sawicki 1991). A summary of Foucault's work on the history of sexuality will be provided in Section 2.4 and will illuminate his concepts and their applicability to this thesis.

Section 2.5 looks at more recent extrapolations of Foucault's approach that have been developed within discourses on moral regulation. Primarily using the work of Alan Hunt (1997, 1999), I will explore how moral notions of 'right' and 'wrong' are constructed through discourse. These moral constructions are used to govern the conduct of others through claims of causal connections between certain practices and specific and symbolic forms of harm. The significance of moral discourses is particularly evident both in relation to the incitements for personal and social change that accompany them, and in the ways that morality is transformed into a form of capital within these discourses. The presentation and discussion of moral regulation and related concepts will provide a framework to facilitate the proceeding analysis of the profeminist men's discourse on sexual relations.

2.2: Foucault: Power, Truth and Discourse

Foucault's theorization of power is both a response and a challenge to earlier approaches that viewed power as a 'thing' that was entirely 'owned' or 'possessed' by some and completely unavailable to others. This particular conception, which was largely embraced by Marxist theorists, reflects an approach that focuses on the state and law as the ultimate sources of power. From this perspective, power is conceived negatively as interdiction, or that which places limits on freedom. Not only does Foucault disagree with this approach, but he argues that such a simplified understanding actually masks power and thereby contributes to forms of domination (1978:86; 1980a:95). In other words, the perception that power is held absolutely by the state and law, and that its primary effect is interdiction, acts to hide other manifestations of power. By opting for an understanding of power that locates it in a polarized binary, the multitude of ways in which power is exercised throughout all areas of life are ignored and responses to forms of domination are limited.

Foucault rejects this 'juridico-discursive' approach: "One cannot impute to me that power is a system of domination that controls everything and which leaves no room for freedom" (1987:124). If power involves influencing the behaviour of another, then freedom is a precondition of power because without freedom the 'other' cannot be influenced (1987:123). Thus, according to Foucault, power is not an object and can neither be entirely monopolized nor be wholly inaccessible. Rather, "power is exercised from innumerable points" and is integral to all relationships (1978:94). It is exercised in

all forms of resistance, which cannot escape or be outside of power, and, like power, resistance is present in all relationships (1978:95).

Power has no central source, but it does exist within a matrix of both local and larger social relations. These local uses of power play a role in constructing the larger “lines of force” that can lead to forms of domination, what Foucault refers to as the “hegemonic effects” of confrontations of power (1978:94). Foucault rejects the notion of two discrete levels of power relations, but in order for comprehensive strategies to function they require the support of lower, more local manifestations. Similarly, local sites cannot become “patterns of transformation” without entering into larger power strategies (1978:99). When there is some correlation between local manifestations of power and larger power strategies, “lines of force” emerge and can result in forms of domination. In this scenario, power does not emanate from a single source, but the (somewhat) aligned and mutually reinforcing levels of power may be exercised with “hegemonic effects.” Foucault refers to the mutual interdependence between ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ power (my terms) as the “rule of double conditioning” (1987:99). This dynamic is used to illustrate how the interactions of everyday life, local groups or agencies, for instance, can have a cumulative effect of supporting or resisting the “many cases [where] the relations of power are fixed in such a way that they are perpetually asymmetrical and the margin of liberty is extremely limited” (1987:123). By acknowledging that not everyone has the same relation to power, Foucault avoids presenting power as evenly accessible and exercisable while maintaining his position that it is not exercised from an all-powerful center.

The significance of Foucault's focus on the interplay between the micro and macro manifestations of power is that possibilities for social change are located within the realm of everyday life. This is a point that will be returned to in section 2.3 of this chapter. It is important to note that while Foucault placed resistance within the realm of everyday life, all forms of resistance are interior to power and as such can be integrated into larger power strategies and do not guarantee more liberty. Liberty, Foucault argues, would require challenging the foundations of the type of political rationality used to justify governance (1981:254). Mitchell Dean defines political rationality as, "the relatively systematic, explicit, discursive, problematization and codification of the art or practice of government, as a way of rendering the objects of government in a language that makes them governable" (1994b:187). Put differently, it is the type of rationality considered intrinsic to the state that is understood as being in the interests of both the state and the population governed (Hindess 1997:258). As such, it justifies and enfranchises the state's very existence. It is not an over-riding external principle (Hindess 1997:258), nor has its form been historically constant. For Foucault, the form of political rationality that has become dominant is one based on 'pastoral' power, "whose role is to constantly ensure, sustain, and improve the lives of each and every one" (1981:235). One of the ways this is accomplished is through the doctrine of the police, which involves surveillance and attention to all aspects of social life so as to facilitate and improve the lives of all citizens: "the role of the police is to supply them with a little extra life; and by so doing, supply the state with a little extra strength" (Foucault 1981:248). This doctrine is not restricted to state agencies, but includes numerous dispersed agents, including private individuals and organizations, that act – intentionally or not – in a governmental

capacity (Gordon 1991:36). The effectiveness of these plural and dispersed agents rests largely in their relative distance from official state apparatuses, a distance which, in conjunction with state- and law-centred analyses of power, has worked to conceal their relationship to and exercise of power.

The political rationale of the 'pastoral' recognizes that liberty is both a precondition for security as well as a threat to it. This form of political rationality aims to ensure that the subject population conforms to standards that will promote security without requiring the overt coercion that would potentially invalidate the state's own reasons for existence (Hindess 1997). Means such as the doctrine of the police contribute to security through processes of totalization and individualization (Foucault 1981:254) or, in other words, understanding and acting upon the population both in its breadth and in all its details. People, and their bodies, are essential components to these mechanisms of power (Foucault 1980a:104). It is the rationality underscoring this totalizing and individualizing process that Foucault perceives as threatening liberty by shaping, limiting and normalizing the types of subjectivities that are available.

Both Foucault's work on power and on political rationality relate to the role that the construction of truth has within his framework. According to Foucault, truth is both socially constructed and constructs the 'reality' we live in; it is created through power but also creates power. As Foucault defines it:

'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements.

'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth (1980b:133).

Truth, according to Foucault, is *the* political question, and any hope for social change is “not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power... but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (1980b:133). Foucault’s perspective on challenging ‘truth’ is similar to his conception of power: neither can be challenged without enacting that which it challenges. Hence his general conclusion that neither ‘truth’ nor ‘power’ can be discarded and countered with an ‘innocent’ (my term) politics – a politics grounded in visions of a utopia that is power-free and presumes to represent ‘natural,’ unconstructed truths. However, as Foucault has argued, it is possible to engage in a politics of truth construction that works to sever truth from forms of hegemony.

The definition of ‘truth’ that Foucault provides is similar – if not identical – to his conception of discourse. This is not surprising given that discourse is the site of the production of truth within his approach. His refusal to accept a false/truth dichotomy is one reason for Foucault’s rejection of the use of a concept of ideology (Purvis & Hunt 1993:489). Foucault has provided a three-point critique of ideology, arguing that “it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth” (1980b:118); that it relies on a pre-constituted subject that is then acted upon by power (1980b:118; see also Purvis & Hunt 1993:488); and that it “stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant, etc.” (1980b:118). Again, as in Foucault’s approach to power, the common observation that Foucault is engaging with ‘the ghost of Marx’ is evident in Foucault’s treatment of ideology.

In the place of ideology, Foucault presents discourse as the arena in which truths are constructed. Discourse is more than a sum of statements, which, while providing the content of discourse, have no essence in and of themselves (Tilley 1992:295). Thus, Foucault's concept of discourse does not rely on linguistics or semiotics in its production of meaning. Rather, discourse involves the many interdependent fields that, as Tilley writes, "actively *produce* the objects of which they speak, internally limit their own domains, define that which they are purporting to talk about and make these objects manifest and subject to further description" (1992:298; emphasis in original). Discourses are thereby more than just descriptions: they are relations between communicative practices and the objects that are delineated by them. In the fields in which knowledge is created, where understandings of 'reality' are made to be real, discourses, like the truths they construct, are both affected by power and shape power's exercise. As Bourdieu and Wacquant point out, fields are, by their definition, always contested and sites of struggle (1992:98).

The role of power in Foucault's discourse is evident in his emphasis on how each discourse has specific rules which mediate it. Every discourse has boundaries and "law[s] of [the] *existence* of statements" (Foucault 1991b:59) which act to regulate, for instance, what can be said and who can speak. For Foucault, these "laws" seem rather structuralist, or static and formal, which is largely a result of his focus on 'professional' discourses within the sciences which tend to be more coherent (Purvis & Hunt 1993:486, 489). Moral discourses like the profeminist men's discourse do have rules and protocols, but these are neither as formalized nor as institutionalized as more technical discourses.

A distinction needs to be made between individual discourses and the larger fields in which a number of discourses interact. There is no single theorization of the different 'levels' of discourse available either in Foucault's work or in that of those who have critiqued or used his conception of discourse. However, there are clearly differences between a discourse, for instance that of psychiatry (which itself has many different and competing 'sub-discourses' within it), and conglomerations of interacting discourses, such as all those involved in the 'mental health' field (i.e. psychological, therapeutic, and other related discourses). These larger amalgamations are often referred to as 'discursive formations' (see Purvis & Hunt 1993:486; Foucault 1991b). In the case of profeminist men, their discourse can be understood as a component of a discursive formation on gender and sexuality, which would include, for example, gay and lesbian, feminist, social work, therapeutic, socialist, criminology and 'non-feminist' 'men's' discourses (to name a few).

While Foucault does seem to provide a rather monolithic approach to discourse at times, he also recognized that discourses are inherently subject to change. He is not concerned with traditional debates around the 'origins' of phenomena, and hence avoids conceptualizing change as occurring through linear stages of development (1991b:54-5). Rather, discourses experience "*successive displacements*" (1991b:55; emphasis in original) that can only be understood by examining the specific conditions and configurations in which a discursive formation exists. A point of debate is in the degree of stability and permeability of 'discourses' versus 'discursive formations' (see Purvis & Hunt 1993:486). I feel that neither should be seen as fixed. It is perhaps sufficient to suggest that the larger discursive formations tend to have a higher degree of stability, and

that change is generally initiated within individual discourses. If this assumption is correct, then particular discourses (i.e. profeminist men's or psychiatry) provide entrance points into discursive formations (masculinity/gender or 'mental health'). At the same time, change within a particular discourse is hampered by its relation to the larger formation. In the case of profeminist men's discourse, it is perhaps more affected than affecting in its relation to other discourses. These relationships between and within discourses and discursive formations are crucial to understanding change. To serve as a sufficient account of discursive transformations for the time being is the recognition that transformations in any specific discourse can emerge from within the discourse itself (intradiscursive), from its relationships and interdependencies with other discourses (interdiscursive), and from occurrences that are outside of the realm of discourse (extradiscursive) (Foucault 1991b:58).

The non-discursive realm involves that which does not actively produce knowledge but rather acts on knowledge already constituted through discourse. Examples provided by Foucault include "an institutional field, a set of events, practices, and political decisions, a sequence of economic processes" and so on (Foucault 1972:157). In each of these, the knowledge upon which they rest is preconfigured. For Foucault, these two realms are autonomous and the discursive has primacy over the non-discursive (Tilley 1992:298). However, Foucault's attempts to separate these domains and arrange them in hierarchies presupposes that discourse always precedes other practices, and that these other practices are incapable of affecting discursive formations and transformations. I prefer Tilley's approach, which recognizes "that both reside in a relation of mutual mediation, mutual determination, from which definite objects of discourse arise and

emerge” (1992:298). Purvis and Hunt have provided an account that incorporates the non-discursive and discursive such that the discursive can be understood as a *process* that has (non-discursive) ideological *effects* (1993:496). These effects work to “reinforce and reproduce dominant social relations” (1993:497) through their incorporation into institutional processes and, more importantly, through the ways in which subjects identify with the understandings of themselves and their world that are constructed through discourse. There are, again, issues of reciprocity in that the very term ‘ideological effect’ assumes a one-way relationship wherein discourse is determinant. However, as a *process*, discourse is always open and subject to its own power effects, inevitably including its own ideological effects.

Foucault’s conception of discourse manages to link the material and the non-material or mental (McNay 1992:27; Purvis & Hunt 1993:484), thereby evading the problematic distinctions and prioritizations that have plagued many other theorists. Additionally, despite Foucault’s own tendency to turn discourse into a monolithic force, his account does illuminate the fractures and transformations that, if used conscientiously, provide a means for resistance through the development of alternative discourses. These are valuable tools for both those interested in understanding the social and for those who wish to change it. They are not, however, the most significant aspects of Foucault’s conception of discourse. Rather, Foucault’s greatest contribution, and that which he considered most important in his work, is the role that discourse plays in constructing the subject – that is, in constructing who we are and how we perceive ourselves.

2.3 Foucault's Subject

In his account of the subject, Foucault provides a valuable approach that has been adopted and modified by many (i.e. Halperin 1994; Rose 1990, 1994; Sawicki 1991). However, his account of the subject's construction through discourse, and the subject's potential for resistance, leaves a number of questions unanswered and at times seems contradictory. For instance, Foucault can be both overdeterministic in his account of the subject and overly optimistic about the possibility for voluntary, conscious self-transformation. Foucault has also been criticized for inadequately addressing the ethics of the self-stylization he advocates.

Foucault conceives of the subject as both an effect and vehicle of power. That is, for Foucault, the individual is never without power and acts to channel it while simultaneously being a product of power and its articulations of truth through discourse (1980a:98). In particular, Foucault focuses on the ways in which sciences and other disciplines, through discourse, have normalized what are considered acceptable subject positions and limited the range of identities available (1980a:106-7). Not only have the disciplines constructed truths about who we are, but they have also developed practices that link our subjectivities to knowledge and power. The contact point where the individual's conduct is mediated or directed by others is definitional of Foucault's concept of government (1980a:203). These governmental practices are enacted upon bodies, which are subject to increasing surveillance and "a tightly knit grid of material coercions" that channel individuals in directions that are beneficial to a dispersed state (1980a:104). It is important to note that the effectiveness of these forms of

subjectivization are due to the way they are recognized by the individual and incorporated into identities:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (1982:212; emphasis in original).

There is a tension in Foucault's work in that while he retains the possibility of resistance through the creation of alternative discourses and new ways to construct the self, he simultaneously constructs the disciplining effects of power as a monolithic force (McNay 1992:43). For instance, Foucault writes, "In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, *determined* in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power" (1980a:94; emphasis added). If discourse *determines* subjectivity and all knowledge is an effect of power, then how is it possible for anyone to think outside of power or to mount resistance (McNay 1992:148, 153; Purvis & Hunt 1993:489)? Foucault himself is somewhat vague on this, although some theorists have argued that his approach should not be read as dismissive of individual agency. For instance, Sawicki writes that, "to focus on the ways in which the subject is in fact constituted, and on the broader social and political forces that determine the parameters and possibilities of rational agency is not to deny agency. It does, however, point to its limits" (1991:103). While McNay is critical of the unresolved tension between the social context and individual agency in Foucault's work, she notes that his later work on the self tends to

avoid reducing individuals to the product of the social context and incorporates an understanding of the relation as being mutually determining (1992:61-2). For my purposes, I accept that subjectivity is produced through discourse but that its interpellation of the subject is never fixed. I do not believe that the individual can be seen as either entirely autonomous nor as wholly uncritical or incapable of questioning and challenging the 'truths' posited by predominant discourses. My position here is similar to that of Weedon; it does not treat individuals as inactive and simultaneously recognizes that "discourse constitutes ways of being a subject, modes of subjectivity, which imply specific organization of the emotional as well as the mental and psychic capacities of the individual" (Weedon 1997:94). Debates around the interrelationships between individuals and the socio-cultural context will undoubtedly arise throughout this analysis, but for the time being I am more interested in the means through which individuals are linked to discourses and forms of power.

Foucault posited that there are specific *technologies* (or *techniques*, which is often used synonymously with *technology*, but which I will attempt to differentiate) that link individuals to power. These technologies are inherently related to forms of political rationality and, like political rationality, are often assumed to be 'natural' and are not often thought to be connected to forms of power. Dean provides a useful starting point with his definition of the *techniques of government*, which are "all the means, mechanisms, and specific instruments which make possible forms of administration, power, and rule" (1994b:187). These techniques are differentiated from technologies, with the latter including, for instance, institutional arrangements in areas such as

education or medicine, while the former involves the specific systems and methods used within these broad technological fields (Dean 1994b:187-8).

For Foucault, there are four major types of technologies. These include technologies of production, sign systems, power and of the self. Much of Foucault's earlier work focused on technologies of power (or domination) (1993:203), which involve the coercive subjection of individuals to forms of power that are external to the self. In his later work, the ways in which individuals work on their selves and are compelled to do so is the focus. He defines technologies and techniques of the self as:

...techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on (1993:203).

In subtle combinations with more coercive technologies, these self-technologies act to normalize and subjectivize individuals and thereby improve the efficiency of government. The self technologies enfranchise the state's own existence because they are not overtly coercive and they purport to attend to the interests of those subjected (Foucault 1981).

It should be noted that while Foucault uses the term *technology*, this term carries connotations that need to be problematized. The notion of technology implies that the means and the process are intentional, calculated, and guarantee a predictable outcome. The outcomes of social processes or practices are rarely amenable to such a mechanical approach. While the term *technology* has proved useful for Foucault (and many who have adopted his work), practices intended to reform the self, or to prompt others to reform their selves, are never completely successful or uniform in their application and

outcomes. Foucault's terminology is widely recognized despite these problems, and hence while I wish to distance my writing from some of the connotations of his terminology, it is difficult to avoid using his terms entirely.

Nikolas Rose's study of the role of psychological expertise in creating the self as a focus in analyses of social problems is a useful example of a technology of the self. Rose notes that the intentions of these systems are ethical (1990:217) and operate "by seeking to align political, social, and institutional goals with individual pleasures and desires, and with the happiness and fulfillment of the self" (1990:257). Nonetheless, external constraints are internalized into the self as discipline becomes associated with practicing and "training in the minute arts of self-scrutiny, self-evaluation, and self-regulation" (1990:222). To be responsible in this manner requires submitting oneself to expertise, whose practitioners 'generously' offer their help (1994:381) with "a continual enterprise of self-improvement through the application of a rational knowledge and a technique" (1994:392). We are obliged to make choices, and "to fulfill our political role as active citizens, ardent consumers, enthusiastic employees, and loving parents as if we were seeking to realize our own desires" (1990:258). The "progressive principles" of reshaping the self are "double edged" because,

They institute, as the other side of their promise of autonomy and success, a constant self doubt, a constant scrutiny and evaluation of how one performs, the construction of one's personal part in social existence as something to be calibrated and judged in its minute particulars. Even pleasure has become a form of work to be accomplished with the aid of professional expertise and under the aegis of scientifically codified knowledge. The self becomes the target of a reflexive objectifying gaze... (1990:239).

Rose's work on psychological expertise is heavily influenced by Foucault and provides a good example of a discourse and a technology that has created techniques for the regulation of identities and meanings that generally do not involve overt coercion nor conscious and coordinated intentions to dominate (1990:257-8). Again, it is important to note that technologies, such as those exhibited by therapeutic and psychological discourses, neither determine the population's identities nor do they have a uniform impact. Such discourses do have extradiscursive effects in that they influence other discourses and extend their reach into the lives of subject populations.

Rose's work on psychological and therapeutic techniques is particularly relevant because the most important techniques, according to Foucault, are those that are "oriented toward the discovery and the formulation of the truth concerning oneself" (Foucault 1993:204). In his historical analysis of techniques of the self, Foucault differentiates between Christian and Classical techniques. In the Christian tradition, one of the means to discover the truth of oneself was through processes of self-examination and confession, while the Classical tradition tends towards constructing the self according to the truths that one knows or believes in (1993:210). This difference is similar to the contemporary 'paradox of self-help' described by Wendy Simonds (1995), which describes the dual tendency in self-help literature to incite a search for truth within the self and simultaneously incites the construction of the self.

The construction of the self is inherently about morality, which Foucault defines as "a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies" (1985:25). Foucault differentiates between "code-oriented" moralities and "ethics-oriented" moralities. The former involve

prescriptive, formalized rules and regulations, such as codes of behaviour or legal prohibitions. The latter involve how one constructs oneself as an ethical subject with little or no reference to formal codes (1985:25-6, 29). In both cases, the importance is the real behaviour of individuals, the ways that they “conduct themselves in reference to a prescriptive system that is explicitly or implicitly operative in their culture” (1985:26). While the explicit prescriptive system involves code-oriented guidelines that are generally recognized, the ethics-oriented systems that implicitly operate and direct behaviour and perceptions of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ are equally important and deserving of attention. To be moral, one must act in conformity with a unified pattern of conduct that is based primarily in a relationship with oneself, or self-to-self (1985:28). These practices are indistinguishable from processes of self-formation (1985:28) and are definitional of Foucault’s concept of ethics: “the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself...and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions” (1997:263).

For Foucault, there are four major components of the relationship one has to oneself (1985:26-28; 1997:263-265). First, there is the *determination of the ethical substance*, or the location of that which one aims to change or formulate according to ethical criteria. Examples would include feelings or desires as areas which one may want to subject to ethical work (1997:263). The second component is the *mode of subjection*, “the way in which the individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice” (1985:27). This involves the myriad of means that invite or incite the individual to construct an ethical self and the reasons for its necessity, such as religious doctrine or rationalized rules and expectations (1997:264).

Third, there are *forms of elaboration, of ethical work* (1985:27), the *self-forming activity* (1997:265). These involve the actual work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself. For instance, one might engage in learning, self-denial, self-examination or other practical exercises (1985:27). Last, there is the *telos* of the ethical subject, or the “kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way” (1997:265). The *telos* recognizes that an action needs to be a component of a pattern of conduct in order for it to become moral, and hence it is a way of being rather than isolated actions (1985:27-28). These four components comprise the ethical relationship one has to oneself, and while there are relationships between them, they also have a certain degree of independence (1997:265). Their analytic usefulness will be apparent in Chapter Five, in which I apply these four elements to the profeminist men’s discourse and its attempts to re-formulated men’s sexual subjectivities.

Foucault suggests that “the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built into our history” (1993:222). In short, he means that there is no true self, no essence of the individual that is pre-socially constituted. This, I believe, is one of the reasons for Foucault’s dismissal of theories of ‘repression.’ He does not support the notion that there is something natural or innate that can be recovered. Anything that could be ‘recovered’ would be constructed and would represent new forms of regulatory control and normalization. This is one of the reasons he rejects a recourse to the ‘sovereignty’ of the individual as a form of resistance against disciplining power – it is an integral component to the operation of power in society and is quickly re-integrated into mechanisms of control (1980a:108). The disciplining, normalizing tendencies of

contemporary society, and the technologies of control that operate in their service are precisely what Foucault resents.

As a potential form of resistance and a means through which new subjective modalities may become possible, Foucault embraces the Classical Roman notion of the *aesthetics* or *arts of existence*. While he is insistent that we cannot effectively take something from the past and impose it on the present (1997:259), he does offer the arts of existence as a model while emptying it of its historic content. He defines the arts of existence as,

...those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria (1985:10-11).

This approach is the only “practical consequence” of a recognition that the self is not provided for us – we must “create ourselves as a work of art” (1997:262). David Halperin, an advocate of the use of the arts of existence in the development of gay subjectivities, notes that Foucault’s stylization is not about decadence but rather about the creation of personal autonomy and social power distinct from technologies of control (1994:74, 108-9). It is a strategic possibility, an exercise upon the self to transform oneself and attain a particular mode of being (Halperin 1994:76-7). As a relation of reflexivity to the self, it enables a certain degree of freedom and does not claim any single identity as ‘truly’ resistant or radical (1994:114). Because it involves fluidity and individual constructions, it avoids the dangers of substantive identities, mainly their co-optation or insertion into regulatory regimes.

Note that in Foucault's definition of the arts of existence, the individual changes themselves in their *singular* being. This can be considered a strong point in Foucault's approach in regards to resisting conformity and regulation, but what about the 'other'? Foucault believes that "We are the inheritors of a social morality which seeks the rules for acceptable behavior in relations with others" and that considers caring for one's self to be immoral (1988a:22). He rejects moralities that are primarily other-oriented, although he has indicated a desire to develop an ethics that includes both the self and the other (1997:258). Foucault's justification for discounting the other lies in the specious and rather unsubstantiated claim that one who cares for one's self cannot dominate others (1987:119).

The problems with Foucault's work on the arts of existence have brought criticism from a number of fronts. For instance, Lin Foxhall (1998:123) argues that Foucault's exercise collapses when it fails to incorporate 'others'. Similarly, Barry Smart argues that Foucault's omission of 'others' does not challenge a selfish culture of the self, may neutralize our "moral impulse" (1995:107), and evades our responsibility for others (1999:94). Philip Turner also questions whether the self that is "liberated from any notion of undertakings that have a moral claim upon it prior to any of its particular intentions and choices" is stuck as the "self's depths are used to judge the self's depths" (1991:41). McNay adds to this by suggesting Foucault "borders on a libertarianism which does not distinguish between acts that are predatory and oppressive in relation to others and actions that are genuinely progressive" (1992:147). Without any standards of evaluation or an interactional notion of the self, "the individual cannot distinguish between what constitutes a radical exploration of identity and what is simply an arbitrary

stylization of life" (1992:165). These concerns about Foucault's self-stylized and self-knowing subject are compounded when, under his schema, all knowledge is an effect of power (McNay 1992:147-148). If all knowledge is an effect of power, and if power works through individualization, then we have no way of knowing for certain whether Foucault's proposal isn't just another strategy through which power controls us (McNay 1992:165). Exactly how a new ethics of the self will lead to social change, as Foucault has claimed, is also unclear (McNay 1992:177).

McNay (1992:11), along with others (Pringle 1992:84), has also raised the concern that Foucault's work neglects gender. This can be particularly problematic when considering that Foucault already avoids making distinctions between those practices of the self that are suggested and those that are imposed (McNay 1992:80). Clearly, not all practices of the self are entirely non-coercive, nor are they applied equally. Nor, for that matter, are all aspects of the self easily accessible or amenable to conscious transformation (McNay 1992:80; 1999:97).

The concerns raised by McNay are important and challenge any adoption of an uncritical acceptance of Foucault's *arts of existence*. Nonetheless, Foucault's effort to inform a subjective practice does merit some value in terms of its avoidance of easily regulated, normalizing identities, as well as its refusal to engage in utopian political strategies. Barriers around acceptable subjectivities are not only instigated by larger-scale institutional enactments of power, but are also deeply enshrined in many efforts to resist such forces. The tendency to prescribe identity is indeed a problem, both in terms of domination and regulation but also in terms of the potential for personal fulfillment. As Taylor has noted, the demands of benevolence, or acting according to an interpretation as

to what is in the best interests of others, can have a toll on self-fulfillment and self-love (1989:518). While he also illustrates the dangers of seeking only personal fulfillment, he also warns of the dangers of dismissing its importance entirely (1989:511).

2.4 Foucault on Sex

The work of Foucault is useful for my study not only because of the methodology he proposes, but also because he has applied his approach to discourses on sex. While Foucault's work in this regard is primarily historical, he nonetheless provides useful observations on how sex has been constructed and linked to regulatory practices. A brief look at his work on the history of sexuality is also useful as an applied illustration of the theoretical perspective and related concepts previously discussed in this chapter.

Foucault's work on sexuality challenges notions of power as always repressing sex and the related notion that desire and sex are constituted through the law (1978:82-3, 85). The notion of repression relies on the assumption that there is an essence to sex that exists outside of our construction of it, and it assumes power is never productive and represents a limit on freedom (1978:83). He insists, as is consistent with his general approach, that we need to avoid assuming that the relationship between sex and power is inherently 'evil' (1987:129). Rather, power is an integral component of desire and sexual relations and can be reversed (1987:129). The role of law should also not be considered definitive of sex because,

...it is utterly incongruous with the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus (1978:89).

Rather than claim law constitutes desire, or that we are sexually repressed by power, Foucault examines the discourses that construct and act upon our conceptions of sex. The relationship between power and sex, for Foucault, requires a detailed historical analysis rather than an a priori renouncement.

In Foucault's analysis, we have experienced three centuries of incitations to talk about sex (1978:23) through discourses such as medicine, psychiatry, the criminal justice system and social controls (such as those associated with the welfare state and its multiple, dispersed agents) (1978:30-1). The result has been that sex ceases to be an unspoken pleasure (1978:4) and becomes that which is administered, policed, and managed (1978:24) through networks that incite people to talk about, modify and control their desires (1978:33-4). As Foucault wrote in regards to nineteenth century society's relationship to sex,

...it put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning it. Not only did it speak of sex and compel everyone to do so; it also set out to formulate the uniform truth of sex. As if it suspected sex of harboring a fundamental secret. As if it needed this production of truth. As if it was essential that sex be inscribed not only in an economy of pleasure but in an ordered system of knowledge. Thus sex gradually became an object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within us: a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends (1978:69).

One of the primary mechanisms Foucault examines is confessional practices and incitements to self-examination (1978:59-60), initiated through Christianity and proliferated through clinical practices. These practices link sex to truth (1978:61) and construct sex as something that everyone needs to examine in order to understand oneself, in order to have an identity (1978:155-6). There are thus two ways in which sex

is related to truth: we ask sex to tell us its truth, to reveal itself, and since it cannot we busy ourselves constructing and talking about its truth. Second, we insist that sex explain our truth, to tell us who we are (1978:69).

The construction of the truth of sex occurs through networks of multiple discourses that shape our understandings of sex. The processes involved are thoroughly saturated with power, and as sex is constructed through these discourses power is extended. Power in this context has four key operations: to establish *lines of penetration*; the *incorporation of perversions* and the *specification of individuals*; *perpetual spirals of power and pleasure*; and *devices of saturation* (1978:41-6).

By *lines of penetration*, Foucault refers to the ways in which concerns around sexual habits provide an entry point for the extension of forms of governance. For instance, the concern since the nineteenth century with children's "solitary habits" had less to do with eliminating masturbation than with establishing techniques to increase the surveillance of children by parents. Concerns over childhood masturbation brought medical and educational practitioners into increased contact with parents, all of whom looked at children with increased suspicion. In order not to be at fault for failing to be suspicious, parents at least partially accepted new duties in the form of prescriptive formulas for their conduct as parents. In effect, the family became subject to the expertise of others and children's sexuality became an entry point, a morally-charged *line of penetration*, for new forms of power (1978:41-42).

The second operation of power delineated by Foucault is the *incorporation of perversions* and the *specification of individuals*. Power's use of sex is not to exclude different practices, but rather to incorporate all possible sexual practices such that they

can be detailed, organized and, ultimately, regulated. Sexual habits were in effect given a new reality through their codification into the individual – in other words, what may have previously been considered sexual practices became sexual identities, ways of being, modes of existence (1978:42-44). Thus, for instance, Foucault discusses how the “homosexual became a personage... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” that was subject to medical, psychological, and psychiatric forces (1978:43). The constitution of this category has less to do with actual sexual practices than with relating the practices to a certain sensibility, a type of character that needs to be studied in all its detail (1978:43). The instrumental effects of these practices of implanting perversions and specifying identities should not be underestimated: by constructing and regulating identities around sexual practices, power can establish itself in the truth of every body (1978:48). Not only are those with “perverse” identities affected by the creation of perversion. Rather, the creation of perversion constitutes everyone as suspicion, everyone as in need of examination and surveillance by the self and others, and, in the end, also constructs what is accepted as ‘normal’, ‘healthy’ sexuality.

As sexuality was categorized as ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’, everything associated with the individual became a signifier of his or her sexuality (1978:44). Surveillance becomes of paramount importance; power watches individuals through numerous control mechanisms. With the power of watching comes the pleasure of watching and the pleasure of evading watch, of resisting (1978:45). Sex becomes charged with intensified meanings and increased surveillance at the same time as the pleasure of evading or challenging sexual norms increases. These tendencies are what

Foucault refers to as the *perpetual spirals of power and pleasure*, the third operation of power (1978:44-45).

Devices of sexual saturation, the fourth operation, involve the means through which points of power are distributed and hierarchicalized and the ways in which disperse apparatuses turn sex into something that infuses every situation and needs to be controlled and considered in detail (1978:45-46). Sex is given great causal capacities (1978:103), and the more desire is interrogated, the amount of anxiety and suspicion that one has towards sex increases (1986:239). This is furthered through the *devices of sexual saturation*, the numerous “contacts that act as inductors” (1978:46) and make sexual activity a concern in all relationships and social settings.

The four operations of power detailed by Foucault are evident in what he sees as the four strategic unities within discourses on sex beginning in the eighteenth century. These unities involve the hysterization of women’s bodies, the pedagogization of children’s sex, the socialization of procreative behaviour and the psychiatrization of perverse pleasures (1978:104-5). One issue I want to explore in this research is whether there has been a more recent ‘strategic unity,’ namely a pathologization of ‘male sexuality.’ By this I am referring to an assumption that there is *one* underlying essence behind all men’s desire, and that this essence is dangerous. In discourses such as biology, socio-biology, religion and some social movements, as well as in popular media, a version of ‘male sexuality’ is presented and assumed to be widely representative (in the case of media, depictions are often considered to both represent *and* be the cause of a problematic ‘male sexuality’).

Foucault expresses hesitancy in locating any specific intent or source in the deployment of these discourses on sex (1978:36-37). However, he traced the emphasis on sexuality to political changes whereby people and their bodies became the most important asset and tool in acquiring security and power. Foucault terms this “bio-power”:

Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body (1978:142-3).

Sex became a major political issue because it gave access to both the disciplines of the body and to the regulation of the population. As Foucault writes,

It fitted in both categories at once, giving rise to infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous orderings of space, indeterminate medical or psychological examinations, to an entire micro-power concerned with the body. But it gave rise as well to comprehensive measures, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body or at groups taken as a whole. Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species (1978:145-6).

Foucault is critical of attempts to resist power by ‘liberating’ ourselves sexually, by searching for a truth in sex that can be deemed to be outside of power relations. ‘Sex’ is imaginary for Foucault, it is a social construction that creates our desire for it, that impels us to search for ourselves through it (1978:156-7). In order to resist, we cannot turn to the very mechanisms of the deployment of sexuality that have harnessed it but must rather seek to break away from the agency of sex (1978:157). Put differently, we need to challenge the importance granted to ‘sex;’ in fact, for Foucault, we need to abandon the terms ‘sex’ and ‘sexuality’ because they are historically and socially constructed, contained by the boundaries that delineate what counts as ‘sex.’

Furthermore, they are associated with identities, with normalized ways of being (Halperin 1994:96-7). In its place Foucault wishes to put an emphasis on bodies and pleasures (1978:157). One of Foucault's motivations is a rejection of the repressive hypothesis. Halperin also explains that Foucault's emphasis on pleasure is an attempt to resist the disciplining effects of sexuality; because sexuality and desire express identity, pleasure can be used to shatter identity, to depersonalize and desubjectivize one's practice (1994:93-95). This is not an easy task and requires work at constructing oneself, but it is, for Foucault, the only way to avoid the disciplining and normalizing effects of the deployment of technologies of sexuality (Halperin 1994:108-9).

This overview of Foucault's work on the history of sexuality is useful for the analysis that follows. Additionally, it is illustrative of Foucault's general approach. He reveals how modern forms of power work by claiming to know the truth of the individual, and explains how this occurs through discourse. He also shows how resistance, to be successful, requires challenging the very terms of that which it aims to counter.

2.5 Moral Regulation

Foucault's work on governmentality and self-formation has been influential in the growth of literature on moral regulation. Like the work of Foucault, moral regulation is about the governance of the conduct of others and of the self (Hunt 1999:2) and occupies a central place in processes of socialization and projects of social governance (Hunt 1997:296). Mariana Valverde sees it as being "characterized simply by a common interest in analyzing post-religious forms of ethical and moral regulatory practices"

(1994a:vii). It has become popular because, among other things, it combines the social and historical construction of people, of ethical subjectivities, and it places an emphasis on the cultural codes that shape everyday life (Valverde 1994a:vii). Valverde notes that it is not a theory but is rather a concept that is connected to other economic and political fields. These connections, however, cannot be taken for granted and require detailed study (1994a:vii).

What follows is an overview of some of the basic concepts used within the discourse on moral regulation. Using primarily the work of Alan Hunt, my aim here is to provide a working definition of moral regulation and to show how claims of harm are used to establish perceptions of 'right' and 'wrong.' The moral weight of these perceptions can be used as a form of capital that divides subjects and implores them to construct themselves according to certain criteria. It needs to be noted that by using the term 'moral regulation,' I do not intend to *necessarily* imply a positive or negative judgement, although it will also become clear that I do not intend to refrain from any such judgements.

To begin, a definition as provided by Hunt:

Moral regulation involves the deployment of distinctively moral discourses which construct a moralised subject and an object or target which is acted upon by means of moralising practices. Moral discourses seek to act on conduct that is deemed to be intrinsically bad or wrong (1999:6-7).

This definition can be further explained with reference to its components, which are not necessarily considered moral issues in themselves but are constructed as such through the linkages posited between them (Hunt 1999:7). These components include a moralized subject, a moralized object or target, knowledge, a discourse, a set of practices and a

'harm' (Hunt 1999:7). Using alcohol consumption as an ad hoc example, the moralized subjects are drinkers (as a group or 'class' and individually); the moralized object is alcohol; the knowledge deployed can involve, for instance, medical research, crime statistics, economic impact studies or the testimonies of children of alcoholics; the discourse cuts across medicine, criminology, social work, and others; the set of practices is the consumption of alcohol; and the 'harms' can range from poor health to drinking and driving to family break-up and social decline. The linkages posited between drinkers, alcohol and its consumption, specific forms of knowledge, and harms to both individuals and the social body result in the claim that alcohol consumption is inherently bad or wrong.

Hunt makes an important point when he notes that harm has two dimensions involving "some specific harm resulting from the wrong conduct and some enhanced or symbolic harm" (1999:7). Thus, continuing with the previous example, there are claims of harm to the individual drinker and to the larger social body as alcohol consumption is given causal power beyond any specific instance of its use. One of the difficulties I have is with the ways in which claims of harm can be extrapolated and manipulated, which will become more apparent when looking specifically at moral discourses on sexual relationships. However, I consider it to be equally problematic to invalidate all claims of harm solely because the linkages posited are often tenuous and reliant on particular interpretations that generally incorporate high-handed assumptions regarding the conduct of others. The process and ethical quandaries involved require detailed examination and offer no guarantees that a just standpoint can be articulated. Nonetheless, it is my hope that exploring claims of harm within the particular contexts they are made will provide

some grounds for making loose judgements, or at the very least for problematizing taken-for-granted assumptions evident within the specific moral discourse that is the topic of this study. This process, and the inherent uncertainties involved, is a substantial component of this paper.

A complimentary approach to Hunt's conception of moral regulation and claims-making is the work of Joel Best (1987), who attempts to adopt and modify Toulman's work on the basic structure of arguments. This structure begins with the grounds, or the facts or data, which are linked to conclusions through warrants. Warrants are those statements that justify drawing conclusions from the grounds and are often implicit and the most likely to be value-laden (Best 1987:108-9). Best also provides an elaboration on the different types of grounds that can be used. For instance, there are definitional grounds, which set the boundaries as to what is considered relevant and provide an assessment of the type of problem being dealt with (1987:104-5). Examples can also serve as the grounds, for instance by introducing a problem with extreme, horrific examples that act as a referent and set the tone for proceeding discussions (1987:105). The third type of grounds discussed by Best involve those that establish the extent of a problem. Examples would include statistical frequency estimates, growth estimates, and claims as to the range of people affected (i.e. everyone is potentially affected, therefore everyone must act) (1987:106-8).

These last types of grounds – those relating to growth estimates, for instance – are similar to Hunt's observation that most moral regulation projects have a tendency to couch their arguments within the language of "decline or degeneration" (1999:11). Hunt is cautious of the potential dangers of adopting the position that moral regulation projects

can be deduced from 'crisis' theories (1999:200-1), but he does use the term 'crisis tendencies' (1999:201) to represent situations in which social change interrupts people's regular patterns or identities and in which there is conflict over the acceptable extent of social governance (1999:201-202). When a moral regulation project is articulated within the terms of social decline or crisis, Hunt notes that, as is the case with claims of harm, the conclusions or reforms have both a specific function and a larger, symbolic role (1999:11). For instance, using the example of alcohol consumption couched in the terms of social decline, the proposed remedy of banning alcohol may be presented as an immediate solution to the problem of drinking and driving but also as a step towards healthier, more familial-oriented and close-knit communities. In this case, the claim that communities will be healthier may be extrapolated from a claim that the streets will be safer for children. It is also based on a single, negative interpretation of the relation to alcohol; it would be quite possible to argue that alcohol does play a role in creating community cohesion and has other positive effects. Like many moral arguments, the example provided here is reversible depending on the interpretive stance taken.

A useful descriptor is provided by Hunt for many of the remedies proposed by agents of moral projects. Borrowing the term 'retraditionalization' from the work of Geertz, Hunt aims to expand its scope and suggests it consists of two key elements:

First, it involves efforts to provide fresh grounds and justifications for projects to reinstate traditional forms of social relations and to respond to new and disturbing social changes that were exemplified in the demonisation of 'the sixties' and the 'permissiveness' that refused deference to religious authority or to social hierarchy. Second, and I suggest more important, is that 'retraditionalisation' advances a new configuration of values (1999:194).

Contemporary projects directed at curbing drug use or sexual activity exhibit these “new configuration of values” in that they do not attempt to reinstate, for instance, religious-based prohibitions. Rather, their arguments may be grounded in values relating to social equality or other apparently well-intentioned reasons, despite the fact that many of the concrete proposals are almost indistinguishable from previous, more ‘traditional’ social patterns. Calls for a return to older forms of social relations but for new reasons, the two basic tenets of Hunt’s ‘retraditionalization’, will be shown to be useful in the analysis of profeminist men’s discourse on sexual relationships.

An element and function of moral regulation is what Foucault has termed ‘dividing practices’ (1982:210). Dividing practices both “moralises the categories, delineates between good and bad” and “operates as a legitimation for the differential treatment of the divided categories” (Hunt 1999:8). So, again using the example of alcohol consumption, moral divisions may be constructed between those deemed ‘alcoholics’, those deemed ‘social drinkers’ and those who abstain entirely. Consequently, treatment may depend on how one is classified.

Dividing practices also illuminate two related aspects of moral regulation: the preponderance of ‘moral capital’ and the ways in which targets of moral projects become ‘subjects’ (Hunt 1999: 8). Valverde (1994b) introduces the term ‘moral capital’ to refer to a type of capital that circulates within moral discourses and practices. The description provided by Valverde is somewhat vague, and so I will endeavor to briefly elaborate upon how I intend to use it within the scope of my research. I intend to use it as a form of currency that represents moral authority, or one’s position of moral righteousness. It is tangible only insofar as it is recognized by others and linked to particular fields in

which it has value. Having moral capital is a primary means by which one can avoid being subject to negative categorizations within dividing practices; as such, it requires adopting (or at least claiming) a particular subject position and is hence linked to practices of self-formation.

Like Hunt, one of the primary reasons for my interest in moral regulation is in “the ways in which the self comes to be induced to act upon themselves” (1999:16) and become the ethical subject of one’s own actions. The targets of moral regulation often respond by engaging in processes of self-formation, which generally requires reflexivity on the part of the subject and is often guided by forms of ‘expert’ knowledge (Hunt 1999:8). This is not to suggest that moral regulation projects cannot be coercive (Hunt 1997:281), nor does it suggest that the targets do not and cannot resist forms of subjectivity that they are pushed to accept (Hunt 1999:8). It is also important to point out that the agents of moral regulation are not untouched by processes of self-formation: “the processes through which hegemony is secured and reproduced also involve the formation of the capacity of regulatory agents to rule; they must establish their competence and capacity to rule” (Hunt 1997:281). Thus those who aim to affect the behaviour and ethical subjectivity of others must also construct themselves ethically in order to secure moral capital and the authority to incite others to change.

In Hunt’s judgement there has been a decrease in the use of prescriptive decrees in incitations for personal change along with an increased emphasis on reflexivity and self-monitoring (1999:218). Much of this has to do with the ways that social activism has joined with forms of self-help (1999:27), which has introduced new forms of expertise (1999:219). For instance, subjects are implored to choose from a variety of

experts, including the self as its own expert (1999:219). The reduction in prescriptive formulas and the expanding range of expertise from which the self can draw should not be taken to imply that one is free to construct one's self as one wishes, but rather that there is a loosening of guidelines and that one must take increased responsibility for one's own self. Additionally, there is a tendency to encourage the recognition of forces larger than the self in the form of 'others' or the social body, or in other, often non-specified powers (Hunt 1999:219). The dynamics involved in self-formation for the self versus self-formation for the sake of others will be explored throughout this project and, at least in part, represent some of the tensions between modern and postmodern ethical positions (Bauman 1993:83-4).

The concepts used within the discourse on moral regulation that are presented here provide a practical framework that will be applied to the profeminist men's discourse on sexual relations. As Hunt has noted, there has been a "fusion of sex and morals" (1999:21) such that at times they are almost synonymous. The moral discourse around sexuality are important because it "both constructs what sexuality is and how it is to be experienced by particular groups of people, and links sexuality and sexual conduct to other aspects of social life" (Hunt 1999:21). Hunt takes a rather strong stance against many contemporary moral reformers, arguing that, like the Victorian purity reformers, they tend to take "a view of sex as an inherently dangerous force and also share an anti-hedonism in so far as 'pleasure' is not valorised as a significant human aspiration" (1999:200). He is particularly critical of the tendency within feminism to resort to a 'victim' politics of protecting women (1999:205-6), particularly since such a politics requires the *governmentalization of gender boundaries*. These boundaries mark or

regulate what is and isn't acceptable for particular gendered subject positions (1999:210-11). The maintenance of bipolar gender categories is a problem that is central to my endeavor here, particular in regards to sexual relationships. Indeed, as Hunt notes, debate around morals and sexual relations, particularly when oriented around issues of sexual violence, "goes to the heart of the conditions of possibility for companionate relations between men and women" (1999:205).

I will suggest that Hunt's perspective may emphasize more radical positions within feminism to the detriment of feminism generally, but this does not pose a major problem for my research because the profeminist men's discourse tends to embrace radical positions in regards to sexual relationships. While I am hesitant to endorse any stance that normalizes radical feminism as representative of feminism, Hunt's critiques are relevant for my purposes here and are understandable to the extent that anyone studying moral regulation is likely to encounter radical positions the most frequently.

2.6 Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to set out, as clearly and succinctly as possible, the theoretical tools that will be used to guide my analysis of the profeminist men's discourse. In particular, I have attempted to detail the interrelationships between Foucault's conception of power, the centrality of 'truth' within his approach, and the role of discourse in shaping a non-determined subject. The presentation of Hunt's conception of moral regulation, itself largely an outgrowth of Foucault's work, offers tools for the examination of contemporary moral reform movements. Each of these components will be used in my assessment of the profeminist men's discourse, both in terms of how this

discourse constructs contemporary 'realities' and in terms of how it aims to direct new subject positions.

This chapter has raised numerous issues that will be central to my evaluation of the profeminist men's discourse. For instance, there is conflict over how an emphasis on the self and an emphasis on the 'other' interact and whether one is ethically more palatable. Likewise, there is tension between the importance of individual fulfillment versus social betterment – the latter term itself being contentious and subject to interpretation. The resultant dilemma is one in which freedom and regulation are both positioned as opposites and simultaneously each seems to require the other. Similarly, while the inherent difficulties involved in efforts to evaluate claims of social harm have been mentioned directly, the basis of such endeavors relies on establishing a workable conception of justice. Such a conception has not been directly addressed for several reasons, most notably my belief that such an assessment requires detailed consideration of specific circumstances and contexts in order to claim any authority. Within the largely postmodern tone I have set thus far, which attempts to encompass as many perspectives as possible, any such claim to authority will be tenuous and relative. Nonetheless, these are some of the basic questions and concerns that underscore and motivate this study. The theorists whose work has been raised thus far will not only be brought up again because of their technical utility in the analysis, but also because their work provides insight into what is my basic interest: the possibility of social change and resistance that aspires to maximize justice without reinforcing subjectivizing practices and forms of domination.

Chapter Three

The Problems of 'Men' and of 'Masculinities': Profeminist Theorizations of Gender and Patriarchy

3.1 Introduction

It is pertinent to examine how the profeminist discourse theorizes gender identity, power, and 'patriarchy' because these provide the foundations for theorizations of sexual relations. In addition, a more general exploration allows for insight into the differences and similarities in the theoretical approaches enacted, as well as for a better understanding of changes within the discourse and in its relationships with other discourses. By developing a more holistic and contextualized understanding, the intricacies of the 'rules' of the discourse will become more apparent.

As indicated in Section 1.4, a basic division I will be making within the discourse is between 'radical' positions and those that I term 'less-radical.' By 'radical' I follow Michael Messner's three-point description, which suggests the primary themes within radical profeminist men's discourse include: a recognition of sexism as a structural system and not just a product of individual attitudes; positioning genders as classes that are oppressed or oppress; and claiming rape and sexual violence as the extreme forms and locus of male domination (1997: 50-1). I will add that radical profeminists prioritize gender-based inequality, often going so far as to claim that patriarchy is the root of all forms of oppression. Messner differentiates radical profeminists from socialist profeminists, the latter of whom focus more on institutional power, resist defining men primarily in terms of sexual relations, and attempt to incorporate class and racial

differences amongst men (1997:56, 59). He further distinguishes both of the above from 'liberal feminists' that focus on individual rights and personal growth (1997:60). Others have distinguished profeminist men along other lines, such as 'Men For Change' who separate the "political change type guys" from the "personal journey type guys" (2000a). The latter characterization is indicative of the influence that therapeutic discourses, which are often very spiritually oriented, have had within profeminist men's circles. However, despite these demarcations, there is a great deal of overlap between these labels. All profeminist men incorporate approaches to both political change and personal change, and virtually all incorporate some tenets of radical feminism - especially when it comes to sexual relations. For these reasons, I have opted to make a simple distinction between those writers whose work is thoroughly radical (i.e. Funk 1993; Stoltenberg 1977a, 1977b, 1989, 1993, 1998) and those that are positioned more moderately despite intermittent radical leanings (i.e. Brod 1995; Kimmel 1990a, 1990b).

The tendency to adopt radical positions is in part a result of neglecting what Michael Flood terms the "problem of multiple feminisms" (1993-4): because feminist discourses and practices are multiple and often contradictory, there is no certainty for profeminist men as to *which* feminism to follow. While Flood seems to dismiss this problem as somewhat trivial, the result has been a tendency to gravitate to (generally) older, less ambiguous doctrines. This also seems to be the case with much of the profeminist material on gay, lesbian and bisexual issues which, for instance, rarely discusses queer politics. Pease suggests that the choice of feminisms and "gay movement[s]" will "ultimately be determined by the practicalities of particular political situations at particular times" (2000a:142). I agree with Pease's contingent perspective, but in his

own work he dismisses queer theory, apparently because of its inclusion of bisexuals, transgendered people, sadomasochists, and heterosexuals who are involved in gay and lesbian communities (2000a:123-4). Positions such as this have led Weeks to conclude that men's studies, one of the stalwarts of profeminist writing, has taken a "dizzy ascent into orthodoxy [that] largely stems from the impact of feminist and lesbian and gay theorists in the 1970s and 1980s" (1996:750).

One of the goals of this chapter is to further illuminate the difficulties of instrumentalizing a profeminist identity, particularly in its present incarnations within the discourse. Committing oneself to the development of a critique of men, masculinity and patriarchy, as well as to constructing new, non-patriarchal identities, is difficult when, as Pease notes, there is no clear identity for the oppressor who sides with the oppressed (1999:267). Such a position is morally-charged because, as is often emphasized, profeminist men do not experience sexism but make a *choice* that is not available to the oppressed groups themselves (Goetz 1987:2). Steven Gould contemplates this when he writes that "to feel one wants to offer support but that one doesn't experience the problem oneself is a bit like feeling one's a middle-class revolutionary" (1992:78).

The notion of constructing a non-oppressive self under these conditions poses problems, and indeed these problems have been central in attempts to form an unambiguous profeminist identity. Such an identity requires authenticity, which, as Anthony Giddens has observed, involves understanding one's own identity as being distinct from technologies of control (1991). How such a 'liberated' state can be attained is elusive, particularly when such an undertaking can only claim to exempt itself from the effects of power by defining power as a monolithic force with transparent origins and

effects. A further complication is that claiming an identity requires not only self-recognition, but also recognition from others (Calhoun 1994:20), and feminists have generally been skeptical of the intentions of self-identified profeminist men and their ability to change (see Coltrane 1994:43; Connell 1995a:222; Schact & Ewing 1997:34). Similarly, some gay activists have criticized heterosexual profeminist men for not being reflexive enough and have insisted that profeminists must unconditionally commit themselves as a “100% ally” (Goetz 1997). This skepticism is also evident both between profeminist men and within individual profeminist men themselves, particularly since many doubt their ability to think or feel in ways that aren’t tainted by patriarchy. Just as Rose has argued that being a responsible citizen requires being an apprentice to expertise (1994:382), profeminist men look primarily to feminist expertise, and sometimes to gay expertise, for guidance and validation.

In addition to reacting to feminism and gay movements, the profeminist discourse interacts with other ‘men’s movements,’ many of whom view profeminists as being ‘anti-male’ feminist pawns. These critiques further complicate the subject position profeminist men aspire towards, and the effects of the debates between men’s groups can be seen in changes to some profeminist positions. These often slight alterations are an attempt to make profeminism more attractive. As Clatterbaugh (1995:529) has noted, radical profeminism cannot attract many men when it is premised on not trusting men because of their masculinity, which is perceived as being constituted through violence and woman-hating. Liberal feminism is also unable to attract many men because it asks them to share power when many men do not feel powerful.

The following section examines the ways in which early and much contemporary profeminist writing incorporates a Marxist perspective whereby men are an all-powerful class within a male-controlled society. Following this, section 3.3 looks at Connell's theorizations of masculinities and at attempts to address difference within the discourse. In both of these sections, consistencies and shifts in conceptualizations of power will be discussed. Section 3.4 looks at how 'men's pain' has entered the discourse as a legitimate topic. In section 3.5 I suggest that the profeminist discourse theorizes women as objects despite aims to address them as subjects. Section 3.6 provides a brief overview of the direction and scope of attempts to incite men to change. The chapter concludes with a summary of the types of rules that operate within the profeminist discourse. As with all sections in this chapter, the goal is to provide some insight into the discourse and to establish a foundation that will facilitate the more detailed examination of approaches to sexual relations in Chapters 4 and 5.

3.2 *Marx's Shadow: Class and Power Under Patriarchy*

Jon Snodgrass' 1977 anthology, *For Men Against Sexism: A Book of Readings*, presents radical interpretations of men and patriarchy. In effect, the book, like all profeminist writings, aims to challenge dominant discourses on masculinity and to construct a new 'regime of truth.' These truths include a recognition that masculinity is harmful, that men are responsible for women's oppression and benefit from it, and that society is thoroughly patriarchal. For instance, Leonard Schein insists that all men oppress women under patriarchy, and that patriarchy "makes all men misogynists, all men rapists, and all men emotionally crippled" (1977a:74). To Schein, "we [men] are the ones who are the

enemy;” “we must see male consciousness and its concrete expressions as the main opponents of full humanism in the world” (1977b:131; emphasis in original). As is consistent with Messner’s designation, Schein’s work is distinctly radical in that he focuses a great deal on sexualized violence, perceives men as a privileged “class/caste” over “powerless” women, and argues that “patriarchy is the prime contradiction from which all other models of oppression come from” (1977b:131).

Schein’s claim that patriarchy is the model upon which all other oppressions originate is echoed in Steven Dansky, John Knoebel and Kenneth Pitchford’s *The Effeminate Manifesto*. The authors announce their intention of becoming “traitors to the class of men” (1977:117), all of whom are indicted as oppressing all women. “The Male Principle” is presented as “an appetite for objectification, role-playing, and sadism” which extends to gay men who engage in “faggot objectification” and “cruising” (1977:118). Transvestism and masochism are also described as “a way to project intense anti-women feelings and also to pressure women into conformity” by presenting stereotypes that appeal to the “sado-masculinist” (1977:118-9). Ironically, Dansky *et al* also insist that “effeminists” must firmly reject objectification on any grounds (1977:118). The implied definition of ‘objectification’ is the act of turning people into ‘things.’ Included in the list of prohibited grounds for objectification are sex and life-style (1977:118), which appears to contradict their critiques of gay men, transvestites and masochists. In many ways, the claims made about heterosexual, gay men and others can be read as a form of objectification in that these generalized groups are treated as objects, not subjects, as the authors claim to know the motivations and character of these men.

John Stoltenberg published three articles in Snodgrass' anthology and has continued to publish books and articles from a radical profeminist position. Stoltenberg defines masculinity as "power, prestige, privilege, and prerogative *as over and against* the gender class women" (1977b:75; emphasis in original). It is "entirely learned behavior, taught by a culture which men entirely control" through the social process of male bonding (1977b:75). While male bonding is the social process of creating men, sexual aggression is the assertion and enactment of male power. The socialization process imbues the male body with sexual aggression such that men cannot function sexually without a power disparity. The "slightest hint" of "common dignity, a reciprocity of moral concern, or any justice whatsoever" prevents men's genital functioning – in other words, "it goes numb" (1977b:76). Gay men are also implicated in this, as Stoltenberg describes gay sex as a form of male bonding and gay liberation as a gay-straight contract to vilify women (1977b:78). If men are to consider themselves as having a conscience or a sense of justice, "*a total repudiation of masculinity is required*" (1977b:80; emphasis in original). This work is never-ending because, as Stoltenberg notes, "none of us can presume that we have yet done enough in our own lives to eradicate our allegiance to masculinity" (1977b:82).

There can be no mistaking the moral tone of Stoltenberg's early work, particularly in regards to its focus on sexual conduct (which will be dealt with in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5). Unfortunately, there has been little change in his use of moral arguments nor in his emphasis on the role of sexual relationships in creating gender disparity and, by his own extension, all forms of oppression (1989:32; 1993:304; 1998:159). Stoltenberg's work has received praise and some criticism within the

profeminist discourse. While many authors positively cite his work, he has also been critiqued for his limited presentation of feminism (Flood 1992-3); vast generalizations and insufficient attention to historical detail (Flood 1992-3; Bartlett 1991:25); ignoring class, race and nation (Flood 1992-3); and an inability to describe the process of change when his own account insists on an all-pervasive male power (Bartlett 1991:25).

Given that radical feminism was at its height in the 1970s, and that men's active support for feminism was rare and largely unheard of, it is not surprising that the views expressed were so thoroughly radical. These authors wanted to – in fact, needed to – take radical stances in order to be taken seriously and to establish themselves politically and morally as men who are committed to fighting structural gender inequalities. Power within this oppressive system was understood through Marx, either directly or indirectly through radical feminist adaptations of Marx. This is clearly displayed within each of these articles in their use of the concept of “class” and a clear separation between the powerful and the powerless. Indeed, the very choice of the word “manifesto” in Dansky *et al*'s title indicates a transposing of Marxist political rhetoric onto the politics of gender oppression. While the adoption of Marxist thought and radical feminism by men in the 1970s is not surprising, the endurance of these views is.

Unfortunately, many contemporary writers do not offer clear distinctions as to what is meant by terms such as ‘patriarchy,’ ‘men,’ or ‘masculinity.’ The implicit assumption seems to be that these terms signify something that is known and clearly distinguishable, although some authors do provide reasonably thorough definitions. In what follows I will focus on how more recent profeminist work theorizes patriarchy, and how this form of social organization is perceived to inculcate men through socialization,

a process that is claimed to be evident in men's everyday practice. Men's collective responsibility will also be addressed.

Rus Ervin Funk provides a definition of patriarchy that is characteristic of many profeminist approaches. Funk offers the following description:

Patriarchy, as defined by feminists, is the process of using the system of male supremacy found in traditional families (i.e., the "father's house") as a paradigm for the world order. Patriarchy is a system in which men create the definitions of power, the ways to maintain power, and the avenues for obtaining power in all its forms (1993:29).

In Funk's definition, power is treated as an absolute that is controlled exclusively by men. With the exception of Funk's simple extension of "traditional families" to the social body as a whole, he doesn't differentiate historically or geographically. In short, patriarchy can be read as being a unified, unchanging and ultimately unchangeable system of male domination.¹ Funk further obfuscates patriarchy when he argues that ending rape will destroy patriarchy and make all forms of oppression obsolete throughout the entire world (1993:38). The problem with this monolithic, all-powerful conception of patriarchy is that it interprets everything as being necessarily determined by patriarchy and, by extension, sexual assault.² If everything is patriarchal then we have no way of knowing anything other than patriarchy and any efforts at resistance seem meaningless. Just as Foucault has discussed how anything can be deduced from the 'domination of the bourgeois class' (1980a:100), undifferentiated and universalized definitions of patriarchy allow for anything and everything to be reduced to a function or effect of gender/class power.

¹ Funk's case is particularly odd because he believes that patriarchy will eventually destroy itself, which leads one to wonder why he also argues we should all work against it (1993:37).

A slightly more specific definition of patriarchy is offered by Allan Johnson. We live in a patriarchal society, according to Johnson, because: it is *male dominated*, or positions of authority are held by men; it is *male-identified* in that what we think of as good, desirable and normal are associated with men and masculinity; and because it is *male-centred* as the focus of attention is primarily on men and what they do (1997:5-8). Johnson's definition is somewhat more detailed in that he distinguishes three characteristics, but each of these is rather vague and can be interpreted as either tendencies or a rigid system of male control. Johnson does not offer any historical differentiations in what he refers to as our "patriarchal legacy," although his extended description of what constitutes a patriarchal society does not seem to assume that it is necessarily universal (1997:5-8).

A third definition is offered by Pease: "By patriarchy I simply mean institutionalized male power" (2000a:13). Pease does discuss problems associated with the term, namely its lack of historicity and the tendency to treat it as fixed and deterministic (2000a:13). While Pease does address these issues in his discussion of patriarchy, much of his writing seems to invoke the concept as though it is at least *almost* all-powerful. Acknowledging problems with the term 'patriarchy' does not excuse its implementation when the result, for instance, essentializes men.

It should be noted that the term 'patriarchy' subsumes other social structures, such as capitalism. In other words, capitalism, because it is male controlled, is understood as being one branch of patriarchy. Harry Brod has used the term 'fratriarchy' to signify the increasingly depersonalized nature of patriarchy, the way patriarchy is

² Chapter 4 will take a closer look at how all sexual relations contribute to sexual assault under Funk's schema. Since patriarchy is based on sexual assault, and all sexual relations at least

directed through capitalism, and to recognize that the majority of men are increasingly dominated within this system (1995:398-9).

Power is deemed to be both the determining force in, and the primary content of, the social construction of masculinity. Profeminist men reject biological essentialism and focus instead on the socialization of men within patriarchy. Gender is constructed through a myriad of institutional means that make the “collective hallucination” (Kaufman 1993:17) of masculinity seem real. This process becomes ingrained in men’s minds and even in their bodies (i.e. Stoltenberg 1989:36; Ellison 1996:77; Pronger 1998). ‘Men Against Racism & Sexism’ describe this process: “All men are trained, coerced and forced by society into being sexist as young people” (2000a). Pease, despite expressing some concerns with the term ‘patriarchy’ and his recognition that men’s identities are formed through numerous discourses, states: “I fully accept the feminist notion that men’s subjectivities and practices are produced and reproduced within patriarchal structures” (2000a:13). If society is patriarchal, then of course everyone (including women) is affected by this social structure. In many regards this is a null point that provides little insight into the mechanisms or the thoroughness of such a process.

Funk elaborates upon men’s socialization, arguing that all men internalize and exhibit patriarchal representations of men and male violence as they are taught to use force, to kill, and to use emotional blackmail to get what they want (1993:45). Victor Seidler furthers this by stating that men have “been brought up to hate, despise and loathe women” (1991:37), an argument that is supported by many profeminist men. Rowan, for instance, has written of how therapy has led him to believe that “most men hate most women, deep down” (1992:92).

contribute to sexual assault, all injustice is essentially traced to sexual conduct.

Hatred and contempt for women are definitional in most profeminist writers' accounts of what it means to be a man. Stoltenberg claims that the "identity as a member of the sex class men absolutely depends on the extent to which he repudiates the values and interests of the sex class 'women'" (1989:34). Challenging one's own hatred of women requires first acknowledging "that one is a recovering misogynist" (1993:306). Stoltenberg is essentially collapsing distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' men and suggesting that 'normal' men are dangerous. Similarly, Funk argues that there is no distinction between abusive and non-abusive men, that all men are dangerous (1993:20-1), that rape is an extension of normal male behaviour and that no man has reached a point where he can relate to women without being oppressive (1993:44). Paul Kivel argues that in his anti-violence work he has found that "offenders were extraordinarily ordinary by any standard I could devise, and the ordinary men were extraordinarily violent" (1992:xxi). These sentiments are reflected in Larry Finkelman's request for men to examine themselves because "a part of ourselves may be more like Mark Lepine than we care to admit" (1996).³

These authors, while providing harsh critiques, are not suggesting that all men are necessarily overtly or intentionally violent. Rather, men are often unaware of the many ways they are violent (Men For Change 2000e). Kivel expands on this: "Some shades of the violence are so subtle that we barely know they exist. These shades come out in the way we walk, the way we talk to our children, and the way relate to our bodies, to women, to other men, to our souls, and to the earth itself" (1992:xix). Since these abusive behaviours are not obvious, Flood has concluded that men who aren't overtly

³ Marc Lepine killed 14 women at Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique in 1989 specifically because they were women.

sexist can be just as abusive, and hence dangerous, as men who practice overt sexism (1990b). Even if an individual man could hypothetically not oppress women, men have been silent for too long (i.e. Men For Change 2000e) and all men benefit from patriarchy and from rape (Funk 1993:33). The conclusion reached is that all men are collectively responsible for all forms of sexism and men's violence (i.e. Men For Change 2000e; Men Against Racism & Sexism 2000a).

I have avoided providing extensive commentary on the preceding discussion of the profeminist men's discourse and its theorizations of patriarchy and of masculinity. Most of this will occur in Chapters 4 and 5. However, one point that I would like to make is that there is a tendency to essentialize men within the discourse, even if such totalizations are based within social constructionist approaches. Ken Plummer (1996:48-9), Craig Calhoun (1994:16), Jana Sawicki (1991:36) and Steven Epstein (1987:48) have all commented on the tendency for some social constructionist and identity politics approaches to impose sameness upon the groups being discussed, and this is evident in the examples from the profeminist discourse presented thus far. While it is particularly evident in the more radical writers, it is consistent through many less-radical authors as well.

The work of Pease demonstrates the fine line between acknowledging abuses by men and discursively constructing men as violent. In one of his works, he argues strongly against a biological basis for masculinity, insisting instead that it "is both socially constructed and individually willed" (1997a:66). Then, on the same page, he presents research arguing that there is no difference between men who batter and those who do not. While he acknowledges that all men are not batterers, he also argues that all men

participate in the subordination of women (2000a:2) and that it is not possible for any given man to not oppress women (2000a:38). This is in part a result of men's "partially unconscious patriarchal desires" (2000a:44), which need to be addressed through "a major transformation of consciousness among men" (1997a:75). In part, this transformation will aim to break biology from gender stereotypes (1997a:154).

There are several points in Pease's work that need to be addressed. First, Pease wants to break biology from gender while at the same time the socially constructed masculinity he presents supports the very stereotypes he wants to challenge (i.e. men as aggressive, violent). In this regard he reifies gender, an act that is not negated simply by stating that he does not intend to essentialize men. It is ironic that Pease can criticize 'dominant ideologies' for essentializing and normalizing men's sexuality when his own work accepts dominant definitions as normative (2000a:140). Second, the observation that all men oppress women in some way is a moot point. I will suggest that no one, including women, live completely "non-oppressive" lives. This is particularly the case when measures of oppression include all the indirect ways an individual can support those attitudes and practices that are deemed oppressive. To measure the relationship between identity (or practice) and oppression in such an absolute manner leads to my third point, which is that Pease's work exhibits an idealistic reliance on the possibility of constructing identities that do not negatively affect other people. The emphasis, I will suggest, should be on the degree of oppression, not whether it occurs or not. There is also an assumption that a clear conception of justice is always available to distinguish between oppression and ethical infringements on others, which I do not believe to be the case (this will be discussed in more detail throughout the rest of my work). Relatedly,

Pease, and profeminist men generally, assume that a clear and knowable separation exists between what is 'patriarchal' and what could be considered 'human.' This is particularly complicated when everything is deemed patriarchal, and when women are introduced into the theorizing. Pease takes the position that women are not powerless (2000a:9), but his indictment of men and oppositional placement of men and women seem to suggest that women are somehow innocent, a point that will be discussed further in section 3.5. Lastly, while Pease's social constructionist approach does allow for the possibility of change that is denied by biological theories, the development of a non-oppressive identity, assuming for the moment that such a subject position is possible, is inherently regulatory. Despite his entirely ethical intentions, constructing a subject position for men that is deemed ethically ideal in relation to women is about dictating acceptable identities and practices for men. I am not suggesting that Pease is erroneous in suggesting that changes can or should be made in constructions of masculinities, and I realize that all social change initiatives are regulatory to some extent. My point is that it is problematic to assume this is necessarily liberating or progressive for men or, for that matter, for women. The assumption that standardizing appropriate behaviour provides a means for resistance needs to be interrogated.

The emphasis in this section has been in part to trace the history of profeminist theorizations of patriarchy and of men's subject positions within it. I believe the examples provided are reflective of the discourse in general, but in order to provide a more holistic understanding I will now turn to profeminist attempts to incorporate difference into their theorizations of masculinities. Central to these efforts is the work of

R.W. Connell, whose work on masculinities is perhaps the most frequently cited, particularly within the more academic strands of the discourse.

3.3 Connell's Masculinities and Approaches to Difference

Connell presents masculinities as practices, as what people actually do rather than how we think about them (1995c:138). As such, they have a rationale and historical meanings and are both individual and collective projects. Connell cites two primary components in the construction and enactment of masculinities: the *symbolism of difference*, or the oppositional positioning of masculinity and femininity; and the *structure of power* (1995a:223). This latter component is essentially identical to Connell's *structure of gender relations* (1995a:73), which he subdivides into three parts.

The *structure of gender relations* involves *power relations*, *production relations*, and *cathexis*. Connell describes *power relations* as the "main axis of power in the contemporary European/American gender order," which "is the overall subordination of women and dominance of men" or "patriarchy" (1995a:74). The second component, *production relations*, refers to gendered divisions of labour and capital accumulation (1995a:74). Lastly, *cathexis* are those "practices that shape and realize desire" (1995a:74). While in Connell's *Masculinities* (1995a) he is critical of what he perceives as social theory's tendency to exclude sexual desire (1995a:74), he does not provide a detailed account in this volume. Elsewhere, however, Connell explains his position more thoroughly (under the term *sexual social relations*) as addressing three related political concerns: the "speciation" of sexual identities within hierarchies of power and legitimation; inequalities that are constituted through sexual practice itself (such as

violence against women); and the ways in which one's sexual practice becomes either a constraint or an enablement for others (1995b:388-389).

One of Connell's key contributions to the literature has been his recognition that there are numerous kinds of masculinity and that they are constructed in relation to each other and in relation to women (1995a:76). Because Connell focuses on masculinities as practices, it is important to note that he resists assigning any particular content to the categories he develops and instead views them as relational and unfixed (1995a:81). The first category presented by Connell is that of *hegemonic masculinity*, which refers to "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (1995a:77). It generally requires connecting both cultural ideals and forms of institutional power, although the latter is not a requisite (1995a:77).

The second typology presented by Connell involves *subordinated masculinities*. As Connell's label suggests, these involve masculinities that are located at the bottom of men's gender hierarchy. Examples include effeminate men and boys, although Connell focuses primarily on the domination of gay men by heterosexual men and the material practices involved (such as political exclusion, violence, and economic discrimination) (1995a:78-9).

Complicit masculinities, the third and likely most common category, includes men who have some relationship with hegemonic masculinity but do not meet its standards. In other words, they do not embody hegemonic masculinity but they do receive the benefits of women's subordination (what Connell terms the "patriarchal

dividend"). These men may not be oppressive in their own actions, in fact Connell suggests they may even live quite egalitarian lives, but they do not challenge the gender order either (1995a:79-80). It is clear, and will be elaborated shortly, that Connell prioritizes structural relations, which enables him to argue that men who are not overtly oppressive are still complicit in that they receive the patriarchal dividend and do not challenge structural distributions of power.

The last category presented is that of *marginalized masculinities*. While the previous three categories are internal to the gender order, Connell uses the term marginalization to refer to the relations between the gender order and other structures of oppression. This includes, for instance, class- and race-based masculinities, which are not entirely distinct from gender but cannot be subsumed within it either (1995a:80-81).

There are several conceptual issues in Connell's account of difference that require exploration. Connell is quite insistent that there is no universal masculinity that is constant through time and space, and he highlights the importance of culture in constructing gender (1993:603-606). In fact, he goes so far as to describe current approaches to masculinity as "ethnocentric" (1993:600). However, Connell does extend his own conception of masculinities to other cultures (i.e. 1993:610) and has been criticized for assuming that men of colour can be theorized as a subset of white men (Mirande 1997:147). I believe the underlying problem is that Connell's structuralist approach equates difference with differential access to power. He is quite clear on this, arguing that lifestyle issues do not constitute difference (1995a:76), and further insisting that under patriarchy difference is always hierarchicalized (1995a:231). In other words, the basic category of 'masculinity' remains intact while it is inserted into hierarchicalized

positions within the gender order. This is problematic because it assumes that the meaning of masculinities is always necessarily about power, a claim that, in order to be justified, requires substantiating the additional claim that identity and practice are inherently and exclusively about power. Furthermore, Connell has the effect of homogenizing groups of men based on his account of their structural relation to power. Connell himself argues that all practices have a rationale and a historical meaning, which he seems to believe he can access. It is possible, in fact likely, that there are different subjective interpretations and meanings of men's practices, aside from acquiring or maintaining power. And Connell's use of the term 'masculinities' to denote men's positions within the gender order implicitly connects the biological category of men with the constructed category of masculinity, even if the emphasis on practices is intended to denaturalize this connection.

Connell's emphasis on power and structure are also evident in his partial rejection of men's efforts to change themselves. Such efforts, he argues, are individualized and may be about containing, rather than challenging, patriarchy (1995a:139). He also adds that a focus on re-making men ignores elements of masculinities evident in women's identities (1995a:230-1). This claim is consistent with his emphasis on masculinity as a practice and his desire to distinguish biology from the social, although it does not fit easily into much of his work. What is important to Connell is the development of collective projects that avoid "the confusions and reactions produced by the attempt to alter an oppressive masculinity without tackling the social structures that give rise to it" (1995a:180).

Connell's approach to sex is similarly structuralist, as is displayed in his accounts of the related concepts of *cathexis* and *sexual social relations*. It is also evident in Connell and Dowsett's observation that not only is sexuality socially constructed, society is also sexually constructed (1992:64). I will not be using Connell's work on sexual relations in chapters 4 and 5 to any great extent largely because he has comparatively little to say beyond a structuralist account. However, since his work is so influential, I will endeavor to expand briefly upon it here.

For Connell, the emphasis in any sexual liberation movement needs to be on democratizing social relations (Connell & Dowsett 1992:75). He believes that men "virtually monopolize" weaponry, heavy machinery, new technology, resources, and corporate and state power (1995a:226). From this, he concludes that "heterosexual men of all classes are in a position to command sexual services from women, through purchase, custom, force or pressure" (1995a:226). In this statement, Connell is suggesting that all men have power over all women generally, and specifically that all men have sexual control over women. This claim challenges his previous recognition of difference and says very little about how to perceive sexual relations, other than to extrapolate from other, generalized systems of inequality. Such a position is consistent with much of the profeminist discourse that will be presented in the following chapter, and leads to conclusions similar to Connell's critique of a man (Hugh) in his study of masculinities. One of the reasons Connell believes Hugh's "changes in practice are not as fundamental as Hugh would like to suggest" is because Hugh "still goes in for one-night stands," refuses commitment, and believes this to be okay so long as he doesn't lie (1995a:180). The problem, again, is that Connell seems to ignore individual

interpretations, meanings, or the possibility that sexual fulfilment can be a valid pursuit in and of itself. For Connell, it seems that self-fulfilment is not a valid pursuit so long as it involves others, which implies that fulfilment should not be a social activity.

Connell's dismissal of the personal or individual is particularly apparent when he argues that we cannot treat bodies as private possessions when there is inequality between people, a position that uses structural concerns to override the personal fulfilment of men and women (1995b:392). He justifies this stance not only by referring to structural inequality, but also by implying that the structural operations of power determine sexual practice. For instance, he problematizes fantasy by linking its formation with "the structure that *governs* sexual practice" (1995b:393; emphasis added). It is interesting to note that Connell has argued that we need to focus on practice, not preconceived images or judgements, and yet he seems to have no problem assuming that sexual relations are dictated and innately oppressive under current structures. The role of practice, or what people actually do, disappears or doesn't matter when contextualized within Connell's conception of patriarchy.

Before looking at other profeminist men's work on difference, I want to consider the regulatory impact of Connell's analysis. In many regards, Connell has found something wrong with all of the men he presents in *Masculinities*, all of whom contribute to patriarchy in some way. This is evident in his comments regarding Hugh, in his treatment of gay men, most of whom are "very straight" in their acceptance of cultural meanings of masculinity (1995a:156), and when he suggests that 'green' men (environmentalists) pay "little attention to economic inequality or institutionalized patriarchy, or to feminism as a political movement" (1995a:130). All of these men have

failed to reach an identity that adequately challenges patriarchy. Connell can be read as suggesting that there is no perfect practice, particularly under patriarchy. However, the tendency to find problems with all men's identities and practices plays a regulatory function in that no man can conceivably receive any vindication. The result, I believe, encourages the pursuit of idealic practices that meet all the ethical criteria one can read from Connell's work. Such an endeavor is regulatory in that it dictates acceptable subject positions for men.

Debates on the issue of diversity are important because they are inherently about the range of subjective positions available and their acceptability or value within particular discourses. Any recognition of diversity within a discourse challenges the categories that are invoked and their generalizability. In this regard, the ability to make statements and the theoretical foundations that underpin knowledge claims are thrown into question. For discourses that aim to challenge forms of oppression, this offers both opportunities and risks. The opportunity is the recognition that the notion of a universal subject position that can access 'truth' and impose it upon others is problematic. This has been challenged as more voices are claiming epistemological relevance. On the contrary, the risk is that as those deemed in power lose their ability to make sweeping claims, those who aim to challenge inequalities at least partially forfeit their ability to make broad counter-claims. This dilemma, the problem of rejecting certain truth claims while imposing one's own, has underscored political debates on postmodernism and Foucault's argument that truth itself, not just some versions of truth, needs to be problematized in efforts to resist subjectivization.

The 'third wave' of feminism consists largely of various attempts to incorporate difference along lines of class, race, nationality, and sexual orientation (other criteria also get raised in some instances, such as age or body size). Postmodern and poststructuralist feminist approaches, along with some psychoanalytic approaches, have challenged radical feminist positions and attempted to highlight the performativity of gender (Butler 1991), subjective interpretation and meaning (Weedon 1997), and individual history (Chodorow 1994; 1995) without abandoning larger feminist projects. There has been a great deal of tension around these efforts, with some feminists claiming that difference still hasn't been adequately accounted for (Fraser & Nicholson 1990) and others expressing concern that the expanding multiplicity of differences amongst women will circumvent feminism's analytical force (Hekman 1997). Both of these perspectives are also present in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer discourses (as the length of the descriptors might imply) where debates over exclusion, the nature of sexual orientation and differences in political aims have fractured communities and political activities. The borders between these discourses and feminism have also been subject to debates over difference as, for instance, some gay men resent some feminisms' critique of their sexuality and identity and many feminists deny any legitimization of sadomasochism or intergenerational relationships. In both discourses, the acceptability and subjective location of bisexuality and transgenderism have also been contested.

As most feminists have acknowledged that there is no universal identity for women, and some have extended this argument to men (i.e. Segal 1993b:627), many men have also refuted the existence of "an identity as men that cuts across race, class, and sexuality" (Fung 1995:292). This has led some to critique the profeminist men's

discourse on issues of difference. For instance, Alfredo Mirande rejects categorizing men of colour as a subset of whites and argues that what are considered masculine traits are very culturally specific (1997:147). Connell has suggested there is a “remasculinization of the periphery” through racial stereotypes such as those of “the terrorist” and the “fundamentalist” (1995c:144). These denigrating images allow men with power to cast themselves as the “good guys” and projecting negative traits onto subordinate men, a point that is also made by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner in their study of Mexican immigrant men (1994). Others have observed that middle- and upper-class men benefit from adopting a “sensitive” or egalitarian identity to differentiate themselves from working-class men, especially since declining wages prevent some professional men from differentiating themselves through property ownership (Griswold 1993:252-4; see also Pyke 1996:531-2). A representative of the British group ‘Men Against Sexist Shit’ has expressed feelings of being intimidated by “middle-class” “armchair ‘anti-sexists’” who lack a class perspective and take pleasure “from sitting in judgement and wagging a moralistic finger at those who are ‘sexist’” (1993:19). The author rejects single issue politics: “I think anyone who wanders around with the belief that sexism is *the* thing, *the* issue, and does not look a bit further to see what’s behind such behaviour is pretty fucked (naïve)” (1993:19; emphasis in original). Unfortunately, the alternative presented reduces sexism to a function of capitalism, but the frankness by which the author personalizes what is deemed class-based exclusion within profeminism is indicative of Sandra Harding’s observation that all accounts can only be partial when a group isn’t heard (1992:187-8). For ‘Men Against Sexist Shit,’ the experience of

profeminism led to the conclusion that “you can get as fucked-up by some people[']s twisted anti-sexist ideas, as you can by sexist ones” (1993:19).

The flip side of these arguments is the recognition amongst many profeminist men that addressing difference could lead to a form of diversified pluralism that accepts all identities and downplays the oppression of women. Flood, for instance, acknowledges that gay men provide an alternate masculinity but cautions that “gay men and gay culture can also be sexist and even misogynistic (woman-hating), and this should not be tolerated because its source is gay” (1993-4). A situation in which some identities held by men are given moral currency because of their relative lack of power, or where men’s responsibility is lessened, are deemed dangerous to the primacy granted to sex-based oppression. Just as white feminists have had to reconceptualize themselves as potential oppressors of, for instance, women of colour, difference forces a recognition that men are not all-powerful and can occupy subject positions other than that of the oppressor. In his discussion of the problematic role of guilt in profeminist politics, Mick Cooper argues that “if all men are bastards for oppressing women, white women are just as much bastards for oppressing black women, and heterosexual black women are no better for oppressing their lesbian sisters... ad infinitum” (1993-4). Cooper’s argument is precisely the sort of position that many profeminist men are concerned about because they fear it will circumvent a focus on men’s roles as oppressors.

Jeff Hearn and David Collinson share the concern that a diversified pluralist approach will remove the focus from power and oppression (1994:113). While they acknowledge the importance of individual experience and cultural variability, structural considerations are the determining force in men’s identities: “masculinities are about

power relations” (1994:107). They offer a modified version of the “gender class approach” by describing men “as a shorthand for the aggregation of subclasses [of men] that exist semiautonomously” (1994:106).

Pease’s approach is similar. He too expresses concern that an acknowledgement of difference may become a way of ignoring women or used as a defense against feminist claims (2000a:31). While I agree with Pease in so far as he recognizes that power is diffuse and that difference can be addressed without disregarding overall differences in men’s and women’s ability to exercise power, he also takes the problematic stance that difference can be reduced to issues of access to personal and social power (2000a:29). Pease takes a somewhat confusing position in that he advocates Foucault’s conception of power and the role that multiple discourses play in the construction of masculinities, but the multiplicity of discourses presented is very limited and focused on structural locations such as race, class and sexuality (2000a:32-6). As such, difference seems to exist within a matrix of structural locations and power that collectively account for the subject positions of ‘men.’ Thus men are distinct from ‘women’ and while their subject positions are not determined by discourse and they are given agency, there seems to be an assumption that patriarchal discourses, if not determinant, still provide an adequate account of men’s identities. In other words, men are a reflection of patriarchal discourses. Pease maintains that patriarchal discourses do not determine subjectivity in order to secure possibilities for change, but there is little to suggest that any change has already occurred. The main problem I have with Pease’s work is that he seems to assume that the contradictions between and within different discourses can lead to an unambiguous profeminist position. In effect, the role of structure and overall patterns of

power disparities are used to inform processes of personal change through various techniques of the self. Such a position cannot easily incorporate difference.

My concern with the extrapolation of structure onto individual lives is central to my overall argument presented in this thesis. I do not wish to negate structural analyses that address social divisions and inequalities that are 'real' in that they impact on people's lived experience and opportunities. However, the structural nature of this approach needs to be made clear, particularly if attempts are going to be made to apply it to men individually. The assumptions that these structural inequalities are necessarily definitional of men and that the possibility for full, unequivocal moral redemption is attainable are problematic (this will be expanded upon in section 3.6).

My preference for addressing issues of difference would be to adopt a position that clearly differentiates strategic essentialism from the more general forms of essentialism evident in the literature. Strategic essentialism does not attempt to reify essentialism but rather to utilize it when required within a specific political context, and it allows for a temporary emphasis on specific identity components, such as gender, without permanently or deterministically attaching subjects to them (Jhappan 1996). Such an approach recognizes that identity is contingent and unstable without ignoring the role that particular identity traits can have on individual experience and their effects within institutionalized systems. The focus on reconstructing the self in much of the profeminist literature does not incorporate such an understanding of identity.

3.4 Men's Pain

This section discusses the recent inclusion of 'men's pain' in the profeminist discourse. The entrance of 'men's pain' as a legitimate topic within the discourse is not unconditional, however, and occurs within a context whereby interpretations of men's lives are directed through and incorporated into profeminist theorizations of patriarchy. Profeminist men have increasingly aimed to be 'male-positive' while simultaneously being 'profeminist'. Flood (1993-4) has described 'male positive' as a position that doesn't assume men are inherently bad, acknowledges men's acts of good will and compassion, and is optimistic about men's ability to change. Being 'male positive' requires supporting men's efforts to change themselves and recognizes that there are positive aspects of masculinity that can be used to change society. Further, it doesn't blame individual men for social structures or the history of women's oppression, but rather emphasizes men's individual accountability for their actions and reserves the right to pass judgment on men in a supportive, change-inducing manner.

According to Flood, profeminist men have not acknowledged men's pain enough (1996a; 1997:16). This may seem like a departure from his previous positions, such as his claims that "we [men] are the problem" or that all men are dangerous (1990b). Indeed, in his later work he goes so far as to acknowledge that women can be violent towards men and that some strands of feminism are "anti-male" (1996a). What is interesting about these later comments is that he makes them without changing his overall position and in contexts that are explicitly responding to critiques of the Australian men's magazine he founded and edits, *XY: Men, Sex, Politics*. It has been "charged with blaming men for everything, being uncritical of feminism" and being

“apologetic, guilt-ridden, and all too politically correct” (Flood 1996a). These complaints come largely from men involved in other men’s movements, such as men’s rights or, probably more frequently, men’s spiritual, liberation, and support groups.

Flood is up front about the delicate balancing act required:

Accidentally slip over the line one way and immediately you’re cast as a panty-wearing, guilt-ridden wimp bent on self-denial or a politically correct, holier-than-thou moral cop. Slip over the line the other way and you’re a woman-hating, responsibility-denying defender of the patriarchy (1996a).

Flood is expressing the inherent difficulties of understanding one’s position as being that of an oppressor while simultaneously trying to side with the oppressed. If he is too affirming of men or critical of feminism, he risks losing the support of women. And if he maintains an emphasis on power and women’s concerns, he risks alienating men. His response has been to try to “acknowledge and respond to men’s pain without surrendering to a men’s rights and anti-feminist agenda” (1995a). While Flood obviously finds his position difficult, elsewhere he participates in these moral politics and the dividing practices evident within them. For instance, his writings have contemplated the level of tolerance that should be allowed within profeminist men’s groups (1995a), and he has written about his decision to publish only feminist-sympathetic material and not debates or material that is not particularly profeminist (1997:16). His reasoning for this is that there are other venues for non-profeminist material and “because such material is offensive and harmful in itself” (1997:16). His contemplation of this issue is reminiscent of Rowan’s account of how his article on pornography was turned down several times by the British men’s magazine *Achilles Heel*

on the grounds that it was neither profeminist nor anti-pornography enough. Eventually Rowan did change the article, and apparently his views on the topic (1992).

The most frequent way in which men's pain is addressed within the profeminist discourse is by contextualizing it as a result of patriarchal relations. This approach allows profeminist men to address men's pain and maintain their position on patriarchy, feminism, and power. Pease describes his position:

As a profeminist man, I believe that we should be more openly critical of those parts of the men's movement that engage in a polemic against feminism and women. We must address the pain in men's lives arising from ill health, custody arrangements, sexual abuse, work stresses, youth male suicide and men's experience of powerlessness. However, I believe that this can best be done by contextualising these issues within the power relations of class, race, age and sexuality, etc., on the one hand, and the contradictory effects of patriarchal power on the other (1998:85).

The contradictory effects of patriarchal power and men's felt experience of powerlessness have been described by Michael Kaufman as "the paradox of men's power" or "the contradictory experience of power." Essentially Kaufman argues that the very traits that men must embody to retain a masculine identity and to exercise power in a dominating way, such as distancing oneself from emotions and suppressing one's needs, are also the sources of men's pain (1993:48). Seidler also takes this view, arguing that self-denial is a component of men's alienation as well as a part of the "infrastructure of men's power" (1991:48).

Defining men's pain in terms of patriarchy also provides an additional tool for profeminist men's efforts to encourage men to change. If the problems in men's lives can be traced to patriarchal power relations, then change can be conceived to be in men's best interest. This strategic move also provides a connection to men's liberation strains of the men's movement without abandoning a critique of patriarchy. The 'National

Organization for Men Against Sexism' (U.S.) capitalizes on this by arguing that both men and women will benefit from challenging sexism: "Men can live as happier and more fulfilled human beings by challenging the old-fashioned rules of masculinity that embody the assumption of male superiority" (2000).

Unfortunately, the attempts to address 'men's pain' and respond to feminism have not curbed a tendency whereby, as Ken Fisher has pointed out, "it's almost politically incorrect to be enthusiastic about being male or being male positive" (1997:1). Acknowledging men's experiences of hurt is difficult when theories of men and masculinities, and the accompanying prescriptions for change, are conceptualized strictly through an analysis of men's gendered relation of structural power over women. This has changed little in profeminist incorporations of men's pain. While I see the addition of men's pain as a legitimate topic to be beneficial and necessary, there is clearly still a tendency to reduce everything to patriarchal power relations. There is some relevance to linking men's pain to social structures of gender, but the only way a full equation of the two can maintain its logic is if everything is theorized as patriarchal. Focusing strictly on power and an all-encompassing patriarchy is perhaps one of the key reasons so few men have pursued organized profeminist politics.

I believe, as I have already stated, that the primary motivations for attempts to include men's pain in the discourse are other men's movements that have challenged the profeminist tendency to theorize men's lives exclusively through feminism. An additional factor that should be noted, and that has influenced many of these other men's groups, is movement towards what Giddens has termed 'life politics' (1991). I use this term of Giddens' to reflect a politics that may not entirely abandon the emancipatory or

liberatory agenda of movements like feminism, but tends to conjoin this approach with one that focuses on personal and collective fulfillment and actualization. The move away from emancipatory movements and their attendant obligations and duties is reflective of a move towards an ethic that stresses individual autonomy and where group membership is exercised through freedom of choice and consumption (Rose 1990; 1994). This trend is reflected in the increasingly therapeutic and spiritual approach adopted by many men's groups, some of whom have loose alliances with profeminist men. I would suggest that based on my own experience of profeminist men's groups and on some of the less-academic publications available, there has been an increase in the degree of spiritual and therapy-related perspectives within grassroots profeminist organizing. Again, this has not necessarily entailed an abandonment of hard politics.

3.5 Women: Expert Victims

The emphasis in the profeminist men's discourse is on men. When references to women are made, they generally have to do with women's experiences of victimization and powerlessness or with women's expertise in understanding sexism and oppression. The epistemologically privileged position that victimization has provided women, and particularly feminist-identified women, is one of the primary reasons profeminist men focus on the importance of being accountable to them. In a context whereby men are problematized and women are narrowly discussed primarily as innocent victims and experts, the sexes appear to be discreet and oppositionally placed. Further, while I understand that profeminist men do not want to appropriate women's voices, the scant

discussion of women reinforces their homogenization and greatly oversimplifies theorizations of power, gender and social organization as a whole.

Much like many radical feminists (i.e. MacKinnon 1989), early profeminist writings perceived women as powerless victims completely controlled by patriarchy (i.e. Schein 1977b:131; Stoltenberg 1977b:75). This view is frequently reiterated in more recent writings. James Barclay groups women with children in their common “powerlessness” and argues that while a mother’s “sense of self is shattered by her child’s sexual abuse,” she cannot intervene because she too is always powerless and at risk of victimization (1987). Ben Morphett presents a similar view when he critiques “the present patterns in which women are bred as an underclass of slaves and sexual chattels, divided and dispirited” (1987:8). In each of these descriptions, women are treated as a universal category within an undifferentiated patriarchy. Further, while the stated aim of these writers is to challenge sexism, their writings grant women no agency and can be read as paternalistic in that men are required to be the agents of change. The tendency to adopt “a politics of ‘protecting women’” (Hunt 1999:206) not only ignores and can prevent women’s agency, but it also requires and reinforces the maintenance of gender polarities (Hunt 1999:210-1).

The difficulties in constructing two contained and oppositional categories is evident in the work of Funk, whose presentation of patriarchy’s creation of ‘men’ and ‘women’ is contradictory and bent specifically to fit his perspective. For instance, in addition to being raised to be violent, men abuse alcohol and drugs and have been taught to hate their bodies (1993:37). These latter points – alcohol/drug abuse and hating one’s body – can also be presented as characteristics of women and proof of patriarchy’s

detrimental effects on women (I am thinking of Naomi Klein's *Beauty Myth* (1992) and of critiques, for instance, of the pharmaceutical industry's efforts to target drugs like valium to women (Lexchin 1984:23)). Funk presents women as being "victimized countless times" as "patriarchy creates women who are afraid to communicate honestly, and who don't know how to 'be' unless it is 'doing something'" (1993:37). Again, Funk's description could easily be reversed – in fact, one paragraph earlier he argues that patriarchy has prevented men from being able to express themselves. The notion that women only know how to "be" when they are busy defines women in their instrumentality, a characteristic that is often applied to men and used to critique their lack of attention to what are deemed non-instrumental activities (i.e. emotions). What becomes evident in Funk's description is that, if one looks hard enough, just about anything can be attributed to men or to women, masculine or feminine, with the cause – patriarchy – remaining constant. Politically, this division between men and women allows for a clear and universal separation between the victims and the victimizers, and it suggests that only men's subjectivities need to change in the process of subverting patriarchy.

Some profeminist authors have moved away from accounts of women as powerless victims. For instance, Pease acknowledges that women aren't powerless (2000a:9) and Seidler has suggested that neither are women always innocent (1992a:11) nor always passive victims (1992b:239). The reasons for this likely have to do with other men's movements' critiques and, more importantly, attempts to acknowledge that more than one form of oppression is operative in any society. However, such an

acknowledgement does not necessarily prevent an analysis that maintains the primacy of sexism and posits that men *almost* have a monopoly on power.

Despite women's complete or relative powerlessness compared to men, women, particularly "women in the feminist movement," "are so far beyond men in terms of full human consciousness that we cannot bring them down to our level but must instead attempt to raise ourselves to theirs" (Schein 1977b:132). This positioning of women as representative of all that is good in the world is not uncommon in the profeminist discourse, as is the importance attributed to women's leadership. Dansky *et al*, for instance, not only endorse feminist leadership but argue that "how women go about seizing power is no business of ours, being men" (1977:117). The acceptance of women's intentions and unequivocal correctness is also evident in the way that any critique of feminism is classified as "backlash" (i.e. Jensen 1998:101).

There is some uncertainty in regards to which feminisms men need to hold themselves accountable. Most profeminists hold a view of accountability that is similar to that of Mark Kriewaldt: "Processes of accountability are a way of responding to the power differences between groups of people... a tool for addressing injustice, based on the position that the best knowledge of an injustice comes from those who have experienced it" (1995). Accountability is therefore not only a process whereby those deemed in power (men) act according to the dictates of those who have less power (women), it is also an epistemological position whereby not having power and experiencing injustice is a source of knowledge (and having power and not experiencing injustice prevents certain types of knowledge).

An underlying theme throughout this discussion is the extent to which men can trust themselves and their experience. For those who do not believe men can trust their own interpretations or experience, there will be a heavier reliance on feminist expertise (i.e. 'Ray' cited in Pease 2000a:47-8; Jensen 1998:113). There is clearly an acceptance of an oppositional placement of men and women and the assumption that direct experience provides insight that cannot be at least partially accessed through research or the numerous subject positions presented in various forms of media (Gilbert 1997). The question of whether or not a given individual can trust their experience also suggests that there is a correct interpretation available. As Joan Scott has noted, experience is always already interpreted and requires further interpretation (1993:412). I would further argue that there can be no accounts of experience that are untainted by power or that exist outside of our interpretations of them.

Many profeminist men have qualified their epistemological position by distinguishing between 'women' and 'feminists.' Funk states that men must not do anything that is against the wishes of the 'feminist leadership' but adds that men do not have to do everything that feminist leaders want. He sidesteps the issue of which feminists to follow by arguing that it is not men's position to determine who is a real feminist and so men must accept feminists' self-definitions (1993:126). Pease takes a similar position, arguing that men shouldn't divide feminists and that men need to start with early feminist writings when conducting research on men (2000a:12). He argues that men need to take responsibility for their research and rejects the notion that feminism should direct men's studies (2000a:6-7). However, he simultaneously argues that men need to make "their work accountable to a critical reference group of women

who will determine whether it meets their interests and addresses their problems” (2000a:6). I find this position, like Funk’s, to be unclear. For instance, I would argue that I could find a group of women that agree with just about anything I could write. I suspect that the lack of clarity is a result of trying to ‘walk a fine line’ that isn’t offensive to anyone.

While Funk and Pease maintain some ambiguity on this, ‘Men Against Pornography’ are up front and direct about which feminists they choose to support:

We wish to dissociate our activism from the views of those who, even in the name of feminism, would advocate, obscure, or offer a political apology for the abuse, subordination, and civil inferiority generated by the sex industry – a vast misogynist social institution of pimps and profiteers.... These feminists are the freedom fighters whose inspiration and leadership we have determined must be our guide (2000b).

This group of men is unusual in that they openly denounce feminists who are not anti-pornography. They rely primarily on moral arguments about the widespread harms caused by sexual imagery to accomplish this dividing practice that positions themselves “unequivocally” alongside radical feminists. Interestingly, in their expanded critique of feminists who view the sex industry as “victimless,” they cite the “silencing nature of the victimization” as preventing an understanding of the extent of the problem. In other words, the existence of feminists who are not committed to fighting the sex industry are evidence of how dreadful the sex industry really is.

The position of ‘Men Against Pornography’ is indicative of a recognition that all women do not inherently have access to a fully feminist consciousness. In the case they’ve presented such a consciousness is inhibited by patriarchy, a problem that other profeminists have also acknowledged. For instance, Connell notes that women can have vested interests in patriarchy (1995a:242) and Robert Jensen has commented that women

are not exempt from the need to interrogate patriarchy's effects on their subjectivity (1998:110-1). Their perspectives are similar to Donna Haraway's position that the subjectivities of the subjugated are never innocent or exempt from critical examination (1996:255) and that subject positions are never self-evident and are always partial (1997:37). However, Connell and Jensen reduce any inconsistencies or perceived problems in women's subjectivities to patriarchy, in effect suggesting that women can be subject to a 'false consciousness.' It is unclear as to whether the authors are suggesting that a 'natural' or 'true' subjectivity exists outside of patriarchy, but this seems to be the implication.

The treatment of women within the profeminist discourse is problematic on a structural or theoretical level, but there are also difficulties on the personal level for men involved. While some profeminist men have stated they are not looking for women's approval (i.e. Brod & Kaufman 1994:3), Cooper has confessed to discovering his hidden aim of acquiring the approval of women when in mixed groups (1993-4). Acquiring this approval, especially in personal relationships, will not be easy given the simplicity of profeminist theorizations of women. 'Brian,' for instance, notes that his soul searching and his focus on feelings, as well as his difficulty engaging in sexual relations because of his awareness of objectification, resulted in his female partner being irritated to the point that, "she said that I was having so little presence and defined personality that I was becoming invisible" (1992:82). In a transcript of a 'Men's Group Discussion,' participant 'B' similarly discusses his failed attempts in sexual relationships with feminist-identified women. He has tried to be "gentle and caring," but women have been turned off and preferred more traditionally masculine men (1992:70). Similarly,

Lawrence Mordekhai Thomas (1998) has written on how many women feel threatened when their role as emotional supporter is jeopardized by men turning to one another for nurturance. Mary Reige Laner and Nicole Ventrone's (1998) studies on dating scripts discovered that men who violate gendered expectations don't usually get second dates (1998), and Karen Pyke (1996:542-4) has commented on the hostility many women express towards egalitarian men because they don't meet gendered expectations. Lastly, Lynne Segal (1994:249) has highlighted that most heterosexual women enjoy sex with men. My point in raising these works is simply to suggest that profeminist men's approaches to women, particularly those that homogenize women and assume they are powerless victims that have only had negative experiences with men, is as arrogant as assuming that selective interpretations of feminist literature provides a clear understanding of what women would like men to become.

3.6 Changing Men

It is important to note that while much of the discourse emphasizes personal change, 'the political' is still primary for some writers who do not want to lose sight of collective projects for change (i.e. Connell 1995a:141). Others strive for a balance, recognizing that personal change in itself is ineffective: "We can spend the rest of our lives trying to change ourselves without laying a finger on a rather nasty world that surrounds us" (Kaufman 1993:275). The stated positions of most profeminist organizations try to bridge the personal and the political by proclaiming, as the 'Men's Network for Change' (Canada) does, "the changes we want in society as a whole are the changes we strive to make in ourselves" (1996:22).

Recognition that the personal is political is cited as a key trait that marks the boundaries between profeminist men and what Kev Klement has termed “faux-feminists.” This latter classification includes “men who claim to be followers of feminism yet continue to act in sexist or hurtful ways” (1996:11, 13). The ability, willingness and ultimately the success at incorporating feminism into one’s everyday life and political activity is also central to David Kahane’s four-part typology of self-identified profeminist identities (1998:223-228). There is a difference between these problematizations of men and the tendency within identity politics to focus on constructing or validating a collective identity. Profeminist men are aiming to distance themselves from a collective identity – men – as much as affirm a new one. In this regard, despite the emphasis on therapy, spirituality and personal growth within the profeminist discourse, the underlying themes have less to do with lifestyle choice than with engaging with institutionalized systems of domination through attempts to construct a non-patriarchal self.

While the discourse collapses any good/bad distinctions in men’s identities and casts all as suspect, there is also a great deal of hope for change as men’s potential for goodness is extolled. ‘Men Against Racism & Sexism,’ for instance, argue that “all men are trained, coerced and forced by society into being sexist as young people” (2000a), and simultaneously proclaim that, “every man is capable of recovering his humanness completely” (2000b). This statement reveals a belief in a theme that pervades the discourse: there is some natural state, some truth that exists outside of our history and outside of power that can be (re)claimed through processes of self-(re)formation.

The profeminist position is interesting in that its commitment to ethical reconstruction revolves around a reintroduction of the 'other' as central to the moral self and insists on the moral proximity of all subjects. In these regards, it rejects modernism's self-interested individualism and adheres to a postmodern ethical position (Bauman 1993:83-84). However, it is also staunchly modernist in its commitment to the possibility of a moral position that is non-ambivalent, non-aporetic, and amenable to the construction of a moral self (Bauman 1993:9). This moral self is accessible through hard reflexive work and offers a secure conscience in so far as a subject can occupy a position that does not contribute to harm. To occupy such a position requires a commitment to an 'objective' interpretation of 'reality' and one's own location within it. Profeminist men have attempted to develop this commitment through a discourse that outlines the connections between the political and the personal such that our selves (men) can work towards constructing identities and practices that are non-oppressive and liberating to all (including our selves). Thus, profeminist men purport to have access to the foundations of a truly ethical subject position and its attendant conduct. The methods profeminist men use to implore men to change, the techniques proposed, and the type of identity that is ideal will all be addressed further in specific reference to sexuality in Chapter 5. However, a brief introduction follows.

There are numerous ways profeminists encourage other men to pursue moral change, such as statistics on violence against women and the claim that all men are responsible for such acts. The language used appeals to men's sense of justice and self-worth, arguing, as Kivel (1992:171) and 'Men For Change' (2000e) do, that the only ethical option available is to actively challenge all forms of violence and abuse. To do

otherwise is to contribute to these actions because silence or complicity is equally damaging. Men must also educate and challenge other men if their efforts are to be considered authentic (i.e. Men For Change 2000e; Klement 1996:13). Ron Thorne-Finch adds to these calls to action: "The longer men procrastinate, the more they jeopardize the emotional and physical well-being of millions of women" (1992:xviii). And, to recognize some men's efforts and encourage more, Charlie Jones repeats a common profeminist sentiment: "*Many of us are men who do care* and try to live personally in ways that are not threatening to the women we know. This is good and it is not enough" (2000; emphasis in original; see also Flood 1990b).

One of the problems with adopting a profeminist subject position is that all aspects of everyday life become sites for personal and political change. While many have commented on the difficulty associated with changing all aspects of one's life, few have problematized the politicization of all aspects of life and the accompanying scrutiny (an exception being Michael Singer 1992). Change is required in all areas affected by patriarchy, including one's relationships with others: "All personal relationships have a politics to them. Oppression happens exactly on this everyday level, for example in conversations, rape, housework and emotions. Making changes here erodes patterns of oppression" (Flood 1990b) (it is interesting – and highly contentious in my view – that Flood lists rape as an "everyday" activity in men's lives). One's relationship to the self, such as one's felt emotions, are included as an arena requiring change (Flood 1990b; Pease 2000a:89). The accessibility of all components of the self to conscious transformation is generally taken for granted and is often cast in starkly therapeutic terminology (see, for instance, Men For Change 2000c, 2000d, 2000f).

It should be noted that while I have suggested profeminist men claim to have access to a non-oppressive identity, this needs to be qualified in that few profeminist men claim such an identity and few purport to know the exact content of it. Most would agree with the sentiments expressed by Paul Conrad: "I believe that any man who claims to have totally overcome his patriarchal conditioning simply isn't looking carefully enough within himself" (1996:17). However, profeminist men do claim to know how to move towards such an identity and the framework within which such an identity will come into being. With an approach to the relationship between politics and lived experience that is deemed truly emancipatory, moral ways of being, and an ethical, harm-free society become possible, although some of the specifics can be elusive.⁴

I do not want to contest the notion that men's identities can or should change. Indeed, change is constant, and the destabilization of men's identities can be taken as an opportunity to recreate identities and explore new conceptual, subjective spaces. This process should certainly be attentive to ethics and to possibilities for a world with less domination. As such, it would not only be beneficial for men, but also for women. However, while the profeminist approach is amenable to Foucault's work in its attention to personal change as a form of political activity, the options presented are prescriptive and based on particular interpretations of gender relations. In this regard they are not particularly liberating to anyone, men or women, in so far as they purport to tell us the morally correct ways to 'be' in the world. The proposed means and direction of change evident in the literature need to be recognized as technologies of citizenship, as "methods

⁴ For instance, Funk indecisively contemplates whether men will be supporting patriarchy if they remove their shirts in public on hot days (1993:43). Relatedly, see David Kahane for a good discussion on "male privilege" and how "feminist men face a painful uncertainty about how to deal with the surplus of instances of this privilege in their own lives" (1998:222-3).

for constituting active and participatory citizens” that “link the subjectivity of citizens to their subjection, and link activism to discipline” (Cruikshank 1994:29). Such technologies do not increase the range of subject positions that are available but rather impose particular identities that, in their limited scope, are amenable to regulation and ensure a degree of security through the imposition of a level of conformity and obligatory self-monitoring and self-control. In this regard, “the self that is liberated is obliged to live its life tied to the project of its own identity” (Rose 1990:254).

By focusing on one axis of identity that men are born into and introducing ideal subjectivities as resistance to patriarchy, there is also a danger of reifying gender as the new identities still revolve around our biological location within sex-gender systems. If everything men do and think needs to be a form of resistance to patriarchy, this reinscribes the very system within which men find themselves. I do not want to suggest that it is possible to exist outside of the gender system, as even a hypothetical non-gendered person is still evaluated within such a system. Karen Nakamura argues this in reference to transgendered subjectivities, stating that “even outlaws are defined in terms of the institutions they resist” (1997:84). However, I do believe a profeminist challenge to gender systems can occur without strictly defining and reconstructing men in reference to such a system, an approach that is inherently about governmentalizing gender boundaries and establishing what is or is not acceptable for particular gendered identities.

Underlying most profeminist positions are notions of the possibility that a utopian society can exist if we dedicate ourselves to it wholeheartedly. Such a transcendental society is one in which some version of equality saturates our lives, and conflicts, if they

exist, are dealt with democratically and fairly according to a universal understanding of justice. My personal belief is that we need to try and lessen domination without assuming that there is a change (i.e. to gender systems) that can be made in order to attain a world of peace and self-actualization. Rather, for me, the work and the pleasure needs to be found in the process of pursuing change, knowing that complete success would be counterproductive in that the implementation of a universal conception of justice would inevitably sacrifice difference. I believe in taking comfort in what gains can be made and living with as few illusions as possible. This does not prevent me from taking stances, altering my subjectivity or participating in political efforts. It does, however, prevent me from relying on preconfigured dogmas to focus my anger over injustice and to lead me blindly towards an imaginary Eden. Such a program may claim the moral high ground and create a sense of security in its rejection of ambivalence, but it also involves forfeiting the autonomous moral self and one's individual moral responsibility (Bauman 1991:14-15). I agree with Zygmunt Bauman (1991:11) that a perfect society or perfect people are not possible, and attempts to prove otherwise – whatever the motivations – can result in increased harm and, as a result, less morality. As Taylor writes: “the highest ideals are the most potentially destructive” (1989:52).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the general trends within the profeminist discourse. As a whole, the discourse takes an approach grounded in an emancipatory version of identity politics that emphasizes social structure. Power is exercised within such systems, but the ability to exercise it is based largely on its inscription onto the bodies of men. There are

clear similarities between this approach and Marxism on the one hand and more radical strains of feminism on the other.

As a discourse, profeminism constructs truths about society and about men. These constructions are couched in the language of a degenerate society rife with harm, and the causes of these problems are found specifically in the construction of men's identities. As a problematized group, men, and profeminist men who act as agents to incite men to change, must engage in processes of personal change. Questioning and reforming the self is not only the key to political activity, but it is the basis for one's involvement in the discourse. As such, to identify with the profeminist position requires submitting oneself to particular technologies of the self, which are regulated according to certain criteria. This regulation is an attempt to avoid relativism and reinforce the boundaries of the profeminist subject position, but the establishment of such boundaries negatively affects the discourse's ability to incorporate difference.

In my view, being profeminist in the way the profeminist discourse constructs it is more than about being anti-sexist. It's about a lifestyle of constant self-reflection, deliberation, and evaluation of all the minute details of life, as is the life of therapy, a life of self-absorption. This is what being a responsible, social citizen is constructed to be.

The big problem for me is that the profeminist discourse can be so conservative and unimaginative in its positions. Basically, the issue of men doing gender or feminism, and the meaning of being a man, are so contested and divisive that profeminist men take on radical positions to be accepted in activist and academic feminist circles and to distinguish themselves not just from other men, but specifically from other men's movements that are not deemed feminist enough (and there certainly are a great deal of

problems, in my view, with each of these other movements). In order to guard the gender borders, one has to accept certain criteria in order to be authentically profeminist, a trend that has led to a degree of isomorphism in the literature as everyone must repeat the same standard perspectives. Constructing the border between profeminism and other men's movements requires distancing ourselves through our rhetoric, dividing practices that support the profeminist claim to moral capital. Discourses that define what men are or could be are very contested, with the result being a regulation of what constitutes an authentic profeminist standpoint. This is not to suggest that other men's movements do not have their own common rhetorical criteria and shape their movements through efforts to distinguish themselves from other men's movements and to defend themselves morally from claims of harm. Indeed they do. But they are not of interest to me here; rather, I do believe that there is a 'vacuum' in men's identities, a lapse in what it means to be a man, and that the profeminist analysis is failing miserably in attracting men to their perspective. This is not only a result of men rejecting feminist accounts, but it also has to do with the rigid, subjectivizing expectations produced through the profeminist discourse. In the following two chapters, I will further demonstrate this in relation to one of the most conservative aspects of the discourse, namely its approach to sexual relationships.

Chapter Four

Regulating Desire: Profeminist Men's Approach to Sex as a Project of Moral Regulation

4.1 Introduction: 'Pathological Men' on a 'Continuum of Violence'

The aim of this chapter is to explore how the profeminist men's discourse theorizes opposite- and same-sex relations and masturbation. Just as the profeminist discourse theorizes masculinities as a product of socialization, male sexuality is likewise presented as a social construction that becomes embedded in the minds and bodies of men. This process occurs within what is often referred to as a "rape culture" that "supports and actively encourages men to rape" (Funk 1993:27). Because all men in some way contribute to this hurtful culture and few try to change, men's behaviour is deemed "sociopathic" (May 1998a:345, 1998b:143). Indeed, 'normal' male sexuality is seen as dangerous and 'pathological' (Bradbury 1992:157; Funk 1993:44; Fracher & Kimmel 1995:368) and an expression of power and male dominance (Johnson 1997:153) that blurs distinctions between sex and violence (Funk 1993:19; Jensen 1998:105). Men's harmful attitudes and behaviours are depicted as residing along a continuum, whereby even seemingly harmless actions or thoughts at one end contribute to brutally violent sexual acts at the other (Funk 1993:53-5; Layton 1992; Men Stopping Rape 2000; Stoltenberg 1989:54). Without the support, for instance, of objectifying thoughts and pornography, it is argued that more obviously harmful actions, such as sexual assault,

would not exist. By linking all of men's sexual thoughts and conduct to forms of harm, the continuum establishes a link between all men and sexualized violence.

While masculinity informs men's sexuality, it is sexuality that confirms and realizes men's gender identity (Fracher & Kimmel 1995:367; Stoltenberg 1989:21-2, 32; Jensen 1998:99). In other words, biological criteria, such as erections and ejaculation, are linked to the social acts of objectifying and dehumanizing women such that they are all considered to be requirements for attaining a masculine identity. In addition, "patriarchal heterosexuality," defined as being male-dominated, male-identified and male-centred, is considered representative of male dominance and aggression generally (Johnson 1997:150). All men benefit from rape and sexual violence (i.e. Funk 1993:33), which work "to keep women as a class 'in their place'" (Funk 1993:16).

In the conclusion of this chapter I will summarize the profeminist approach to men's sexuality and re-emphasize the linkages posited between men, sex, and claims of harm. These claims are one aspect of profeminist men's use of an overarching and unwavering conception of patriarchy and reflect the limitations of implementing a macro-theoretical approach to everyday life. Among other problems, such an approach is inherently restricted in its ability to theorize power. Profeminist men's theorizations of sexual relations within patriarchy are nonetheless politically practical in that they provide new entrance points into the lives of men and establish all sexual relations as suspicious. The 'continuum of sexual violence' that links a broad range of sexual thoughts and behaviours to forms of harm is one way this is accomplished. The resulting anxiety, self-monitoring and push to contain the 'dangers' of 'male sexuality' effectively set the stage for motivating men to interrogate, change and self-regulate their sexual desire.

4.2 Men's Sexuality: 'Objectification, Fixation, Conquest'

This section outlines profeminist theorizations of men's sexual socialization. A major focus within the discourse is on the role of pornography and objectification. The latter is often presented as a defining characteristic of male sexuality and results in a range of problems, including a lack of emotionality and a focus on orgasm. Objectification is located along the continuum of men's sexual violence and is considered a prerequisite for men's aggressive sexual behaviour.

Jack Litewka's "The Socialized Penis" (1977) presented several themes that have persisted throughout profeminist men's discussions of sexuality. Litewka's article, written in 1971, is his personal account of the sexual initiation process experienced by males. For Litewka, the "origins of the tragedy of sex emerge clearly from that process of socialized sexuality" (1977:22) which consists of three related elements. First, males learn from a young age how to *objectify* women. This involves generalizing the female such that she becomes "a lump sum, a thing, an object, a non-individualized category" that is "always 'other'" (1977:23). To a large degree this process involves defining the gender boundaries around what is considered male and female. The second aspect is *fixation*, or learning to focus specifically on certain parts of the female anatomy, such as breasts and vaginas (1977:23). According to Litewka, much of this learning occurs before young men are consciously aware of sexuality and involves not only fixating visually but also emotionally. These lessons are transmitted largely through the media and offer men the incentive not only of pleasure, but also of realizing their own gender identity and having others realize it also. The third element is *conquest*. This involves

being “taught to alter the enemy into nothingness... to gain power and rule” (1977:24). This is a valued skill in competitive societies and, like all male initiation rites, requires “trophies” that prove manhood. Sexually, then, “the male conquers when he succeeds in reducing the female from a being into a thing and achieves some level or form of sexual gratification” (1977:24).

Litewka briefly extends his three-part analysis to men’s relations with themselves by arguing that men objectify, fixate and conquer their own penises (1977:25). By this he means that men focus on, separate themselves from, and train their genitalia. This is evident in the ways that men can conjure an erection mentally or through pornographic representations (1977:23-5). The reason men separate themselves from their genitalia and turn it into its own entity, a “thing,” has to do with the underlying homosexual implications of having one’s ego and maleness rest on the penis and the erection (1977:25). This, according to Litewka, is avoided by constructing the penis as “it’s own man” (1977:25).

While Litewka’s reasoning isn’t always clear (particularly in regard to men’s relations with their own penises), his early analysis of men’s sexuality is representative of subsequent profeminist approaches.⁵ For instance, despite the psychoanalytical undertones of Litewka’s writing, he focuses on men’s patriarchal socialization with an emphasis on the role of media representations and pornography. The concepts of objectification, fixation and conquest deployed by Litewka in relation to men’s treatment of women and men’s treatment of their own bodies are consistent with more recent work. Litewka also incorporates a fear of same-sex desire and its challenge to men’s gender

⁵ I do not mean to imply that profeminist approaches to men’s sexuality have consciously modeled themselves specifically on Litewka’s essay.

identity in his theorizing. An exception in Litewka's work is his forthright acknowledgment of the possibility that his account may alienate men who have had different experiences (1977:35), a concern that represents a degree of tentativeness and a desire to avoid essentialist approaches. Whether profeminist men's theorizations essentialize men is a significant concern in this chapter.

What follows is an extension and elaboration of the themes raised by Litewka. It is difficult to treat them in isolation, but I will begin by further examining what is meant by 'objectification.' Following this, I will explore profeminist men's descriptions of their own sexual socialization and the interrelated issues of objectification, pornography, and fantasy, all of which are presented as key elements in the social construction of male sexuality.

Defining what is meant by 'objectification' is tricky. Pease uses the term to refer to turning women into things or objects, as well as the process of fixating on particular parts of women's bodies. Pease (2000a:84) situates these processes as being central in men's sexual relationships with women and, citing Beneke, problematizes men's inability to feel both sexual excitement and respect towards women at the same time. Pease also selectively cites the work of Kaufman, but Pease does not acknowledge that Kaufman puts both a positive and negative spin on objectification. For Kaufman, objectification has two different meanings: "In part it is a wonderful way we all relate to others; in part it is a negative symptom of patriarchal relations of power and of life in a consumer society. The realities of men's power are, as always, confused and contradictory" (1993:123; see also Horowitz & Kaufman 1987). He elaborates by noting that, "sexual desire always has an object" (1993:123) and that objectification isn't

necessarily a problem “so long as the whole person doesn’t disappear in the process” (1993:125).

In some regards Kaufman is an anomaly within the discourse. His writing avoids oversimplifying men’s sexuality and resists vast generalizations about men while incorporating both personal experience and notions of structural power disparities. Kaufman’s work strays from much of the more ardent radical writings, but it is not out of touch with contemporary feminist writers, many of whom acknowledge that eroticism does require some degree of objectification (i.e. Valverde 1985:45).

Kaufman singles out the disappearance of a holistic appreciation of women as the point at which objectification becomes problematic. For Pease, this problem is widespread, largely because he believes the sex industry has negative effects on men’s perceptions of women and that these are extended beyond the industry itself (2000a:87). Objectification is also a way for men to avoid intimacy and relating to women as full human beings (2000b:137), and it becomes much more difficult for men when they know “women’s stories” (2000a:86). This latter point is reinforced by other profeminist men, such as Cooper (1995:22-3) who has written about his inability to see women as sexual beings and as complex human beings simultaneously. As a result, he can’t sexualize women he knows unless he “pornographises” them.

The line between what is acceptable objectification and what constitutes a violation of women’s subjective selves is difficult, and as a result there tends to be a rejection of anything approximating objectification. Rowan, for instance, claims that a sexual interest in women is an interest in controlling them, and that the whole notion of “sexiness” is about exploiting, controlling, erasing and raping women (1991:30-1).

“Brian,” who believes that any emotional and sexual relationships need to be grounded in political activities, wonders how,

...I can actually promote and develop more rounded relationships. However, I think that this approach – the very notion of ‘looking for women with whom...’ is already objectifying, is already calculating and manipulative. It is already seeing other people through the perspective of my own needs (1992:82-3).

Unfortunately for Brian, he has not found a “principled” way to go about looking for a relationship that does not make him feel “dishonest” (1992:83). The need for Brian to construct himself ethically appears to require a great deal of self-denial, but the underlying problem of determining the boundaries of what is or isn’t objectifying is difficult, particularly if men are viewed primarily as sexual predators.

A similar stance on looking for partners is taken by Funk: “In patriarchy, men ‘hunt’ for a sexual partner; regardless of how subtly we act out that role, it is still abusive” (1993:43). Funk does note the objection that women can objectify men to some extent, but insists “that doesn’t make it right” and that “we can’t take responsibility for the behavior of women” (1993:43). He also argues that men are in the “power seat” because they are expected to initiate sexual activity (1993:46) and that men are predators because they are already thinking about moving towards sex early on in relationships. He describes the pattern whereby men are interested in increasing sexual contact, stating: “This is not a picture of equality and mutuality. This is a picture of coercion. No, it’s not rape, but it does exist in the same mindset” (1993:56). Constructing an inherent link between a desire for sexual contact and coercion, Funk is furthering his assertion that “mutual sexual relationships” belong on his continuum of sexual violence. He argues that all behaviours on the continuum, including consensual sex, contribute to other

behaviours (such as violent gang rape and murder) because they all oppress women in some way and they all contain the same underlying assumptions and attitudes (1993:55). Further, since “all of us [men] have used various forms of pressure, force, and manipulation and coercion” to get sex, “few if any of us know what a truly mutual relationship looks like... all of us act out subtle (and not so subtle) expressions of it [male supremacy] in our personal relationships” (1993:56).

One of the ways in which Funk and others substantiate a correlation between men’s sexuality and patriarchy is through the language men use to refer to sex, genitalia, and women. Words referring to men’s genitalia, such as “cock” or “dick,” as well as men’s references to sex (“scoring,” “fucking”) are described as exhibiting “violent and predatory/prey symbolism” (Funk 1993:35). This is also clear, according to Funk, in the words that men use to refer to women with whom they are having sex (“whore,” “cunt”) as well as words used to refer to women’s genitalia (“cunt,” “pussy”). Funk makes several tenuous assumptions, the first of which is that most men actually do use these words to refer to their partners. Such a claim, I think, is erroneous and a gross exaggeration that suggests men are linguistically trapped in adolescence. Second, Funk assumes that these words always carry the same negative meaning and represent a specific “mentality” (1993:35). While Funk’s presentation of these words as ‘proof’ of men’s abusive character is problematic for me, the claims he makes are accepted by many profeminist men. Within the discourse, for instance, the term “fuck” is described as expressing “an obvious link” (Banks 1995:18) between sex and violence, such that sex and violence become “indistinguishable” (Jensen 1998:105).

Another cornerstone of Funk's indictment of men's sexuality is his belief that most men learn about sex through pornography and that men's behaviour is based on this experience. He notes how "tragic" it is that "men who view pornography tend to view women in general in the same light as the women are portrayed in pornography" (1993:51). This is one of the reasons he claims a "clear connection between pornography and sexual violence" is "beyond dispute" (1993:50). For Funk, all pornography is dehumanizing, victimizing, "pro-rape propaganda" (1993:51); the only difference is that softcore materials manage to mainstream the exploitation of women (1993:52). Funk insists that any sexually explicit materials created within patriarchy are objectifying (1993:53).

The arguments put forth by Funk support a full equation between how men relate to representations of women and to real women themselves. I will not provide a full critique of Funk's position, but I will point out that his argument clearly lumps all men together as exhibiting unified behaviour (he includes gay men in his critique, a point which will be elaborated upon in Section 4.3). He also makes numerous contentious assumptions, for instance that men always have power over women because they are expected to initiate sex. While this is a prevalent notion, I will suggest that many men are uncomfortable with it and wish it would change. Litewka, for instance, has discussed feelings of vulnerability with the initiator role: "while apparently the aggressor and conqueror, you were captive to a judgement by the female who would accept or reject you" (1977:22). Funk seems to assume that women never have the power to reject men's sexual advances outright within patriarchy, which is consistent with his approach of

reducing all social phenomena to an effect of patriarchy. For Funk, there can be no exceptions to men's power.

The moral basis of Funk's stance is also clear, an example being his critique of pornography's lack of emotional depth (1993:50-1). By insinuating the common profeminist sentiment that ethical sexual representations or conduct require an emotional basis, Funk sidesteps any claims that he is somehow against sex itself. In fact, Funk goes so far as criticizing patriarchy and its 'rape culture' for being "sex-phobic," or having an "irrational fear of sex" (1993:53). Funk's claim that he is not "sex-phobic" is ironic and requires a great deal of intuitive faith and trust in Funk, especially since he considers all sexual conduct and representations to contribute to sexual violence. In essence, Funk positions himself as not being against sex, but rather against sex in all its present forms. The only resolution to the problem of sex for Funk would be to remove power from sex, a notion that is only possible if power is assumed to come from a specific source and to always be apparent. If power is understood as something that is constantly exercised and a component of all interactions, then Funk's desire to remove power from sex is a wishful fantasy.

Despite my own unease with Funk's simplistic connection between representations of women and men's behaviour, the relation between social structure, pornography and men's learnt sexuality is direct in many personal stories provided by profeminist men. Mark Layton (1992), for instance, has written about pornography's role in teaching him to objectify women, as has David Dendy:

My sexuality has been crafted within a society that has as its cornerstones the oppression of women, class oppression, race oppression and children's oppression. I certainly wasn't born with an exclusive desire for white, middle-class, educated, young and slender (but busty) women. Growing

up as a man in this culture I repeatedly received the message that dominating women was sexy. I learnt from the women in the movies, or those in the magazines, their legs spread for me in porn. I learnt to objectify women's bodies and to find that sexy. The message of sexy domination is devastating for the lives of women, and it also affects the sex lives of men (Dendy 1994).

Several repeating themes are apparent in Dendy's account of the construction of his sexuality: objectification, pornography, the domination of women and a sense that men have also lost something in this process. Each of these themes also resonates in the writing of Adam Hughes:

Because of the beauty myth, men miss out on having relations with real people rather than concepts in our heads. We miss out on sensuality, and the pleasures of a sexuality based on something other than unreal visual expectations... While objectifying is our fundamental way of relating to each other, we remain locked inside ourselves. We make no real connection with others, and we continue to live in a fantasy world isolated from what others are feeling and thinking... Our sexuality and our relationship to our own bodies have been trained by peer pressure and pornographic culture. Men's sexuality is performance-oriented and penis-focused. Our bodies become weapons, and our gaze becomes a sighting device, honing in on attractive targets (1994:24).

For Hughes, men are not emotionally connected to themselves or to others, particularly in sexual encounters. Rather, men are "goal-directed" and "focused on genitals and orgasm" (1993:13). This is damaging to women as men's "bodies become weapons." Hughes further connects his perception of men's sexuality and harm to women: "If sticking our dicks into our partners is the limit of our sexual imaginations, then how can we respect them?" (1993:13). While Hughes makes the questionable assumption that men's actual sexual practice is reflected in his statements, his connection between "sticking our dicks into our partners" and disrespecting women (or male sexual partners) is even more contentious. It relies on an assumption that there is something inherently denigrating in playing a 'passive' role in sexual encounters and in sex without emotional

connections. This latter point is reiterated by others such as Christopher Pike, who has concluded that sex lacking feelings is abusive (1992:115). Such positions, like that of Funk, imply that ethical sexual conduct necessarily requires emotional connection and bonding. Such a claim is reminiscent of more traditional approaches to sex, including those professed within many religious doctrines (ethical approaches to sexual conduct will be discussed further in Chapter Five). Presenting alienating sexual relations as unethical equates badly experienced sex and a lack of fulfilment with harm and immorality.

It is important to note that the personal stories that appear in many smaller profeminist publications geared towards activism and personal change, as well as those in some academic research, have not spontaneously emerged from no where. Rather, these stories have developed in tandem with men's encounters with feminism, with profeminist men's theorizations of male sexuality, and with therapeutic approaches to unraveling the self. It cannot be presumed that men's professed experience reflects some unfiltered truth. At the same time, it should not be suggested that the role of, for example, feminism and therapy in the construction of these stories somehow negate their validity. These stories are no more socially constructed or interpretive than other stories by and about men. Profeminist men's stories do try and accommodate certain forms of feminist experience and knowledge to a great degree, and while this contributes to and expands them, it can simultaneously distort and limit them. Bourdieu and Wacquant are helpful in explaining the effects that participation in a particular field can have. They argue that "what happens to any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in question" (1992:100). In other words,

the field in which an individual is located has subjective effects such that the individual's subjectivity cannot be fully accounted for without reference to their involvement within the field. At the same time, however, it needs to be recognized that participation within a field does not dictate subjectivity and that participation within some fields can be voluntary.

One issue raised that requires more attention is that of men's loss or pain resulting from their socially constructed sexuality. Harry Brod addresses this topic in an explicitly Marxist approach to gender and pornography (1995). The concept of 'alienation' is applied to "mainstream" male sexuality, which is deemed to be a product of pornography. While pornography is a representation of men's public power and objectification of women, it is also an expression of men's lack of personal power and the alienation that can arise from corporate capitalism and occupying an oppressor class within gender systems. For instance, the effects of pornography on men include a genital focus that desensitizes the rest of the body, and increased anxiety resulting from performance-driven depictions of sexuality (1995:395). Pornography commodifies sex, emphasizing "quantity over quality," while the only freedom offered is from emotions and commitment (1995:396). Brod claims to not have a problem with sexual imagery, but rather with the ways in which portrayals of sex curtail freedom by failing to attribute "autonomous personhood" to those depicted (1995:401) and restricting "the expression of autonomously self-determined sexuality" (1995:400). As he writes,

The question of sexual morality here is not that of restraining or releasing sexual desires as they are forced on the spiritual self by the temptations of the body, but that of constructing spirited and liberating sexual relationships with and through one's own and others' bodies (1995:400).

Brod acknowledges that there is no essential 'authentic' sexuality, but argues that pornography prevents the construction of truly individual expressions (1995:400-401).

In effect, Brod seems to be arguing for the privatization of sexual expression, particularly since he endorses taking a "product liability" approach in support of censorship (1995:402). If Brod really does not have a problem with sexual imagery itself, then I would expect him to support the creation of more diverse and exploratory pornography rather than endorse censorship and what I consider to be the impossible ideal of an individualized, self-constructed sexuality that is unaffected by the social context. If extrapolated, his assumption that removing sexual imagery will create more liberty suggests that any social interference in the construction of the self contradicts true freedom. Such a position is based on a circular logic that ultimately could lead to the conclusion that the moral standards he imposes on sexual conduct – including emotional attachment and commitment – equally inhibit freedom.

Segal has taken issue with Brod's claim that pornography is imposed and restrictive of freedom by asking by whom and why it is imposed, questions that are not answered by Brod (Segal 1993a:75). While Segal does emphasize the importance of considering men's social power in discussions of sexuality, she does not cite pornographic images as inherently harmful to women. Rather, the harm comes from the social context that interferes with women's ability to reject unwanted sexual conduct (1993a:86, 91). This context, as Valverde points out, is where pornography acquires its meaning (1985:125). It is not the imagery itself that constructs the context, but rather the social context that directs how sexual portrayals are interpreted.

The simplistic behaviourism of Brod's position – or 'monkey see and monkey do' approach to the relationship between pornography and men's sexuality – is embraced by Michael Kimmel. For Kimmel, debates over the definition of pornography are "tedious and boring" and a way for "men to abdicate responsibility for confronting the politics of desire" (1990b:306). He offers a simple but unbounded, and I will suggest completely unhelpful, definition: "If men cannot masturbate to it, it is not pornography" (1990b:306). Pornography depicts men's "porn utopia" (1990b:314), or what men would like women and men to be (1990b:306), and is also a source of information that plays a major role in the social construction of men's sexuality.

Kimmel's account of the social construction of men's sexuality is contradictory. On the one hand, he argues that sexuality varies between cultures, historically, in different contexts and over the lifespan of individuals (1990a:304-5). However, Kimmel simultaneously takes the position that our sexual socialization is scripted and learnt "as an actor might learn a part in a play" (1990a:307). There is little room for individual transformations and interpretations within these scripts, which is why "normal sexuality is so strikingly similar in any particular culture" (1990a:307). I cannot offer an explanation for Kimmel's contradiction of himself, except to suggest that a social constructionist approach is somewhat of a requisite for imploring men to change, and that there may be an assumption that these incitations rely on first establishing a common male sexuality from which to move away. A common male sexuality is also required to support his claim that men realize male gender identities through sexual activity (1990a:7-8; 1990b:308). Nonetheless, and despite the fact that Kimmel raises the fluidity of meaning in his account of social constructionism (1990a:4), his approach

assumes that all men successfully learn the same emotionless and loveless script in the same old way (Segal 1993a:74).

The problem with Kimmel's account of men's socially constructed sexuality is not the only contradiction he makes. For instance, Kimmel's claim that men secure their gender identities through sex is supported by his assertion that pleasure is "rarely" a goal in sexual encounters (1990b:308), and if it is experienced, it is "almost accidental" (1990a:11). Kimmel also argues that "sex for men requires emotional detachment, which allows sexual pleasure to be pursued as an end in itself" (1990a:9). So which is it? Without an adequate resolution to these opposing claims, both of which serve as foundations for further claims, Kimmel's analysis is untenable.

The approach to fantasy taken by Kimmel is similar to Brod's concept of men's alienation. Men's fantasies, which are expressed in pornography, are fuelled by "lust and rage," "sexism and sexual repression" (Kimmel 1990b:306-7). By repression, Kimmel is suggesting that "in fantasy we recreate mentally what we have lost in real life" (1990b:307). As such, men's fantasies are "revenge against the real world of men's lives" – lives of alienating labour, lowering incomes, and not enough sex (1990b:315). Kimmel does make a tenuous claim that increased fantasy may decrease actual domination (1990b:317)⁶, and as a result does not equate confronting pornography with eliminating sexual fantasy itself (1990b:318-9). This may not seem like much of a positive step, but when compared to other profeminist men's denunciations of sexual

⁶ I say 'tenuous' because Kimmel's claim is based on his suspicion that white men did not fantasize about Black slaves and that the limited amount of pornography about Black South Africans by White South Africans indicates that dominating groups do not fantasize much about those they actually dominate.

fantasy, Kimmel's partial defense is welcomed. Take, for example, an excerpt from the profeminist magazine *Brother*:

I believe my fantasies are oppressive because they always use and manipulate the person being fantasized. They never take into account the person's mind or feelings – only the body... The fantasized lover is distorted and is used to satisfy men's sick hyper-sex-drive, which has been created and embedded in our minds (cited in Bevson 1977:43).

The conceptualization of fantasy as a "patriarchal perversion" (Bevson 1977:43) is not uncommon within the discourse. Rowan, for instance, describes what he perceives to be "men's ideal sexual encounter" (or fantasy) as "pathological" because little information is provided about the other person, it is focused on one act (intercourse), there is an assumption of both partners having a "simultaneous orgasm," and ejaculation is confused with orgasm (1995:17). The connection between pathology and Rowan's depiction of a typical male fantasy is unclear, although it would be safe to assume that Rowan perceives ethical fantasies as those that include a detailed history and character description of all involved, a range of sexual activity, and separate, real orgasms (the distinction between ejaculation and orgasm presented in the discourse will be discussed shortly).

There is a tendency within the discourse to assume that fantasy is necessarily related to material reality, a connection that Segal rejects (1993a:70-1). Segal further contends that the eroticization of the inferior represents a dynamic interplay between desire and power that signifies inferiority but that does not create inferiority (1993a:72-3). Put differently, fantasy and visual depictions may reflect social disparities but do not create them.

Stoltenberg clearly renounces the claim that oppression isn't created through sexual imagery and he dismisses concerns over men's alienation. As discussed in

Chapter Three, Stoltenberg believes men's violent sexuality is the foundation of gender and all forms of global oppression. According to Stoltenberg, men can't have sex without oppressive power relations (1989:33), and these oppressive power relations create masculinity (or manhood, as he terms it). He writes:

Real men are aggressive in sex. Real men get cruel in sex. Real men use their penises like weapons in sex. Real men leave bruises. Real men think it's a turn-on to threaten harm. A brutish push can make an erection feel really hard... That kind of sex makes you feel like someone who is powerful and it turns the other person into someone powerless. That kind of sex makes you feel dangerous and in control – like you're fighting a war with an enemy and if you're mean enough you'll win but if you let up you'll loose your manhood. It's a kind of sex men have *in order to have* a manhood (1989:35; emphasis in original).

Several themes in Stoltenberg's theory are apparent here, such as his belief that men's bodies have learned to respond sexually to aggression and that men's identity is based in rapist ethics (1989:19). Stoltenberg's contention that male identity is realized through sex (rape) and the denigration of women is also evident, a position that Stoltenberg adheres to entirely:

In rape, in addition to the physical act, a transaction occurs that can be understood as the obliteration of the victim's moral identity... The one who rapes, on the other hand, experiences himself as reintegrated, miraculously made whole again, more vital and more real... The disintegration of the victim's sense of self is, one might say, a prerequisite for the integration of the rapist's sense of self – a dynamic that is replicated whenever anyone acts within the ethical structure of male sexual identity (1989:21-2).

The basis of men's sexual ethic involves objectification and turning women into "objects," a dehumanizing act located on the continuum of sexual violence that makes more aggressive acts possible (1989:54).

Stoltenberg positions his account of how men learn rapist ethics as a process of socialization, although it reads more as his personal intuitive account of a supposedly

universal psychoanalytic developmental process experienced by men (1989:51-54). One of the foundations of Stoltenberg's position is the central role of pornography in institutionalizing the sexual ethic that makes male supremacy possible. Pornography tells men how to enact male supremacy in sexual relations, who to target, and it provides the misogynist, woman-hating justifications for adopting rapist ethics (1989:129). Similar to Thorne-Finche's linking of pornography to the slave trade (1992:90), Stoltenberg goes so far as to compare the role of pornography within male supremacy to the way segregation institutionalizes white supremacy. For Stoltenberg, the connection between sexual imagery and the oppression of women is as clearly evident and severe as racial segregation in that it expresses and enacts a dominating, oppressive ideology (1989:129).

One of the reasons for Stoltenberg's connection between segregation and pornography is his belief that the ownership of people is determined through sexual activity. By projecting an active/passive dynamic, Stoltenberg maintains that fucking determines who is the "possessor" and who is the "possessed," such that the active partner (the male) takes ownership of the passive partner (the woman) (1993:218-20). Acts occurring in 'the bedroom' are taken to represent all relations outside of 'the bedroom.' This proprietary relationship is absolute, such that consent in sexual relations becomes impossible (1993:221-2).

Stoltenberg's account of ownership relies on a clear separation between activity and passivity. In order for Stoltenberg to establish this distinction, he presents power as being an absolute entity that is held by only one party (men) in all interactions, and he maintains this position despite contradicting it himself. For example, Stoltenberg claims

that 'owners' only negotiate in order to maintain sexual access (1993:224), a statement that is congruent with his overall position except in its recognition that negotiations can occur. By acknowledging this potential, Stoltenberg's conception of power is undermined because the very existence of negotiations presupposes that women have some power, if only the power to deny men's sexual access.

The notion of men taking ownership of women, whether through sexual encounters or in relationships, has been problematized by a number of profeminist men. Dendy (1994) and Mark Trudiger and Ron Frey (1995-6) have indicted monogamy as being a patriarchal institution that treats women like possessions and prevents women from organizing. Monogamy is deemed oppressive and serving to protect men's power. As such, it needs to be questioned and changed. Interestingly, Trudiger and Frey do note that their critique can be "problematic and downright dodgy" because men uninterested in feminism may support open relationships in order to access more partners. Apparently this is not the point, or should be for women but not for men unless they are committed to feminism. For Dendy's part, his support for non-monogamy is ironically followed with an expression of concern that women's sexuality is becoming increasingly commodified and the clitoris is adopting the negative traits of the penis as women's desire moves "towards a compulsive, orgasm-focused, competitive sexuality" (1994). There are clearly difficulties in constructing new forms of relationships that cannot be connected to patriarchy, and this is particularly true for these anti-monogamy arguments that counter the emphasis on commitment put forth by other profeminist writers (i.e. Connell 1995a:180; Brod 1995:396).

In support of his theory of male sexual identity, Stoltenberg presents what he considers to be evidence that men's bodies have learnt social aggression. The penis, according to Stoltenberg, is not a sensual organ but rather one that only becomes erect with "fantasies of penetration and violation" (1977a:40).⁷ Similarly, he makes a moral distinction between orgasm and ejaculation. Orgasms involve a "sensation of completeness, of being-one-with, and of wholeness" while ejaculations result in "a rather uncomfortable refractory period – which I take to be the body's message that I strove inauthentically to achieve some cultural lie about 'release of tension'" (1977a:39).⁸ For Stoltenberg, even the 'wet dreams' of boys' are proof that one has "learned the erotics of ownership so well that now you can do it in your sleep" (1993:236). The penis as anything other than a mentally conditioned extension of patriarchy, or any notion of its biology for that matter, are lost in Stoltenberg's writings. For instance, he instructs men to put pressure on the tip of the penis when erect, and if it gets harder, informs men that this is one of the ways their bodies have been taught to be effective rapists (1993:253).

There are some major problems with Stoltenberg's theories, not the least of which are his essentializing depictions of men, his reliance on socio-biological arguments, a failure to account for male supremacy before its institutionalization in pornography, and, as Flood has noted, a complete neglect of any notion of difference (1992-3). Despite this, his books have received praise from feminists such as Gloria Steinem and Naomi

⁷ Note that Stoltenberg equates 'penetration' with 'violation' as if they are the same thing.

⁸ Stoltenberg is not alone in redefining orgasms. Men for Change, for instance, claim that in a recent survey (no reference is provided) 88% of men have never had an actual orgasm. Their definition of orgasm, however, is "a vulnerable and authentic full body, mind and emotional experience of intense love making where the man feels emotionally closer after ejaculation. i.e. rather than feeling like it's done with and now its time to sleep" (2000c).

Wolf (Stoltenberg 1993:back cover).⁹ Stoltenberg is also, I will argue, one of the most referenced writers in the profeminist discourse, particularly with regards to discussions of male sexuality.

A point that will be discussed further in Section 4.3, but deserves attention here, is the role of homophobia¹⁰ in the construction of heterosexual masculinities and sexuality. The central role of homophobia in constructing and enforcing gender boundaries is well documented within the profeminist discourse (i.e. Kivel 1992:32-4; Funk 1993:49; Pease 2000a:76-8; Kaufman 1993:114-22; Johnson 1997:69-70). One of its effects is to inhibit intimacy between men and discourage men from behaviour that could be interpreted as feminine or unmanly (Pease 2000a:77-8; Kaufman 1993:120). The fear and avoidance of anything approaching passivity promotes the adoption of a sexuality that measures itself in its activity, a disposition that stresses control and a 'territorial' domination of sexual encounters (Pronger 1998). Brian Pronger, while not attributing masculinity solely or consistently to men, argues that masculine desire is homophobic and a major obstacle to the embodiment of feminism (1998:74). The connections in the discourse between homophobia, avoidance of the feminine, and an embodied commitment to fulfilling the cultural standards of masculinity contribute to men's sexual aggression and inhibit emotional expressiveness. Not only is this deemed detrimental to women, but also to heterosexual men and their ability to construct fulfilling relationships. With regards to same-sex eroticism, homophobia and the

⁹ It is interesting to note that both of Stoltenberg's full-length books are dedicated to Andrea Dworkin.

¹⁰ I am using this term because it is socially recognized. It is not an ideal term, particularly since it emphasizes an irrational fear of gay men and lesbians and thereby does not focus on issues such as institutionalized heterosexism.

oppression of women, debates within the discourse are more complex, as will be evident in the proceeding section.

The profeminist discourse's approach to sexual relationships presented thus far addresses men's sexual socialization, which it is posited consists of objectifying, fixating and conquering 'others' (mostly women) as well as one's own body. These lessons are taught within a patriarchal society and its pornographic, rape culture. This perspective, combined with claims of widespread sexual violence against women and moral indictments of men's perceived emotional ineptitude, result in the claim that men's sexuality is a dangerous threat to women and the social body.

As presented by the profeminist discourse, there is a noticeable lack of intimacy or love in men's sex lives. Indeed, the profeminist discourse can leave the impression that we live in horrible societies that are rife with violence and where women have a monopoly on affection and benevolent desire.

From my own engagements with feminism and, more importantly, from my own experience as a man, I can understand why profeminist men are enraged by violence against women and upset and confused over their own sexual socialization. However, to assert that heterosexual male sexuality is a consistent, static, monolithic entity that is thoroughly inscribed onto the bodies and psyches of men is a presumptuous claim that ignores the possibility of difference and individual agency. It is unhelpful to label everything associated with men's sexual identity and practice as 'bad' or oppressive because this results in self-loathing, unachievable expectations and very little change. Moreover, the authoritative claims made by profeminist men are presented as though they unveil the truth about men, and as though any disagreement is proof of how

insidious and rampant male power is. Any debate that does occur within the discourse is limited and suspicious, with few men maintaining profeminist credentials and simultaneously questioning accepted doctrines.

Despite the negative depictions of men and sex in the discourse, there is hope for change as many profeminist men express their belief that a “non-oppressive heterosexuality is possible for men” (Pease 2000a:19). The insinuation, of course, is that such relationships do not already exist or, if they do exist, are extreme cases. An exception to the discourse is Stephen Gunther, who, in his 1993 letter to the editors of *XY Magazine*, takes issue with claims made in previous editions. For instance, Gunther criticizes Takach’s statement that “evidence shows that forced or coercive sex is the rule, not the exception,” as well as profeminist men’s use of Andrea Dworkin’s claim that “whatever intercourse is, it is not freedom” (Gunther 1993:3). In response to these, Gunther writes, “the destructive actions of one doctor, one judge, or even a thousand of them, do not preclude me from having a different experience with my wife” (1993:3). Gunther defends his own and others’ opposite-sex relationships, arguing that many people work to “create relationships based on consent, honesty and listening” (1993:3-4). His need to defend his relationship is telling and is reminiscent of how many feminist women have felt a need to defend or hide relationships with men (Valverde 1985:62). Gunther calls for increased critical dialogue and notes the repercussions that many profeminist men’s positions may have:

It may be an endless and unproductive debate as to how many of these [equitable] relationships actually exist in our society, but to preclude their existence all together [sic] (and the possibility of non-abusive sex) is unquestionably unhelpful and ideologically warped in my opinion... What kind of society are we envisioning, as an alternative to the present one, and what place does sex have in it?... How do we talk about setting limits on

sexual encounters without reverting to the fixed and dogmatic notions of the past? (1993:4).

Gunther's objections are couched in his hope that new approaches addressing sexual violence without abandoning sexual fulfillment and heterosexuality are possible if there is room for debate. Gunther is also concerned with moralizing men and re-instituting constraining dogmas from the past. The following section's focus on the relation between patriarchy and same-sex eroticism implicitly continues to raise the question of a non-oppressive heterosexuality.

4.3 Same-Sex Relations Between Men: Resistance or Replicating Patriarchy?

The discussion presented in Section 4.2 is primarily geared towards heterosexual male sexuality, but the emphasis on male sexuality provides a useful entrance into addressing same-sex relations between men in this section. The profeminist critiques of men's sexual socialization often tend to focus on heterosexuality because patriarchy and violence against women are more directly correlated with men's sexual involvement with women than with same-sex relations. The majority of the discourse recognizes the central role of homophobia in the construction of gender, and gay male identities and same-sex eroticism are seen as being subversive in this regard (Johnson 1997:69-70). Similarly, challenging institutionalized heterosexism and the hierarchicalization of sexual identities by democratizing social-sexual relations on a structural level is considered an important political goal (i.e. Connell & Dowsett 1992:74-5; Connell 1995b). Thus, while the discourse often treats same- and opposite-sex desire as part of the same dynamic, a recognition of homophobia and of different object-choices prevents a complete association between the two. For some, these differences are substantial enough that

same-sex eroticism is considered to be a form of resistance and an option in a quest to escape patriarchal identities (i.e. Gould 1992:73; 'Brian' 1992:84-5).

While same-sex eroticism is presented as a challenge to patriarchy, there is also a recognition that men who have sex with men are still men and exhibit 'male' behaviour. As Jeffrey Fracher and Michael Kimmel note, "there is no anticipatory socialization toward homosexuality in this culture" and hence, "both gay and straight men are men first, and both have 'male sex'" (1995:371). Gay men, despite experiencing homophobia, benefit from the oppression of women *as men* and, as Joseph Bristow notes, one's object-choice does not necessarily determine one's politics (1992:61). Thus, while there is a general recognition that same-sex desire is not a cornerstone of patriarchy and that it offers new forms of masculinity, profeminist men simultaneously note the potential for gay men to be oppressive and to exhibit sexist attitudes and behaviours that contribute to patriarchy (Flood 1993-4; Connell 1995a:156, 162, 202, 218). For more radical profeminist men, the subversive effect of same-sex eroticism does not compensate for what are deemed to be gay male culture's reification of a dangerous masculine sexuality (Dansky *et al* 1977; Jensen 1998; Stoltenberg 1977b, 1989, 1990).

This section begins by examining the discourse's treatment of same-sex eroticism as a form of resistance and as being somewhat more 'innocent' than opposite-sex relations. Included in this portrayal are challenges to the socially constructed categories of 'gay' and 'straight.' Following this, the work of Fracher and Kimmel (1995) is presented as representing a 'less-radical' problematization of same-sex male desire. Fracher and Kimmel, despite strong moral criticisms of gay male culture and sexuality, are much more moderate than many radical writers who flatly condemn gay men and

reject differentiating them from heterosexual men. The writings of the more radical writers will be presented last, all of whom accept radical feminist denunciations that portray gay men “as just one more evil offshoot of the patriarchy, treating each other the way men treat women” (Califia 1997:89-90).

Sexuality has been central in my own experience with profeminist organizing and in my attempts to construct an ethical identity. In part, questioning my own sexuality has had as much to do with confusion over an acceptable gender identity and a sense that identifying with heterosexuality represents an unconditional identification with masculinity. I have also felt that identifying as profeminist required challenging my own embodiment that, at least in part, is a product of socialization and something that cannot be trusted. There weren’t – and still aren’t – male heterosexual identities available that were recognized as ethical within feminist or profeminist discourses. As a representative of a profeminist men’s group who worked closely with feminist and gay and lesbian activists, there has also been a moral imperative to explore my sexuality and to distance myself from heterosexuality. Indeed, identifying with heterosexuality was a liability, and either creating some ambiguity in how I identified or identifying as bisexual – which I have for some time – provided some relief from women’s suspicions and certainly increased my credibility. In effect, it offered moral capital. I can relate very well to the men who have considered same-sex relationships for political reasons. In many regards these men are not unlike women who identify as lesbians for political reasons, something that began in the 1970s as heterosexuality was deemed by some to be incompatible with feminist identities.

The notion that same-sex eroticism is inherently more ethical has conditional support from many profeminist men and has led some to explore sexual relationships with men. Steven Gould has written on his "sense that homosexual relationships were the only non-sexist ones" (1992:73). 'Brian' has similarly discussed exploring his "gayness" as an ethically preferable option to heterosexuality (1992:84-5). Like many profeminist writers, Brian discusses having "memories of a gay character" as a youth but that these were forced out of him in the socialization process. Brian suggests that his primarily heterosexual orientation is a damaging social construction that inhibits his sense of authenticity. As such, it needs to be challenged and reformed. Unfortunately for Brian, he cannot find much desire for men within himself, and he notes that even if he could he would be faced with the problem of objectifying men.

Hearn has written on his encounters with feminism, which resulted in a problematization of all available relationship models and rejecting notions that he has a specific sexuality (1992:166-7). Hearn's concern over establishing an ethical sexual self is reminiscent of the contemplations of Nick Sellars (1995). Sellars expresses a great deal of confusion over constructing an ethical identity in light of sexism and heterosexism. The conclusion eventually reached by Sellars is that he can identify as heterosexual and still have a valid political identity. Sellars notes that identifying as heterosexual does not exclude the possibility of same-sex relationships in his life, an option that he prefers to keep open. In many regards Sellars' conclusion reflects an interest in destabilizing the boundaries of sexual categories that restrict men's and women's identities and that he traces to patriarchy and forms of harm.

Sellars' desire to create more choice and limit external prohibitions on his object-choice is also exhibited by Roger Garland, who wants to embrace "diverse desires" and "move identity beyond sexuality" (1994). Garland professes that his desire can be gender-less and intellectually-based, and that a sexual interest in men is, at least in part, driven by his longing for increased emotional connectedness with men. The themes of not having a specific object of attraction, as well as legitimating sexual interests by referencing morally acceptable emotive and intellectual criteria, are not uncommon within the discourse.

Garland surmises that there are three different responses to his self-declared bisexuality. First, there are those who adhere to a "conflict model" and insist that 'gay' and 'straight' are discrete categories, a position that Garland rejects. Second, there are those who are "flexible modellers." Garland is a proponent of this approach and its refusal to box-in sexual identity, and he is very complimentary to those who share this position: "Such sensitive, broadminded souls are quite content to live and let live and happily see sexuality as a spectrum of experience and attraction" (1994). The final category includes what Garland labels "Who gives a stuffers," those who "basically bonk anything that moves" and "think any discussion on sexuality is a waste of time and gets in the way of living" (1994). Garland is clearly critical of this last approach as he cites the existence of intolerance as requiring people to take a stand and interrogate their desire. In other words, Garland wants to liberate identity from sexuality by breaking down any absolute orientations, but he still insists that sexuality is something we need to think about, talk about, and construct our selves in relation to. Garland may be endorsing

more space for individual choice, but he is also insisting that we must consider sexuality as central in our conceptions of and work on our selves.

Pease takes a different and slightly confusing approach in that he seems to support dichotomizing sexual identities in order to challenge heterosexism and homophobia. My own interpretation of Pease's position is that he seems to align himself somewhat uncritically with an essentialist approach to sexual orientation promoted by some gay men and lesbians. For example, he rejects queer politics partially on the basis of its inclusion of bisexuals (2000a:123-4). An inclusive approach to identity, such as queer theory, is deemed problematic for gay men and lesbians because it may "diffuse their single identities" (2000a:123). This claim is based on the questionable assumption that the voice of gay men and lesbians is being detracted from, and implies an equally contentious belief in the existence of a single, legitimate voice for gay men and lesbians. Pease also raises his concern that profeminist men could appropriate the voice of gay men and lesbians (2000a:122-3).

As a component of Pease's research, he conducted focus groups with profeminist men. One of the exercises included discussing memories of "homophobic episodes" in which the participants "felt discomfort in a situation of intimacy with another man" (2000a:78). Pease acknowledges that the stories men told resembled some stories told by women in that the men exhibited a sense of obligation in the encounters (2000a:84). Overall, however, Pease seems to presume that being uncomfortable with male-to-male intimacy is necessarily homophobic. 'Tony,' for instance, tells a story from his early teenage years in which he had some sexual conduct with a slightly older boy. Pease comments on Tony's apparent passivity and that Tony tells the story as though he had no

agency, concluding that Tony “does not want to take any responsibility for this sexual liaison” (2000a:79). This is presented as though it represents some hidden homophobia, which I will suggest is a rather selective interpretation. If Tony was a woman and the older teen was male, I believe that Pease’s interpretation would be more open to the possibility that Tony’s trepidation reflected an unease with the encounter that may not be reducible to homophobia. Assuming that Tony’s unwillingness to take responsibility for the encounter represents homophobia in Tony is not a far step from suggesting that women who report passive, uninitiated sexual experiences with men are necessarily refusing to take responsibility for the situation. This is not a claim that Pease would make, which suggests to me that Pease takes a somewhat uncritical position in treating same-sex relationships as occupying an entirely different ethical space. Pease does indicate ethical concerns over intergenerational sex between males and questions whether different standards of ethical conduct exist for same-sex relationships, but he leaves the issue open (2000a:80-1) and does not question moral prohibitions on intergenerational heterosexual conduct.

Pease does address the issue of profeminist men experimenting with same-sex desire for political reasons, but feels that this “does not address homophobia at all and it may cause further splitting between the heterosexual and homosexual aspects within themselves” (2000a:83). I do not know what Pease means when he suggests that experimentation may exaggerate the gap between heterosexual and homosexual aspects of the self, particularly given Pease’s apparent aversion to bisexuality as a legitimate political identity. His contention that experimentation will not address homophobia is furthered by his suggestion that it “is one of the ways that gay men feel abused by

heterosexual men" (2000a:81). In other words, the lack of commitment from heterosexual men and the possibility of gay men feeling rejected after the encounter makes experimentation suspect. Whether such encounters are explicitly presented as experiments beforehand is not discussed, leading to my contention that Pease is suspicious of all casual liaisons. Pease also endorses Humphries' observation that such relationships are damaging to gay men because they are stuck in the "subordinate desiring role" whilst heterosexual men occupy "the superior admired one" (2000a:82). It is odd that Pease would adopt a perspective that equates "subordinate" with "desiring" and "superior" with being "admired." If this logic were transferred onto heterosexual relations, then women would be the "superior admired" party and men would be playing the "subordinate desiring role," which is entirely opposite to Pease's contention that women are victims in part because of men's sexual desire.

Each of the profeminist men cited so far have primarily approached same-sex eroticism as being more ethical than heterosexual relationships. By their very nature same-sex activities between men do not directly harm women. However, as authors such as "Brian" (1992) have noted, this does not mean that sex with men is unproblematic, nor does it eradicate all of the problems associated with 'male sexuality.' Other profeminist men have emphasized gay men's replication of normative heterosexual masculinity and sexual practice, an emblematic example being the work of Fracher and Kimmel.

Fracher and Kimmel note that sexuality is socially constructed and constantly in flux (1995:367), and yet they simultaneously present their interpretation of 'male sexuality' as being universal, a contradiction not unlike problems with Kimmel's previously discussed work. There is no "anticipatory socialization" for gay men who,

like straight men, are “men first” and have “male sex” (Fracher & Kimmel 1995:371). Fracher and Kimmel relate heterosexual and homosexual male sexuality on numerous fronts and present the latter as relying on the same “sexual scripts” (1995:370). Just as Kimmel emphasized the role of detachment in male heterosexuality (1990a:9), Fracher and Kimmel sarcastically problematize gay men’s detachment as that which, “serves the ‘healthy’ homosexual male by permitting numerous sexual partners without cluttering up the scene with unpleasant emotional connection” (1995:369). Several assumptions are apparent in their approach, the first being that all gay men are assumed to be emotionally detached, which is both a cause and effect of their supposed universal promiscuity. Emotional connections are presented as being absent from casual sexual activity that is non-monogamous or without a substantial history. I doubt that Fracher and Kimmel can substantiate this claim. More important than Fracher and Kimmel’s presumptions about the emotions of others’ is that sex is tied to a particular interpretation of emotional connectedness that in-turn becomes a moral criterion to justify intervention. This vague and intuitive declaration of men’s lack of emotions, or particular sets of expressions, becomes a tool to govern men’s subjectivities and to tie them to a therapeutic, healing agenda.

Fracher and Kimmel continue their critique of gay male sexuality, suggesting that it often involves a “hypermasculine ethic” (1995:370). The possibility that gay culture’s use of masculine symbolism could have meanings that differ from heterosexual masculinity is ignored, leading to the claim that gay male sexuality suffers from the same problems attributed to heterosexual men. These problems include “distancing [emotional detachment], phallocentrism, objectification, and separation of emotion from physical

sensation" (1995:370). Such an indictment is simplistic and continues to rely on a complete rejection of any thoughts falling under the catch-all concept of 'objectification,' and it continues to extend assumptions regarding the emotional experiences of gay men. Further, it suggests that there are moral problems, or something inherently dangerous, about 'phallocentrism.' Its connection to harm is not provided by Fracher and Kimmel, which leads me to suspect that 'phallocentrism' is considered a harm unto itself. This intuitive claim rests on the assumption that all uses of the penis reflect a cultural notion of the phallus as something powerful and aggressive, as opposed to considering the penis as something vulnerable, a site of health problems for men, and, as Kaufman has noted, something that many men tend to feel embarrassed about (1993:113; see also Achilles Heel Collective 1995:4; Segal 1993a:81-2).

To chastise gay men for being 'phallocentric' is questionable not only because same-sex eroticism between men tends to involve more than the just the penis – the anus and nipples come to mind, for instance – and not only because it implies that men engaged in sexual activity together should avoid any emphasis on the penis. Fracher and Kimmel's claim that gay men are phallocentric is questionable because at its core is the notion that there is something inherently 'bad' about the penis and its enjoyment. Such a claim is unsubstantiated beyond an intuitive link made between the penis and sexual violence, a claim that attributes evil to men and their genitalia and suggests that there is a 'higher,' more moral purpose for the penis and sexual conduct. Similar to the way in which Stoltenberg pulls men's physiology into his social constructionist account, Fracher and Kimmel are problematizing men's very embodiment.

The article by Fracher and Kimmel (1995) was written to assist councilors and therapists in dealing with issues of men's sexuality. As such, it is not just a theoretical paper; it is, like much of the discourse, an effort to instruct interventions into men's lives. The point I am making, one that is the substance of Chapter Five, is that this article – and the discourse generally – is intended to affect the real lives of real people. While there is vigilance in trying to purify the moral message of the discourse, the equally important moral question being ignored is the extent to which morality can be prescribed before it becomes an unethical imposition. This question needs consideration, particularly with regards to something as subjective as sexuality.

My concern with articles professing expert advice, such as Fracher and Kimmel's, is in part because their position is presented in a way that makes it much more palatable than more radical positions. Because Fracher and Kimmel appear far more moderate and less direct in their zeal, and because they are situated academically, the ideas they espouse as truth are granted more validity. This isn't to suggest that more radical positions aren't alive and well within the discourse, just that the more moderate packaging is granted more authority in less fervent profeminist circles and in other discourses.

The radical position on same-sex relationships has a history that goes back to the early years of the discourse. In Dansky, Knoebel and Pitchford's *Effeminist Manifesto* there is recognition that, "faggots and all effeminate men are oppressed by the patriarchy's systematic enforcement of masculinist standards" (1977:117). The profeminist equation of the personal and the political is also evident, as Dansky *et al* criticize but do not condemn different domestic arrangements:

...we do not automatically support or condemn faggots or effeminists who live alone, who live together as couples, who live together in all-male collectives, who live with women, or who live in any other way – since all of these modes of living in and of themselves can be sexist but can also conceivably come to function as bases for anti-sexist struggle (1977:119).

While personal living arrangements are theorized primarily in relation to their propensity to offer resistance to patriarchy, issues of accommodation are treated with lenience in comparison to sexual relationships. Dansky *et al* support radical interpretations of sex that assume any indication of power, such as in an active/passive dynamic, are “inherently sexist, since they express the desire to be masculine or to possess the masculine in someone else” (1977:118). Sexual relations are thus property relations, a position indistinguishable from Stoltenberg’s previously discussed critique of opposite-sex relations. “The Male Principle” of objectification, sadism and role-playing is considered to be “embodied,” “enshrined and glorified” in “arenas of faggot objectification (baths, bars, docks, parks) where power-dominance, as it operates in the selecting of roles and objects, is known as ‘cruising’” (1977:118). This critique exemplifies the application of an undifferentiated interpretation of male sexuality to gay men. Despite acknowledging gay men’s oppression within patriarchy, Dansky *et al* revert to authoritarian pronouncements as soon as sexual relations are raised. Even the conceivably marginalized context of these relations, as provided by the authors (“baths, bars, docks, parks”), are described as shrines that glorify the mentality of an oppressive patriarchy.

Stoltenberg’s early writings depict gay men in an even harsher light. He does acknowledge that gay sex is threatening to patriarchy because it doesn’t explicitly express a common contempt for women (1977b:77). However, gay men only differ from

heterosexual men in the level of the power disparity between themselves and whom they fuck. The masculine necessity of a power disparity to induce sexual feelings is still present (1977b:76), and gay men are perceived to be committed to an undifferentiated masculinity and hence contribute to woman-hating injustices (1977b:80). Stoltenberg depicts gay sex as a form of male bonding and gay liberation as an extension of patriarchy that involves gay and straight men conspiring to vilify women (1977b:78). Any evidence of such a contract is purely intuitive as Stoltenberg claims that all arguments for and against male homosexuality are essentially the same in their attempt to enforce male bonding. For those against homosexuality, there is a desire to prevent men from being victimized by men and “fucked as a woman” (1977b:77-8). For those who support gay rights, their arguments rely on securing gay sex as a culturally acceptable form of male bonding over and against women (1977b:78).

In his early writings Stoltenberg also takes issue with bisexuality, deeming it “just another form of phallic imperialism” and “another escalation in masculinist sexual aggression” (1977a:38). Stoltenberg is particularly concerned that bisexuality has become “trendy,” and he introduces stereotypical arguments against bisexuality that would be considered homophobic by many standards. For example, Stoltenberg writes:

For a man to call himself bisexual is to pride himself in the functioning of his cock... There is a dangerous consistency in male sexual behavior programing [sic] which makes not very difficult the shift from fucking men to fucking women or from fucking women to fucking men (1977a:37).

Stoltenberg sees a ‘dangerous consistency’ throughout men’s sexual behaviour, but the ‘danger’ to me is the consistency with which Stoltenberg manages to find a way to condemn everything associated with men.

Stoltenberg's later writings elaborate upon his position towards gay and bisexual men and sexual orientation in general. For Stoltenberg, claiming a sexual orientation is an inherently objectifying form of "target practice" (1989:106) that is contrary to the requirements of "good sex" (ethical sex). Ethical relations are impossible whenever gender is an issue in attraction (1989:106; 1990:253). Recall that Stoltenberg believes gender, and thus difference, is established through sex. Any notions of difference serve male supremacy because they are always hierarchicalized (1989:105; 1990:253). Same-sex relations are no different as Stoltenberg, in effect, projects an active/passive dynamic such that the active man represents masculinity and the passive man is feminized and representative of 'women.' This is construed as true regardless of whether the roles are temporary and reversible. The subordinate role is also a way to assert masculinity by "seizing on the masculinity of someone else whom you perceive as more of a real man than you" (1990:251). This is accomplished when,

...you submit to his aggression sexually or you let him leave some violence on you... you get a heavy load of his manhood and it makes you feel as if it's in you too, purging your body of those soft and awful feelings you get from having had one of your parents be female (1990:252).

In addition to Stoltenberg's bizarre psychoanalytic connection to mother-hating, this excerpt represents his unwavering belief that sexual relations are inherently patriarchal. Ironically, Stoltenberg's suggestion that submission reaffirms masculinity is never considered in lieu of his insistence that women are always in the submissive role, and hence both women's and men's passivity are presented as further proof of patriarchy and male power.

While submitting to another man is one way to retain one's masculinity, adopting a dominant or active role also "helps reinforce during the time of sex his tenuous

connection to an idea of manhood that only exists because it exists over and against women” (1990:252). In sum, gay and bisexual men can never have ethical sex as Stoltenberg has found a way of interpreting every possible sexual scenario as representing a hatred of women and as enacting and strengthening his overarching conception of male supremacy. And, as Stoltenberg reminds us, “there *must* be victims,” as is apparently evident from the existence of documented cases of abuse in same-sex relationships (1990:252; emphasis in original).

Stoltenberg problematizes gay pornography as having created ways for men to be presented as objects without necessarily being victims (1989:132-3). This is a problem for Stoltenberg, particularly since gay pornography “epitomizes the kinds of sex, and the values in that sex, that men as a class... aspire to” (1989:107). The values revealed include a dread of feminization (1989:110), glorification of the penis (1989:107-8), and “sex that has no past (the couplings are historyless), no future (the relationships are commitmentless), and virtually no present (it is physically functional but emotionally alienated)” (1989:107). The vast majority of Stoltenberg’s criteria are presented as being morally self-evident, but their supposed connection to harm is unclear (with perhaps the exception being “a dread of feminization” which can be related to misogyny).

Other profeminist men have adopted Stoltenberg’s position. Jensen, for instance, defines ‘man’ as “a male human who fucks” (1998:99) and ‘sex’ within patriarchy simply as “fucking” (1998:102). Horrific examples of men advocating for or raping women are provided to assist in establishing a derogatory perception of ‘fucking’ (1998:99), and since gay men ‘fuck,’ they too are implicated in “patriarchal sex” (1998:111). Jensen’s account is critical of the “frequency and ease” with which gay men

use the term 'fucking' "in a celebratory way" (1998:111). The only acceptable option for Jensen, who identifies as gay, is to abstain, especially since he no longer trusts his own ability to refashion sex into something that is egalitarian and not patriarchal (1998:113). It is a moral requirement, an "epistemic responsibility," to understand where all of our desires come from, and we cannot explore new forms of sexual conduct until we have fully deconstructed the effects of patriarchy on our embodiment and beliefs (1998:110-1). As Jensen writes:

If we want to leave behind patriarchal sex, not only must we confront the likelihood that we might need to stop having sex for some period of time, but we must be willing to accept that we may not have any idea of what will take the place of patriarchal sex for quite some time. In other words, we have to be willing to live a life without sex for the sake of justice, for the sake of ourselves (1998:112).

Jensen's call to action – or more accurately, his call to abstention – is a moral incitement that is presented as being a novel and radical notion. In fact, he warns readers to carefully monitor themselves and to be "alert to how things that seem new can be rooted in old ideas" (1998:115). There is some irony in this statement given that Jensen is presenting abstinence as though it is a new idea. I cannot attest as to whether the Roman Catholic Church is aware that Jensen is claiming credit for this, but his revolutionary pursuit of 'not-sex' (his term) seems rather stale and conservative when considered in its historical context. Of course, Jensen's egalitarian motivations are radically different from those of the Church, but his edict is the same: abstinence is necessary in order to access 'truth.' Jensen's approach is a prime example of the discourse's attempts to retraditionalize sexual relations and conduct.

Before addressing profeminist approaches to masturbation, I want to address the potential ramifications of the approaches to same-sex eroticism, particularly with regards

to dividing practices. Anna Marie Smith (1997) has written about what she refers to as the “new homophobia,” a strategy that is being imposed upon gay communities¹¹ as well as being developed within gay communities as a self-governing strategy. In effect, some benefits are offered to ‘good’ homosexuals while ‘dangerous queers’ are persecuted as immoral. Profeminist approaches that moralize same-sex relations risk contributing to this process, and yet there is almost no commentary on the potentially damaging effects of profeminist pronouncements. As a discourse that presents itself as moral, it is justifiable to expect profeminist men to account for their often totalizing depictions of gay men and the potential for negative repercussions, particularly when the particular profeminist writer may himself never witness the material effects his writing may have on others.

4.4 *Masturbation: Self-Love or a Problem of Patriarchy?*

This section focuses on masturbation and men’s sexual relationship with themselves. Men’s relations to their own bodies, and men’s thoughts and fantasies and the relationship between these and patriarchal oppression are addressed. In many cases masturbation is problematized, although some profeminist men also express conditional support for the political acceptability of masturbation.

Masturbation has long been suspected of contributing to a host of social ills. Interrogations of it, demands that it tell us what it means and who we are (to paraphrase Foucault 1978:69-70), are evident in the profeminist discourse. Litewka raised the question of why men masturbate in *The Socialized Penis* (1977), concluding that

masturbation can be fun and a release of tension but also that the penis had learnt to respond to fantasy by fixating and conquering (1977:33). What is conquered is not provided by Litewka, although I believe it fair to suggest that Litewka is referring here to men attaining (or 'conquering') a masculine gender identity. As he states, "masturbation allows a man to continue defining himself as male, as a power, as a conqueror" (1977:34).

Jamie Bevson offers an alternative to the "patriarchal perversion" represented in men's masturbatory fantasies and the attendant problems of focusing on the penis and orgasm (1977:43-4). The more ethical option presented is to make love to yourself, an activity that lessens oppression and increases one's openness to more emotional and sharing relationships (1977:44). The relation implied between oppression and 'normal' male masturbation is not entirely clear, nor is the relationship between 'loving oneself' and experiencing more emotional connections to others. What is apparent is a felt need on the part of Bevson to distance himself from "the frenzied jerking" associated with patriarchal masturbation and to both take his time and to focus on his ass while masturbating (1977:44). These steps apparently assist in securing a moral differentiation from other men and their bad habits. Jensen has reiterated this differentiation, arguing that, "there is a difference between self-touch that is motivated by self-love and self-touch that is rooted in those [patriarchal] scripts" (1998:114).

A critique of what are perceived to be normative masturbation habits amongst men is also provided by Dendy: "When I hear of how other men masturbate – furtively, quickly, harshly, with too little compassion or tenderness towards their bodies, in an end-

¹¹ I recognize the limitations of the term 'gay communities' but intend to use it to refer to gay men, bisexuals, lesbians, transgendered people, and self-identified queers.

rush to orgasm with guilt as the repercussion – it smells to me of homophobia: of fear of loving our own likeness” (1994). An approach to masturbation similar to that of Bevon is advocated by Dendy, namely one that avoids men’s objectification of their own bodies and instead attempts to “nurture ourselves” by recognizing men’s bodies “as the homes of our souls” (1994). Self-love, as Dendy describes it, challenges objectification and homophobia. Interestingly, Dendy not only links men’s masturbation style to homophobia, but he also argues that anti-masturbation arguments are similarly homophobic and encourage men to be repulsed by their own bodies. If indeed taboos against masturbation are fuelled by homophobia, then Dendy believes “masturbation may be the key place on which to work in order to dismantle heterosexism and sexism” (1994). It is not clear what exactly Dendy means by citing masturbation as a location for political activity, but his article is explicitly about personal change and so the insinuation is that solitary sexual practices can affect systems of oppression. The unspecified links that turn masturbation into an oppressive or resistant activity are not illuminated clearly within the discourse beyond a ‘personal is political’ (and vice-versa) justification.

It may be redundant to discuss Stoltenberg’s stance on masturbation since his theoretical position does not change a great deal. Stoltenberg views all men’s sexual activity as objectifying, focused on the penis, and as an enactment of their gender identity. Masturbation is no different, although Stoltenberg does suggest that there are ways to have a non-oppressive, emotional, and physical connection to one’s own body (1993:245). The specifics, I suppose, could be deduced from Stoltenberg’s list of ethical requirements for non-abusive sexual conduct, which will be presented in Chapter Five.

Stoltenberg of course denounces masturbation resulting from observing pornographic imagery or words (1993:120). Pease, who is for the most part rather silent on masturbation, takes the same approach as Stoltenberg in critiquing masturbation that is a result of observing depictions of women's bodies (2000a:87-8). A much more tentative discussion is provided by Flood (1990a), who does not accept the notion that fantasy necessarily represents what men want or desire in real life. Flood does question the relationship between masturbation and pornography, and wonders what role they play in the construction of male sexualities and whether they negatively affect women. While not adhering to a rigid position on masturbation, Flood does consider it one of the "vital political issues" men need to address, and he indicates that we need more information on what and how men are actually fantasizing and masturbating before determining what men should be doing. Such a position, while not offering prescriptive solutions, maintains that men's sexual relationships with themselves have material effects.

In a rather rare exception, Kim Houghton provides an unapologetic and unqualified defense of masturbation: "Sex is all very well, but for a delicious, totally self-indulgent experience, you can't beat a good wank" (1994-5). I do not know if Houghton is aware of anti-masturbation arguments in the discourse, and hence I cannot attest to his intentions in his short article in *XY: Men, Sex, Politics*. What I find interesting is that he provides two reasons other than pure enjoyment for his support of masturbation. First, Houghton notes that there is "no correct [political] line to worry about," and second, "it's all perfectly safe" (1994-5). Houghton seems to have found relief from political and health concerns in his habit. Given the tendency to problematize masturbation in the discourse, Houghton's pro-masturbation zeal is a bit of a relief. Whether or not he would

maintain it if confronted with political arguments questioning the innocence of masturbation is unknown.

Fracher and Kimmel approach masturbation in a fashion not unlike their critique of gay male sexuality. They suggest early experiences of masturbation are lessons that indoctrinate young men into male sexual scripts:

Masturbation teaches young men that sexuality is about the detachment of emotions from sex, that sex is important in itself. Second, men learn that sex is something covert, to be hidden; that is, men learn to privatize sexual experience, without skills to share the experience. And masturbation also teaches men that sexuality is phallocentric[,] that the penis is the center of the sexual universe. Finally, the tools of masturbation, especially sexual fantasy, teach men to objectify the self, to separate the self from the body, to focus on parts of bodies and not whole beings, often to speak of oneself in the third person (1995:369).

Fracher and Kimmel do not specify whether there is an immediate social context for these lessons or whether they involve independent learning. Nonetheless, the authors are comfortable stating that masturbation is a constant and uniform component in the “adolescent sexual socialization” that works to “govern male sexuality” (1995:369).

In addition to the scope of Fracher and Kimmel’s claim, the content is also mired in flagrant assumptions. First, they make the unsubstantiated assertion that masturbation is an unemotional activity and that detachment originating in masturbation is reproduced in partnered sexual experiences. Second, they problematize treating sex as something important in itself, insinuating that moral sexual conduct must necessarily pursue a higher purpose. Third, the contention that masturbation teaches young men to hide their sexuality neglects to consider the possibility that the social context, rather than masturbation itself, socializes men to privatize their experience. Fourth, Fracher and Kimmel’s relation between harm and young men not sharing their sexuality is easily

reversible as private sexual experiences can easily be viewed as a way to take responsibility for oneself and one's desires without imposing them on others. And if men lack the skills for sharing sexual experiences, I will suggest this should be attributed to a social context in which youth's sexuality is rarely directly discussed as opposed to simplistically blaming masturbation. Fifth, the claim that masturbation teaches 'phallocentricity' explains little, other than to offer the suggestion that young men should be toying with something other than their penises. I doubt this proposition would ever be used to challenge women's emphasis on the clitoris. It seems young men are so implicated in a phallocentric, patriarchal culture such that they should not sexually touch their own bodies.

I also object to Fracher and Kimmel's assertion that masturbation and fantasy teach a separation between the mind and the body and an objectification of the self. What constitutes a separation of the mind and body and how this claim can be substantiated is unclear, although I think it is fair to assume that Fracher and Kimmel use 'mind' to refer primarily to emotions. The claim that men objectify themselves through masturbation implicitly objectifies men and their penises such that they are presented as objects with knowable, generalizable qualities and meanings and are not subjects of their own. Besides, if all men do in fact make such a separation and do treat themselves as objects, is the appropriate response for men to not touch their bodies, especially their penises? It seems to me that all of the ways men could conceivably masturbate will be considered suspect within Fracher and Kimmel's critique, and since no alternatives are offered, I am concerned that their rather blanket condemnation implies that masturbation itself, regardless of how it is done, is a social ill.

The anti-masturbation rhetoric put forth by Fracher and Kimmel is wrapped in the language of the 'self' and exhibits a belief that there is an essence to individual selves that needs to be recognized and appreciated before sexual conduct is ethical. In this regard, and in Fracher and Kimmel's emphasis on the importance of emotions and recognizing people as "whole beings," a priority is placed on intent, attitudes, and emotions, none of which represent actual behaviours. This point is raised by Alan Soble in his critique of profeminist and feminist views that equate a thought with a treatment, such that all private mental conjecture is considered as significant and as dangerous as physical and public behaviour (1996:99). Soble also critiques profeminist interpretations of masturbation and reaches some conclusions similar to those I have presented. For Soble, masturbation amongst men is a positive activity because it doesn't adhere to standards of masculinity and is not abusive towards anyone. There are no victims (1996:96).¹²

4.5 Conclusion

'Male sexuality' is presented within the profeminist discourse as a socially constructed problem and a form of pathology in all men. In effect, the discourse lumps all men together and presents them as the dangerous consequences of patriarchy. The manner in which this is accomplished is not unlike Foucault's discussion of speciation and the incorporation of perversions (1978:42-4), albeit in this case a rather large proportion of the population becomes subject to evaluation and attempts at intervention. The discourse is powerful in that it purports to tell women and men the truth about men's identities and

desires. By blending forms of feminist knowledge with interpretations of one's own experience as a man, profeminist authors and activists can claim expertise and access to truth.

Many of the problems I have attempted to raise can, I believe, be traced to the discourse's tendency to insist upon a seamless, unified theory that can explain society and men as being thoroughly patriarchal. Such attempts at grand theory require either omitting or finding creative ways to incorporate the abundant exceptions and fissures that inevitably exist. The very basis of a social constructionist approach, such as that adopted by profeminist men, needs to be understood as necessarily incomplete and even contradictory at times. To suggest that a social construction can be universal and unchanging refutes the very premise upon which social constructionism is based – namely that society is a social product. As a social product, social formations, and the people occupying them, can never be entirely consistent. Such regularity and conformity is simply not possible, which further implies that society can never be wholly 'bad' nor completely 'perfect.' While the profeminist discourse maintains a social constructionist approach so that change remains a possibility, it simultaneously attempts to impose a totalizing theory. Such an effort requires denying the subjectivity of all social inhabitants and turning them into objects. Furthermore, the only approach to power that is amenable to such large-scale theories is that which presents power as a monolithic force. Otherwise, the degree of consistency demanded by the theory is thrown into question. In the case of the profeminist discourse, power is everywhere, inculcating all daily activities, but it is held and exercised virtually exclusively by men.

¹² For the sake of clarity, I do not have reason to consider Soble's work to be part of the 'profeminist discourse' as outlined in Section 1.4.

One of the ways in which profeminist men accomplish a broad and essentializing theory of men and their sexuality is through the notion of a continuum of sexual violence. All men are indicted by the relation posited between all sexual imagery, thoughts and behaviours and forms of sexual violence and brutality that only the most dedicated sadist could accept. In effect, the continuum establishes a line of penetration (Foucault 1978:41-2), whereby everything linked to men or to sex becomes the object of intensified surveillance and is infused with increased meanings. Sex is granted tremendous causality and concerns about it come to saturate social intercourse. All interactions become suspicious and any hint of sex is erased (Bauman 1998:31). In many regards, the continuum reflects Valverde's *domino theory of the passions*, whereby all sexual conduct is placed on a 'slippery slope' and every possible indulgence is deemed to result in a further, more dangerous or taboo pursuit (1985:149-50).

The profeminist theorizations of objectification, masturbation, and opposite- and same-sex relations that have been presented lay the foundations for efforts to encourage men to reform themselves. This is an important aspect of the discourse; it is intended to affect the lives of real, living people. Any presumptuous, overly generalized or poorly rationalized opinions and interpretations need to be understood in this context. Otherwise, the purported intent of creating more moral societies is circumvented by prescriptive exhortations that attempt the morally questionable act of dictating acceptable subjectivities. I say 'morally questionable' in part because the linkages between, for instance, fantasy and real harm, or between a lack of apparent emotional outpourings and a sort of pathology, are based on specific and largely unsubstantiated generalizations. Additionally, as Bauman notes, attempts to impose what are believed to be 'perfect'

identities always risk causing harm and decreasing morality (1993:11). I will leave it open for now as to whether this is the case with the profeminist discourse, although it should be clear at this point that an aim of the discourse is to effectively increase men's willingness and ability to self-regulate and police themselves.

Chapter Five
Creating Moral Men:
Political Incitements for Personal Change

5.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to expand upon the overview of the efforts of the profeminist discourse to change men provided in Chapter Three, with a specific emphasis on efforts to change men's sexual desire and conduct. It is impossible to fully distinguish between profeminist attempts to instigate change in men generally and the more focused endeavor of reconstructing men's sexualities. This is especially apparent with regards to the more radical writers, most of whom do not separate an aggressive male sexuality from broader theorizations of men's identities and practices. Nonetheless, the aim here is to prioritize efforts that specifically address reforming men's sexual selves.

The focus on the self is not the only approach to sexual violence and inequality within the literature, as is evident, for example, in Brod's interest in censoring pornography (1995) and the structural emphasis in Connell's call for a democratization of social sexual relations (1995b). While some profeminists urge institutional change and others focus on reforming the self, these approaches and their intended effects overlap. Locating the sources of patriarchy and sexual violence and developing change-inducing tactics have always posed problems for the discourse. The problem of method is implied by Dansky *et al* (1977:119) in the *Effeminist Manifesto* when they express their hope "to find militant ways for fighting" oppression that are neither "inherently male supremacist" nor counter to feminist goals. The solution to this dilemma, and

perhaps to the apparent difficulties of fully realizing their ideals within institutional systems, has been an emphasis on the more accessible individual. The self is also a strategic location for change given that profeminist men require authenticity if they are to be recognized as legitimate agents of change by other men and feminists (see Hunt 1997:281-2). As Foucault has pointed out, techniques of the self are linked to efforts to direct others and construct others as subjects (1997:277).

Foucault, as discussed in Chapter Two, provides two meanings of the word 'subject.' Controlling or directing the behaviour and consciousness of others, to make people subject *to* someone else or an external referent, is one means to subjectify people. Subject also means being subject to oneself, to forms of self-knowledge, one's conscience or identity. Directing this latter form in others is more covert and arguably more effective in that it is an often invisible way to subjectivize people (Foucault 1997:277).

Dean (1994a) has elaborated upon different forms of subjectification and self-formation. *Political subjectification* is presented as those practices and discourses that address people as though they were free, self-determining subjects required to govern themselves for their own good and the benefit of the community (1994a:155). *Governmental subjectivization* involves the myriad of state and non-state agencies that induce subjects to "seek to shape the conduct, aspirations, needs, desires, and capacities of specified categories of individuals, to enlist them in particular strategies and to seek defined goals" (1994a:156). These dispersed agencies act in a governmental capacity, constructing truths about individuals and imploring the acceptance of particular subject positions. By urging the adoption of particular perspectives of the self and

accompanying practices of the self, the third category of *ethical self-formation* is achieved. Put differently, *ethical self-formation* involves the “practices, techniques, and discourses of the government of the self by the self, by means of which individuals seek to know, decipher, and act on themselves” (Dean 1994a:156). To influence how people perceive and act upon themselves is enormously powerful. It requires *political subjectification* to provide its rationale and *governmental subjectivization* to stimulate and direct processes of *ethical self-formation*. These three categories are not mutually exclusive as they interact and reinforce each other.

My reason for raising Dean’s three types is that they offer some insight into how ethics and processes of self-formation are linked to governance. The plurality and dispersion of forces beyond the state that aim to affect the identities and sexual conduct of others, of which profeminist men are but one element, is an important component of my analysis. As Rose (1990:225) has noted, the ‘private’ realm is demarcated and regulated by civil agents more than by the state.

Foucault’s distinction between ‘code-oriented’ and ‘ethics-oriented’ moralities is also useful because, as will be shown, the profeminist discourse incorporates codes of ‘dos and don’ts’ but also relies on men accepting particular self-regulating practices. While both these approaches tend to move in the same direction within the profeminist discourse, their congruency should not be automatically assumed (Hunt 1999:16). Many of these practices take the form of self-help, a tendency that has been linked to many contemporary moral regulation projects (Hunt 1999:217-9). Self-help is but one aspect of the therapeutic practices within the discourse. These practices are therapeutic in that they exhibit “a certain rationality for rendering experience into thought in a way that

makes it practicable, amenable to having things done to it” (Rose 1994:390). In the profeminist case, this often involves understanding oneself as a product of patriarchy and applying this knowledge to one’s experience such that different options for the self can be constructed. These options allow the individual to construct a new relation to the self and to the external world.

This chapter is organized according to the four aspects of the relation to the self as outlined by Foucault (1985:26-8; 1997:263-5; see also Chapter Two). In the conclusion, I will return to Foucault and provide commentary on the benefits and drawbacks evident in the profeminist discourse’s approach to constructing an ethical sexual self.

5.2 *Determination of the Ethical Substance: Locating Patriarchy Within*

This section addresses the *determination of the ethical substance* (Foucault 1985:26; 1997:263-4), or the location within the self of that which is deemed to require change. The profeminist discourse cites an array of aspects of the sexual self in need of change, ranging from behavioural modification to reforming the unconscious. Certain traits associated with ‘male sexuality’ are targeted for expulsion from the self while attempts to attach sexuality to non-sexual criteria, such as particular values and political perspectives, are endorsed.

My focus here is on profeminist problematizations of men’s sexual desire and practice, which are considered important sites for personal change. As detailed in the previous chapter, tools such as the ‘continuum of sexual violence’ construct all sexual thoughts and activities as suspicious and potential contributors to both violence against women and the continuation of patriarchy. In order to cleanse sexual desire and practice

of harm, moral action that is part of a larger pattern of conduct and a relationship with the self is required. As such, these patterns become a way of 'being,' a relationship with the self that is consistent and attempts to minimize contradictions.

Some profeminist men emphasize the importance of behavioural change (i.e. Men Stopping Rape 2000). Funk makes the case that men's behaviour is the problem, but that there is nothing inherently 'bad' or 'wrong' about men themselves (by doing so, Funk can claim that he is not anti-male) (1993:24, 128). Behavioural change is often connected to attitudinal change (Funk 1993:35). The 'Meninists,' for instance, are "opposed to all forms of macho behavior and obscene sexist attitudes" (2000).

I am unsure as to whether the emphasis some profeminist men place on men's attitudes as a site for change is intended to represent a full change in men's consciousness and subjectivity, although my interpretation is that attitude, consciousness, and subjectivity are used synonymously.¹³ Many profeminist men certainly focus explicitly on changing men's consciousness or subjectivity (i.e. Rowan 1987; Pease 1996; 1997:75; 1988:83-4; 1999:259; 2000b:134). In order to reform men's behaviour and consciousness, there is also a need to change men's unconscious feelings and emotions. Pease, for instance, considers men's emotions to be tainted by patriarchy (2000a:44,119-20). It has also been made clear in the previous chapter that many profeminist men do not believe men are emotional enough and are detached during sexual activity. There is thus some confusion over the role of men's emotions (or lack thereof) and whether they need to be changed or explored. In the case of changing emotions, it is unclear how to separate what can be deemed 'human' from that which is

¹³ I normally associate 'attitude' with specific beliefs, viewpoints or value judgements, whereas subjectivity and consciousness are far more all-encompassing and refer to a way of 'being.'

'patriarchal' or 'masculine' (Valverde 1985:166). The accessibility of emotions and desire to conscious reconstruction is equally unclear (Sawicki 1991:37).

Just as profeminist men posit that male sexuality causes two types of harm (sexual violence and the reproduction of patriarchy), the required remedies are also divided into two components. First, immediate behavioural changes are needed in order to stop the sexual abuse of women, and second, a thorough reformation of men's conscious and unconscious subjectivities is required in order to construct a consistent and lasting identity that does not contribute to harm.

The need to cleanse men of patriarchy and masculinity is accepted by most profeminist men (i.e. Stoltenberg 1977b:80, 1998:159; Funk 1993:23; Jensen 1998:111). This involves ridding oneself of socialized traits that are embedded in men's minds, and removing oppressive characteristics that have been somatized into the bodies of men (Ellison 1996:77). While certain traits are targeted for expulsion, there are attempts to attach ethical sexual behaviour to non-sexual criteria. Dendy, for instance, argues that political will and sexual desire should not be treated as mutually exclusive. Rather, Dendy suggests they need to be aligned (1994). Although not specifically in reference to sex, Flood also presents political criteria that men need to use to evaluate all of their behaviours and thoughts (1993-4). Stoltenberg is firm in his belief that 'good sex' requires connecting "pleasurable sensation and principled action" (1989:103) such that challenges to power inequities are incorporated into one's sexuality. Put differently, 'good sex' is "a question about the relationship between the social structure and the particular sex act" and, as such, it must empower both partners equally (1989:104).

Male sexuality, in the profeminist discourse, must not be its own reason and purpose but rather must be tied to something else. This is interesting given that most forms of social control over sexual conduct and eroticism, such as tying sex to reproduction or marital status and love, have declined in their significance (Bauman 1998:20-1). Profeminist men grant sexual conduct a great deal of causality, and they seem to fear that desire will run amok if it is not anchored to something designated as being 'moral.'

The more therapeutic and spiritual approaches to reforming men need to be noted. For some, inner exploration is itself both the process and goal for creating new male sexualities. Steve Banks, for instance, believes that inner exploration is the key, and that pursuing a therapeutic examination of the self will lead to an 'inner understanding.' With such an understanding, "sex can be really enjoyed as wild and animal, intimate and loving... whatever you want it to be" (1995:19). David Shaw's position is more spiritually-oriented, as he argues that equal sexual relationships are possible under patriarchy but only when they involve "bonding in spiritual terms" and "sacred sexuality" (1996:12,17). Both Banks and Shaw take a more 'personal growth' approach to sexuality, requiring therapeutic and/or spiritual processes that are assumed to guarantee that one's actions will be moral. The ethical substance that requires work is slightly different than other profeminist men, although the aim of reconstructing men's sexuality and attaching eroticism to something non-sexual, such as therapy or spirituality, is not entirely distinct from the moral positions of other profeminist men.

5.3 Modes of Subjectivization: Moral Necessity and Personal Growth

In this section, I examine the *mode of subjection* (Foucault 1985:27; 1997:264), or the means used to encourage men to realize the need for personal change. There are several ways in which men are encouraged to reconstruct themselves in accordance with profeminist principles. Approaches to claims-making are central as all men are morally indicted in violence against women and social decline. Best's account of claims-making procedures will be used to illustrate how the profeminist discourse utilizes certain grounds, warrants (statements justifying the conclusions drawn from the grounds), and the conclusions themselves (Best 1987; see also Chapter Two). By holding all men responsible for men's violence, and through self-help style questionnaires that aim to help men recognize their participation and complicity in forms of abuse, profeminist men attempt to secure other men's commitment to personal and political change. Profeminist discussions on the utility and ethics of using guilt and shame as motivators are presented, as well as efforts to promote and have men recognize the need to heal themselves and the ways in which this is linked to particular sets of values and practices. The work of Flood, Pease and Funk, particularly their views on and approaches to inciting change among men, will be discussed toward the end of this section.

Profeminist efforts to draw attention to problems associated with male sexuality are often based on statistical evidence indicating that men's violence against women is widespread (i.e. Barclay 1987; Men Stopping Rape 2000; Men Stopping Violence 2000a, 2000b). The rates of violence, particularly sexualized violence, are often said to be increasing (i.e. Fandl 2000) and under-reported. Barclay, for instance, presents statistical evidence of men's sexual violence against children and argues that the numbers are "just

the tip of the iceberg of human suffering and exploitation,” implying that the high numbers do not represent the real frequency of child sexual abuse (1987).

To provide a human face to the statistical data, the personal stories of abuse survivors are often provided. These stories tend to be extremely horrific, but they are presented as the norm (i.e. Barclay 1987; Funk 1993:9-10; Jensen 1998:99). In other instances, the frequency of fictional or pornographic depictions of violence against women are presented to support the argument that men’s violence is rampant and is accepted within patriarchy. Stoltenberg, for example, insists that “pornography tells the truth about men” (1989:121).¹⁴ This claim is often accompanied by statistics and other grounds that are used to establish rape as a ‘normal’ form of sexual activity for men within patriarchy (Bradbury 1992:157; Stoltenberg 1989:35). The argument that men’s sexuality is inherently based on rapist ethics provides a definition of male sexuality that acts to support further arguments. It functions as a ground that supports claims about the widespread frequency of male sexual violence, and it is used as a warrant, as a statement that links rampant sexual violence to a need for men to change. Defining the problem as one in which all men are involved, along with the use of frequency rates, growth estimates, and examples, are the common elements of grounds used in claims-making as presented by Best (1987:104-8).

By arguing that rates of sexual violence against women are increasing, these profeminist men imply that society is degenerating or facing a moral crisis. Stoltenberg explicitly supports the notion that contemporary North American culture is in a crisis (1998:153), as does Marvin Ellison (1996:5). Such claims are not uncommon within

¹⁴ Stoltenberg presents pornography as both a cause of sexual violence and as representing the essence of male sexuality. These two claims are not compatible.

moral regulation projects (Hunt 1999:11), and act to support (and are supported by) claims that sexual violence is increasingly widespread.

Ellison connects his claim that we are experiencing a cultural crisis with a call to action that aims to create a sense of agency amongst his readers. He writes:

The bad news, in evidence everywhere, is that human sexuality is distorted by various forms of social oppression. The good news, less evident but critically important, is that people have a place immediately accessible to them – their own body space, as well as their intimate connections with others – within which to mount resistance to injustice and also experiment with freedom (1996:1).

This statement, which is provided at the beginning of Ellison's book on sexual ethics, promises personal empowerment and more freedom. Reinforcing a sense of agency amongst readers is a powerful motivator that presents personal interests and social justice as being part of the same dynamic. Suggesting personal interests and social justice can be pursued simultaneously not only encourages men to become involved but also assists in the task of tying men's self-reformations, as well as sex generally, to non-sexual social criteria.

By establishing sexualized violence as a rampant problem and by defining male sexuality as inherently dangerous, the profeminist discourse morally indicts men. This is furthered by claims that all men are responsible for all men's sexism, violence, and rape (i.e. May 1998b:95; Men for Change 2000e; Men Against Racism and Sexism 2000a). It does not require a huge leap to move from holding all men responsible to insisting that men are morally responsible for ending sexism and violence (i.e. Men Against Racism and Sexism 2000a). Insisting that men alone have the power to end sexual injustices also appeals to men's sense of agency by telling men that their individual choices and action

will make a difference. Jones, for example, in an article entitled “Male Responsibility for Rape and Rape Awareness,” concludes with an appeal to men’s agency: *“Be glad that you are a man and have the power to help stop the violence that affects everybody”* (2000; emphasis in original). This comment is preceded by Jones’ insistence that no matter what men do it will not be enough, so while men are empowered with the ability to make change, authenticity will require pursuing personal and political change in every activity one undertakes in perpetuity.

Larry May insists that men must use their agency to “distance themselves from the rest of the male population that contributes to the prevalence of rape” (1998b:4). Actions men can take to distance themselves morally from other men are put forth, and May posits that men need to investigate their anger and sexual desires as sources of information about themselves (1998b:3-4). This latter point is similar to Jensen’s claim that it is ‘epistemologically irresponsible’ for men and women to not examine the source of every felt desire (1998:110).

The proposition that men need to distance themselves from other men is rejected by other profeminist writers. Flood, for instance, warns of “the danger of ‘exceptionalising’ ourselves – representing ourselves as better than other men” (1995a). Two reasons for this include a concern over “feminist fucking,” or professing feminism to access women sexually, and Flood’s related insistence that men who don’t practice overt sexism are equally as dangerous as men who do (1990b). Another concern is that supporting a distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ men implies that some men have done enough to combat sexism. As Flood states, “being ‘nice’ or ‘gentle’ is not enough” (1990b). While May supports distinguishing between men who do and do not contribute

to sexual violence, Flood, at least in principle, rejects these dividing practices. Despite Flood's rejection, however, I think it would be erroneous to assume that Flood's own work does not differentiate between men who adopt feminism and men who do not. Elsewhere, for instance, Flood has presented criteria for being a 'good man' (1993-4).

Dividing practices are central to profeminist attempts to get men to change. The work of Stoltenberg is exemplary in this regard. Stoltenberg critiques men that he does not believe have fully integrated his version of feminism into their lives. For instance, he writes:

There are plenty of apparently "sensitive," "compassionate," and "sympathetic" men around – men who present themselves as being in favor of social justice but who act in their lives as if they would sooner die than relinquish the prerogative that they got by being born male (1977b:81).

This statement by Stoltenberg divides men who are fully pursuing a moral identity from those he deems are not. It is also an attempt to spur men to action, much like his list of predictions of "What Men of Conscience Will Be Doing in the Next Decade":

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will do very little or nothing.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will prefer to discuss their feelings.

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will do only that which makes them feel better about themselves...

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience, if they notice they are doing nothing, will want to spend hours and hours justifying their inertia...

PREDICTION: Many men of conscience will spend more time shopping for tofu than they spend reading the feminist press (1989:181-2).

The effect is to pressure men to act in accordance with Stoltenberg's views, as anything less will invalidate claims to a moral or principled identity. I have provided this sample of Stoltenberg's 'predictions' in part because I can clearly remember the effect they had

on me for many years. Stoltenberg's *Refusing to Be a Man* (1989) was the first profeminist book I ever read, and by the end of it my self-perception of being a conscientious person was razed to the ground. There were many times when his predictions and his insistence that there is only one way to live a moral life resonated in my mind and pushed me to do more and more in order to secure my own self-image and identity. Interestingly, Stoltenberg is critical of men's guilt (1989:184), and yet his work acts to incite guilt and insecurity as to whether one is moral enough. Stoltenberg's work, like that of other profeminist men, *creates* and *requires* guilt in order to fully hail men's subjectivities.

The role of guilt and shame is a frequent topic in the profeminist discourse. Some writers, such as May, argue that guilt and shame are constructive tools in efforts to convince men of the need to change themselves (1998a:346-7). For others, guilt and shame are negative and lead to timidity or an excessive focus on personal emotional growth. Cooper, for instance, notes how amusing and tragic profeminist guilt is:

Who else but the anti-sexist man can feel guilty for being sexist, feel guilty for feeling guilty, and end up feeling confused for feeling guilty and guilty for feeling confused and confused that his guilt isn't as guiltlessly confusing as another man's confused guilt feelings? (1993-4).

According to Cooper, the root of guilt is the internalization of those feminist voices that critique people and not behaviours, resulting in some men's constant questioning of themselves and feelings that one's identity, regardless of behaviour, is tainted. Cooper writes how he, "was so convinced that everything I did in relation to women was fuelled by unconscious sexist motivations that I was virtually blind to other possibilities" (1993-4). One component of this was his internalization of the common profeminist position that, "a man who says he hates women is a misogynist, a man who says he doesn't hate

women is a misogynist in denial, and... hey presto... it looks like all men are misogynists!” (1993-4). Moving beyond blame and guilt would be a productive move for profeminists, Cooper argues, because it will allow men to have more pride in their work, and will lead to more responsible and effective profeminist activism (1993-4).

‘Men for Change’ offer a different approach by distinguishing between ‘guilt’ and ‘shame.’ They introduce this distinction with an appeal to men’s agency and to men’s pain:

There is **personal power** to be found in understanding the differences between shame and guilt.

The awareness of realizing that we have choice over life experiences can be a release from despair, blame and self hate and a move towards empowerment and healthy responsibility for our actions, behaviours and future.

You are invited to relate to the choices outlined below [between shame and guilt]. The best choice will be obvious to you only if you believe in yourself, if you don’t now, we hope this will be part of your journey in the near future (2000e; emphasis in original).

The emphasis on personal empowerment and life choices are indicative of a self-help tendency in this organization. This is also evident in their definitions of shame and guilt:

SHAME: The feeling of being inferior to everyone else. Being exposed to others in a very painful manner, a sense of our total failure as a person; feeling alienated from others and ourselves, feeling humiliated[,] discouraged and despairing; feeling totally and utterly worthless.

GUILT: A healthy and necessary sense that we have violated a moral code, our values, or our standards or that we have transgressed someone else’s rights (2000e).

While shame is presented as negative, guilt is believed to be ‘healthy’ and to represent moral truths. Guilt is further described as providing “Connectedness with true self” and “Endless potential for personal growth and change” (2000e). Shame, on the other hand,

prevents connections with the 'true self' and leads, for example, to addictive behaviours (2000e).

The 'Men for Change' position creates a need for men to change and seek help, and it responds to these needs. It connects feelings with morality, such that negative emotions are a moral problem requiring moral solutions. To *be* moral, to have moral capital, men must change. While many profeminist men cite violence against women as a moral imperative for men to change, 'Men for Change' explicitly propose self-reformation as a way to heal oneself and develop a moral relationship with the world. This is evident throughout the organization's internet material. The "Bill of Rights for Men," for instance, extols men's 'right' to be "authentic" while also pushing for social change: "As a man, I have the right to show my strength by choosing not to use power and control against someone else" (2000b). Likewise, their web page on "Personal Growth" has information and referrals on issues such as ending abusive behaviour, 'positive' masculinity, 'positive' parenting, recovery and healing (2000f). These materials promise not only self-redemption and a better life for men, they also instruct men on how to be ethical in all areas of life.

'Men for Change' is certainly not the only profeminist organization that attempts to secure men's allegiance by offering to help heal their pain. The National Organization of Men Against Sexism (U.S.), for instance, informs men that they will be more fulfilled and happier if they reform themselves and challenge sexism and traditional masculinity (2000). Brod's discussion of men's alienation as a result of the pornography industry similarly appeals to notions of discovering the self, creating personal freedom and constructing a more ethical life (1995).

An additional means evident in the profeminist discourse is the use of questionnaires intended to help men evaluate themselves. These questionnaires are presented such that very few people can complete them honestly without having their behaviour and the ethics of their relationship to the self and others thrown into question. 'RAVEN' (Rape and Violence End Now), for instance, offers an "Are You Abusive?" list of questions and, if the respondent answers positively, implores them to seek change and unlearn abusive tendencies. Doing so will lessen feelings of being "alone and unhappy"(2000). While some of the questions are clearly linked to problematic behaviour, others are rather open-ended and can easily apply to anyone. 'Cursing' at partners, or "using threatening looks, loud voices or gestures" (2000) are considered abusive. It is also considered abusive if "you manipulate her by lying or withholding [sic] information" (2000). The parameters of what constitutes abuse are difficult to determine and are culturally specific. By linking, for instance, 'loud voices' to abuse, the questionnaire pathologizes what can be a routine aspect of living. Related to this is the notion that withholding information is necessarily abusive, which implies that non-abusive relationships require full disclosure of the self and its activities. 'RAVEN's' position is that social life needs to be cleansed of a range of behaviours that are linked to men and forms of harm.

Kivel frequently uses questionnaires as exercises to work on the self, but they are also intended as means through which men can identify themselves as requiring change. While the goal of encouraging men to seek help is clear, Kivel's exercises often begin with the assumption that all men are abusive. An excerpt from one of his lists of questions exemplifies this:

4. What is one way you have hurt a woman (physically, emotionally, or verbally) in the recent past? In what ways have you denied your actions?

5. How did you blame her for your actions?

6. How have you learned to express your anger toward women?...

12. If you are verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abusive to even one woman, even occasionally, get help (1992:59-60).

The questions posed by Kivel assume that all men are angry and abusive to women, and he concludes this exercise by informing men that they need to get help. This list is followed by another exercise in which men who have discussed a woman's body with another man, or have lied to an intimate partner about other sexual relationships, are deemed problematic (1992:61). The implication is that if a man has ever discussed a woman's body, regardless of context or intent, they have a problem. In addition, and similar to the 'RAVEN' questionnaire's insinuation that men need to disclose themselves fully, men who want to be non-abusive are expected to discuss every aspect of other intimate relationships they have had, regardless of when these relations occurred.¹⁵

Kivel also offers an "Admitting Sexual Violence" exercise, which is intended to assist in taking an "inventory of your violent sexual behavior" (1992:125). Kivel's list of problematic behaviour includes, for instance, having ever "criticized a person's performance or adequacy as a sexual partner" (1992:125). This is presented as a problem associated with men and implies that any such comments, even if provided constructively, are abusive. This claim, I will suggest, discourages men from raising their sexual likes and dislikes, stymies sexual conversations, and does not help articulate

¹⁵ Kivel does not specifically refer to simultaneous relationships or infidelity, leading to my conclusion that he believes full disclosure of all other relationships, past or present, is required.

what is harmful. Kivel follows this by proclaiming that having sex with someone against their will is abusive, and then states that *withholding* sex and affection are abusive (1992:125). Without an explanation, this claim suggests that men are abusive if they refuse to have sex. There are evidently problems in creating clear codes as to what is ethical, but these questionnaires nonetheless can fulfill the function of hailing men, of having men problematize and doubt themselves.

'Men Against Pornography' offer tests for men to discover whether or not they are experiencing negative repercussions from using pornography. The incentives offered include more self-esteem, self-awareness, and better relationships. Additionally, men are offered assistance in developing "the skills and courage to challenge the lies that pornography makes us believe" (1990:295). How exactly men are forced to accept 'messages' in pornography is not addressed, but this claim does leave open the possibility that men, in addition to women, are victims of pornography. Insinuating that men are somehow victimized by pornography increases the appeal of questioning it. The tests themselves, such as one entitled 'Check Yourself Out,' lists statements pertaining to problems associated with pornography and requests 'yes' or 'no' answers. For example, respondents are asked whether they have ever "become dissatisfied with your sexual partner's physical appearance or how they express themselves sexually" (1990:294). Similarly, respondents are asked whether they have ever been unhappy about their own appearance or sexual expression (1990:294). It would be difficult, I think, for anyone to honestly say 'no' to either of these questions, although the assumption of a direct link between pornography and being unhappy with one's own or others' appearance or sexual expression is tenuous. This connection is questionable for numerous reasons, not the

least of which being social pressures and influences that are not restricted to pornography. Nonetheless, the test may be effective in getting men to question their pornography use and consider, for example, a twelve-step recovery program ('Men Against Pornography' 2000a).

The work of Funk exhibits the means through which the profeminist discourse attempts to push men towards processes of self-reformation. Funk provides many statistics on sexual violence, and further argues that they 'grossly' underestimate the problem and that rape is on the increase (1993:7,14,22). Numerous horrific accounts by rape victims are provided, and the rapists in these stories are presented as 'normal' men (1993:9-11). By presenting the assailants as 'normal,' and by providing statistics on the number of men who reportedly enjoy dominating women (1993:22), Funk supports his claim that all men are dangerous (1993:21). Because no man can be trusted, he insists that all men need to examine themselves and not point fingers at other men (1993:23). If the reader still isn't convinced of the need for self-reformation, Funk tells men that regardless of their intentions, no man can relate to a woman without oppressing her (1993:42-4) and that "all of us [men] have used various forms of pressure, force, and manipulation and coercion to get what we want" sexually (1993:55-6). In other words, all men are rapists. For men who aren't immediately put-off by Funk's high-handedness, the moral indictment of men presented by Funk can certainly create moral insecurity, guilt, and a desire to reform the self.

Funk also puts forth three questions intended to help men realize their need for change. These questions include: "[1] Ask yourself to remember a time when you've felt like you needed to prove your manhood... [2] How have you acted to intimidate

somebody?...[3] When have you manipulated someone to get what you wanted?" (1993:100-1). For Funk, any action that is potentially intimidating or manipulative is a problem regardless of context, leading to his observation that men "need to begin looking at just how easy it is to be abusive" (1993:101). There is evidently a desire on the part of Funk to purify social relations and associate all forms of power with abuse. In doing so, and by relating these questions to the rest of his claims, Funk attempts to get men to accept his call for widespread personal and political change.

Flood relies less on statistics and more on men's sense of justice and desire for better lives. This is best represented in his list of reasons why men should change and oppose patriarchy:

- *altruism
- *principles of justice and equality
- *the increased possibilities of love, support and care for and from others, particularly other men
- *the benefit of emotional growth
- *better relationships with women
- *positive and healthy contact with children
- *the avoidance of other men's violence and of the fear of men
- *reduced likelihood of violence by groups and nations
- *because women are asking and demanding that we change, and simply won't allow us to be oppressive (1990b).

Flood's reasons for change assume that men are necessarily oppressive in their current state and have problems in relationships (especially with children). He attempts to align personal interests and political change, as is evident in his use of 'emotional growth' as a

motivation for change. It is also evident in his use of the descriptor 'healthy,' a term that he uses frequently to describe the benefits of activism and self-reformation (see also 1995a). The exact meaning of 'healthy' is unclear except to distinguish it from its opposite, 'pathology,' which presumably represents men's current situation. 'Health' and 'pathology' are bipolar terms, and Flood seems to be suggesting that men must decide between one or the other as though they are clear and discrete categories.

In regards to guilt, Flood recognizes many profeminist men are "steeped" in it, although he feels "relatively free" of it himself (1996a). Guilt is unproductive for Flood, although his treatment of it contains some irony. For instance, in a list of "Strategies for Change," Flood lists "Move beyond guilt paralysis" immediately before stating "We are the problem" (1990b). Exactly how Flood can argue that men are the problem and simultaneously admonish feelings of guilt is indiscernible to me. I would expect guilt to be a response to a moral indictment that passes judgement based on biological identity and not on one's behaviour or treatment of others.

Pease considers guilt and shame to be positive catalysts for change but does not consider them to be sustainable motivators (1993:9). Elsewhere he distinguishes between 'productive' guilt, which motivates men to change, and unproductive, shame-inducing 'neurotic' guilt (2000a:118). Aside from guilt, Pease suggests there are three primary reasons men respond to feminism. First, some men believe their best interests can be served by coopting feminism and deflecting attention elsewhere (2000a:15-6). Second, men can have enlightened self-interests and realize their own interests and 'liberation' in feminism (2000a:16-7). Third, men can adopt feminism for ethical reasons, a sense of altruism and a regard for issues of justice (2000a:17). This last reason

can also be understood as a desire for moral capital, which is a form of self-interest itself (although this does not make it inherently negative). There is substance behind each of Pease's claims, but note that they are not directly related to changing sexual desire. Rather, they are general reasons for some men's acceptance of feminism.

There are both 'push' and 'pull' mechanisms in the profeminist discourse. The 'push' mechanisms are those that critique men and posit that change is the only hope for an ethical self-identity. The 'pull' mechanisms are those that offer men incentives to change, such as promises of more fulfilling emotional lives. Grounds, such as statistics on the frequency of sexual assault and horrific stories of abuse, are presented and linked to claims that all men are dangerous. Questionnaires and other tools are used to encourage men to recognize this in themselves and to commit to processes of personal reformation.

A moral tone is evident in profeminist attempts to access men's subjectivities. The links posited between men, male sexuality, sexual assault and a society in crisis are tied to specific forms of knowledge, such as rape statistics, and to discourses of the self, resulting in a claim that men and their sexuality are morally deficient and require reformation (see Section 2.5). Men, and male sexuality, become targets of moral regulation and are encouraged to engage in processes of self-reformation that require constant reflexivity and are guided by the expertise of other profeminist men and feminist-identified women. There is some leeway in the types of expertise required. In some cases the self is its own reflexive judge guided by spiritual or therapeutic notions of the self, in other instances the self is urged to accept particular codes of conduct (as evident in many of the questionnaires). In both cases, social citizenship requires

ethically constructing the self according to particular duties and responsibilities (Rose 1994:379-80).

5.4 The Elaboration of Ethical Work: Forever Working on the Self

This section examines the *ethical work* (Foucault 1985:27; 1997:265), the exercises and practices that are implemented to facilitate change in men's sexuality. In order to secure behavioural change, deep-seated changes in consciousness through practices of confession, self-examination, consciousness-raising groups and self-education are advocated. An examination of these common reflexive methods will be accompanied by more formal, code-oriented approaches.

There are numerous exercises men are encouraged to undertake as ways of working on the self. While the discourse presents ways for men to modify their behaviour and decrease harm, this needs to be facilitated by processes of self-education and self-examination in order to ensure that one's actions reflect a way of 'being.' This can be pursued individually, but participation in men's consciousness-raising groups and more formal group activities are also advocated. In many regards these exercises can be seen as a form of 'sex work' in which sexual feelings and conduct are worked upon in order to bring them closer to how one suspects one ought to feel about and experience sexuality (Duncombe & Marsden 1996:220). Recall from Chapter Three that many profeminist men believe that working to bring every aspect of life and thought into alignment with profeminist ideals is the core substance of a profeminist identity (Klement 1996:13).

Behavioural changes are advocated by profeminist men in order to lessen violence against women. Many of the suggestions are practical and appropriate. Funk, for instance, tells men to communicate with their partners and to ask before touching others (1993:101-2). Similarly, Kaufman puts forth the importance of consent and of men taking shared responsibility for contraception (1994:245). Each of these recommendations is pragmatic and offers a somewhat clear way for men to act ethically. I say 'somewhat' because, in Funk's case, telling men to ask for consent and simultaneously placing consensual relationships on the continuum of violence does not alleviate uncertainty. Related to this, and while I do consider communication to be important, particularly in sexual relationships, it would be erroneous to suggest that communication (including 'consent') cannot be manipulated and abusive. Other behavioural changes, such as Jensen's support for abstinence (1998) and Stoltenberg's insistence that men stop using pornography and not use drugs or alcohol during sex (1989:38-9), are similarly clear in that they connect what is deemed to be a problem with a solution.

Many of the changes that profeminist men support, however, do not offer immediate solutions. For example, decreasing an emphasis on the penis (Hughes 1993:13), not pursuing orgasm as a goal (Dendy 1994), restructuring or eliminating fantasy (Bevson 1977:42-3), redefining beauty standards (Klement 1996:13), or removing gender as a criterion in attraction (Garland 1994) are not clearly amenable to conscious reconstruction. Indeed, the aim of the discourse is to facilitate a conscious self-reformation but, as Sawicki has noted, "How one goes about altering one's desires

when they appear to conflict with 'feminist' political or moral principles is not obvious. Nor is the extent to which such desires can be consciously altered at all clear" (1991:37).

A beginning step advocated within the discourse is self-education. The most frequently cited means to accomplish this is through a combination of listening to women and reading feminist texts (i.e. Flood 1990a, 1990b; Funk 1993:106; Real Men 2000; Schact & Ewing 1997:35; Stoltenberg 1977b:81). There is a general belief that men don't listen to women and a recognition that few have read feminist theory, so engaging in these activities assists in understanding women's experiences and the depth of the problem of patriarchy. Profeminist men's use of reading and listening is not unique; as Foucault has observed, listening has been central in many other projects for working on and training the self (1988a:27,32; 1997:272-3).

The role of feminists in this process of self-education is mixed. Kahane suggests that profeminist men need to engage in activist friendships and communities, particularly with feminists, in order to further an understanding of the issues and because the reactions of others "are more adequate indicators of your feminist commitment and consciousness than how you imagine yourself" (1998:231). Relying on feminists is rejected by Klement, who presents the not uncommon sentiment that men need to take responsibility for their learning and avoid burdening women (1996:13).

The goal of self-education is to facilitate self-examination and illuminate the impact of patriarchy on the self. This process is an ongoing endeavor, as Funk reminds men:

It is vital that each and every one of us, as men, take a hard and painful look at our behaviors and attitudes to see the ways we support rape culture. This work requires a constant vigilance. It means never quite forgetting that we are men, and that we are granted some privilege based on that (1993:99).

In this excerpt Funk argues that the work men must perform on themselves requires judging all of one's behaviours and one's consciousness specifically in reference to one's gender with the purpose of challenging one's gender training. This is despite his hope for a world without gender (1993:153) and is also true for men who are disenfranchised along lines of race, sexual orientation, age, and ability. Marginalized men, like all men, are promised to "become fully empowered" if they "clean up our [men's] behaviour" (Funk 1993:100).¹⁶

Like many profeminist men, Funk presents listening to women and reading as a "method for beginning and sustaining this self-examination and self-discovery" that will assist men in critiquing, among other things, the ways they talk to women (1993:106-7). An additional method for self-examination presented is writing exercises. In order to avoid being overcome with guilt and getting defensive towards his message, Funk advises men to write about all the feelings they experience throughout their body and to create space for their emotional selves (1993:18-9). John Jordan presents a more structured writing exercise for men with addictions to pornography. These men are expected to write diaries that are structured according to the five emotional and physical stages of compulsive consumption presented by Jordan (1995:31). These journal exercises are frequent components of self-help projects.

Questions for men are often presented to guide self-examination. These questions can also be used to get men to realize the need for change. Funk presents questions for men to ask themselves, which act both to push men to recognize a need for

¹⁶ Funk recognizes forms of oppression other than sexism, but he promises marginalized men complete empowerment if they change their behaviour as *men*. Other injustices are recognized, but they are neglected in Funk's call for change. This incomplete attempt to incorporate

change as well as exercises in unraveling the self (1993:100-1). Garland encourages men to question their sexuality and how it relates to social structures and gender identity (1995:15). Hughes provides men with a series of questions that are specifically geared towards exploring the inner motives and the effects of objectifying women (1994:24). In each of these cases, pursuing inner exploration is presented as a political necessity and as a requirement for personal growth.

An approach that emphasizes personal growth without neglecting political issues, such as violence against women, is provided by 'Men for Change.' For example, this group presents ten different categories of intimacy and offers questions imploring men to explore how they relate to each type and which types they could be neglecting (2000c). In another instance, 'Men for Change' presents six different techniques that men can use to repress their emotions. Men are encouraged to reflect on the list in order to become more in touch with the ways they could be avoiding their feelings (2000d).

Stoltenberg presents a variety of changes for men to make in order to align sexual conduct with more egalitarian values. He writes:

What I believe needs to happen is a radical reexamination of the values in the kinds of sex we are having. We need to make a commitment to responsibility and responsiveness in sex. We need to make a personal commitment to stay conscious during sex, to stay alert to what is going on even as it is going on, a commitment to being ethically awake instead of doped. As individuals, and perhaps as friends (I don't believe there is any readiness for this in any existing movement), we need to begin to understand more about what is going on between us when we have sex, the values in it, how it is related to the rest of our lives, how it is related to how we treat people, and how it is related to political change – and we need to talk about it all, face to face, one to one, before, during, and after (1989:113-4).

difference supports my earlier contention that difference is insufficiently addressed by many profeminist writers.

Stoltenberg believes that men are 'doped' and need to begin to consciously consider the ethics of all sexual conduct. The causality Stoltenberg grants to sexual conduct, such that it affects all relationships, is used to support his position that sexual conduct needs to be evaluated in reference to particular values and its relation to political change. Further, he implores men to talk about the relationship between sexual activity and equality at all times. In essence, he is suggesting that communication needs to be overt and continuous in order for the 'real' meaning of sex to be uncovered in any given situation. Stoltenberg is also arguing that there is a need for constant surveillance of the self. In his account of panoptism, Foucault has referred to self-surveillance as a tactical, yet invisible, "perfection of power." In other words, the exercise of power becomes unnecessary when its means – such as surveillance – are incorporated into the subjectivities of its targets (1979:201).

Stoltenberg's discusses how wonderful sex can be when you stop having to work at it (1989:39). Stoltenberg is correct in arguing that we have already adopted forms of 'sex work,' such as performance expectations, but I reject his naïve assumption that his program for reconstructing sexuality will lead to sex without work. I similarly reject his belief that being constantly attentive to feelings and ethics will create more intimacy and more emotional connectedness (1989:112). Just the opposite may occur: by insisting that sexual conduct must always be accompanied by a rational awareness of the politics involved, Stoltenberg creates performative expectations that, I will suggest, limit the emotive possibilities of sexual relations. Singer has taken a position similar to mine and has pointed out that suspending one's self-consciousness during sex can lead to more pleasure. Singer has also suggested that taking responsibility for partners turns sex into

work, and that trying to be perfectly non-sexist and “perfectly in touch with everything” (1992:60) inhibits pleasure and emotions.

In a later work, Stoltenberg provides numerous tests and charts to help determine whether men are in ‘manhood’ or ‘selfhood’ mode during sex. For instance, Stoltenberg presents questions and an ‘ownership’ diagram to examine the ways in which an active/passive dynamic represents property relations (1993:218-9), a “Personal Checklist of Some Reasons You May Feel That You Ought to Stay in Manhood Mode During Sex” (1993:209-10), and “A Personal Checklist of Some Ways to Tell Whether Your Sexual Feelings Are Occurring in Selfhood Mode or in Manhood Mode” (1993:230-3). In each of these, sex is presented as being either a part of the ‘manhood act’ or as congruent with Stoltenberg’s version of morality (or “*loving justice*”). Two clearly distinct options, one being the root of oppression and the other moral, are offered to readers who are encouraged to develop their own checklists and to keep track of their sexual feelings at all times (1993:210).

It is fitting that Stoltenberg presents criteria involving the examination of embodied experience. The similarities between the clitoris and the penis are discussed, along with, for instance, the sensitivity of nipples and the orgasmic possibilities of men’s prostates (1993:211-2). However, Stoltenberg’s position is different from other profeminist men who similarly view the body as a site for change. Pronger, for example, posits that oral and anal receptivity can ‘deterritorialize’ masculine desire and that a willingness to give up control can facilitate feminist knowledge (1989:75-6). While Stoltenberg claims that his agenda for reforming sex will lead to emotional ecstasy and new forms of loving and relating, his programme emphasizes a need for men to

constantly control and monitor themselves. The issue of control, I will suggest, marks a key difference between Stoltenberg and Pronger.

Jensen considers control to be important, as is evident from his insistence that it is “epistemologically irresponsible” to act on desires without understanding where they come from (1998:110). The difficulty in fully understanding desire is one of the reasons Jensen has decided to abstain from sexual relations. Without full control and knowledge of himself, Jensen does not trust himself. He also does not trust himself to speak about sex:

...there are ways in which talking-about-sex can be a type of having-sex. It takes constant monitoring to reject patriarchy's rule and not engage in sex... I believe that having sex and talking-about sex in my core epistemic community would undermine progress... Such activity suggests that no matter how much one tries to redefine sexuality or talks about change, we're all just interested in fucking each other (1998:109).

For Jensen, any form of talking about sex is detrimental to his task of recreating it. This position is different from many other profeminist men who consider verbalization and dialogue to be a valuable tool in efforts to deconstruct male sexuality.

The issue of verbalization is discussed by May, who criticizes both Catholic and contemporary forms of confession as ways to legitimate sexual aggression and remove guilt (1998b:43-55). For men to assume their moral responsibility, May endorses Stoltenberg's work on the need for a moral transformation in men (1998b:56). May argues that confession must be combined with self-transformation through what he terms a 'progressive confession,' which “involves the project of remaking the self, of beginning on a journey of changes in perspective, attitude, and behaviour which will cumulatively show that a man has accepted responsibility for who he is” (1998b:55-6).

The position of May, like that of Jensen, Stoltenberg and others, requires men to inspect every aspect of themselves and to submit all thoughts and behaviours to particular views of morality. As Foucault has observed, the examination of conscience and confessing all of one's thoughts, desires and their purported causes are key forms of 'self-technology,' or ways through which individuals are implored to govern themselves (1993:203-4; see also 1978:58-63). These processes are subject to a 'truth' of sex, such as sex being inherently patriarchal, and at the same time they are expected to produce the 'truth' of sex and empower the individual. So, as Jensen, for example, professes that all sexual desires need to be accounted for, particularly in relation to patriarchy, he is presenting a 'truth' of sex (its relation to patriarchy) and imploring men to apply this 'truth' to themselves such that they will realize and change it. This is presented as a form of empowerment, personal growth and as a moral and political necessity that creates freedom. However, as Foucault has shown, these processes are governmental in that they aim to direct the conduct of others. By insisting that everyone must account not only for their actions but for every impulse and thought in order to decrease harm and increase security, profeminist men are also aiming to regulate and govern the conduct of others.

Foucault has also observed that others are often required to hear and evaluate confessions and processes of self-examination in order for them to produce and secure modifications of behaviour (1978:61). Men's support and consciousness-raising groups are one way profeminist men have attempted to facilitate processes of reformation, although they have not been adopted uncritically.

Flood is a proponent of men's groups:

Men's groups provide a source of support for personal growth and change, and a safer and affirming environment in which to confront our oppressive

and self-destructive behaviours. We pick up skills such as listening, communicating and relationship building, which are essential for healthy relationships with women, children and other men. We develop an awareness of our own emotions and attitudes... Groups offer the chance to laugh, play, share, cry, confess, heal emotional wounds, joke, confront and pull together with others towards a goal (1994:27).

While Flood supports men's groups generally, he is critical of those that do not incorporate anti-sexism into their programs. Focusing primarily on men's emotions is not sufficient, as men's groups need to "provide both support for and pressure to change" (Flood:1994:28). Self-education within consciousness-raising groups, along with public activism, are recommended by Flood as ways to change that can bring together an intellectual understanding of issues and an emotional acceptance of them (1994:27).

Seidler also offers qualified support for consciousness-raising amongst men. Such practices bridge the personal and the political, the emotional and the structural, and explore the relationship between historical experience and identity (Seidler 1991:13). Seidler notes several problems with men's consciousness-raising groups, such as the tendency to intellectualize emotions, to externalize problems of sexism onto men outside the group, and some men's practice of competing with a "holier-than-thou' deference to feminism" (1991:15-6).

The 'holier-than-thou' approach is criticized by Seidler because it moralizes men and prevents progressive change. An example of such an approach is the work of Schein, who recognizes some benefits of men's consciousness-raising groups but is also wary of the potential for them to become a new outlet for men's sexism. The benefits noted by Schein include discussing similar experiences of being men, avoidance of

men's co-optation of mixed groups,¹⁷ and the potential to directly "confront our [men's] misogyny as fundamental to our consciousness" (1977b:129-31). The dangers presented by Schein include the potential for men to collude against and misdirect anger towards women, that groups may weaken men's resolve to struggle against their own sexism, and that change-inducing activities may not move beyond the group (1977b:132-4).

In order to maximize the benefits and minimize the dangers, Schein presents three principles for men's consciousness-raising groups. First, men need to accept radical feminism in theory and practice. Second, emotionality needs to be accepted as a part of the 'new man.' Third, men must never assume they can speak for women (1977b:131-2).

Paul Carlo Hornacek puts forth three similar principles, arguing that men need to accept the tenets of feminism, commit themselves to personal and political change, and incorporate periods of criticism (including self-criticism) into every session (1977:125). This last point is reiterated by Kahane, who believes that profeminist men need to develop a propensity for self-criticism and exercise skepticism towards each other (1998:228-9).

Several additional criteria pertaining to the structure of men's consciousness-raising groups are considered necessary by Hornacek. Unlike women's consciousness-raising groups, Hornacek stresses the need for men's groups to "adhere to a pre-determined format which assures that anti-sexist principles and self-critical vigilance are ever-present in the process" (1977:125). Since men have been brought up to be "sexual-oppressors" and will bring this training into the group, Hornacek believes that facilitation by an experienced anti-sexist man or a feminist-identified woman is required (1977:127). A

¹⁷ Flood also discusses problems associated with men in mixed groups, such as men depending on women for emotional support and expecting women to provide all the answers (1994:28).

number of other rules are also presented by Hornacek, such as a prohibition on intellectualization, a commitment to listening attentively and the need for the group to study feminist theory (1977:127-8). It is interesting that Hornacek problematizes intellectualization while promoting theoretical texts. The intent behind bans on intellectualization include a desire to highlight personal experience and emotions, but these prohibitions are enforced selectively. In my own experience, the ambiguous bans on intellectualization that often accompany men's groups can be used either to maintain a therapy-like environment or to direct the content of political discussions. In some instances, I believe 'intellectualization' can become a code word to invalidate and silence unorthodox views.

The number and type of regulatory and control practices are significant indicators of the degree to which these processes are facilitating a subjective exploration or are intended to instill a particular subject identity. In order to label themselves as pro-feminist, consciousness-raising groups need to incorporate an anti-sexist perspective and often combine personal growth with public activism. There is certainly a lot of merit in this, as it can bring welcomed political change and broaden the scope of subjective referents and possibilities. However, the extent to which the content and end result of these processes are predetermined by particular political and moral interpretations of 'right' and 'wrong' ways to 'be' is one way to measure the degree to which these processes are regulatory and subjectivizing. The more the process is geared towards *defining* who men are or should be, the less ethical and the less liberating it may become.

For Funk, forming anti-rape men's groups are an important way to explore issues and to work at articulating feelings. These groups can combine activism and self-care, the

latter of which is critical because, as Funk states, undergoing a process of re-education alone “seems almost abusive” (1993:110). Funk provides a lot of information on group process and on practical exercises for men’s anti-rape groups. In examining Funk’s position, two different distinctions can be made regarding the degree to which these group processes are subjectivizing. First, there is a difference between process guidelines that are intended to facilitate a smooth functioning of the group and those that aim to direct the content. Funk’s guidelines that stress non-violence and confidentiality (1993:156), or Hornacek’s rule on practicing listening skills, for example, are not the same as Hornacek and Schein’s insistence that the group must accept and study radical feminism.

A second distinction evident in Funk’s work are the often obscured differences between consciousness-raising groups and group workshops. The former implies an exploratory process, while the latter is structured to lead to preconfigured conclusions. As examples, consider the difference between Funk’s proposed group exercise of brainstorming and discussing gender stereotypes (1993:162) and Funk’s workshop plan entitled ‘Men’s Responsibility’ (1993:166). The discussion on gender stereotypes is somewhat open-ended and, at least in Funk’s description of it, creates space for dialogue and for sharing subjective interpretations and experiences. Funk’s workshop plan, on the other hand, has the clear purpose of connecting men’s behaviour to rape via his continuum and imploring men to assume responsibility. It is very similar to his ‘Men and Pornography’ workshop (1993:169), in that while discussion may be encouraged, the purpose is less to explore the issue than to get men to accept a fixed interpretation of the

topic. The structure of the session is geared towards agreeing and acting upon Funk's interpretation.

Workshops are common tools in profeminist men's efforts to spread their message and facilitate change in men, but the distinction between these and consciousness-raising or discussion groups is often elided. In many cases, the difference is slight. Cooper, for instance, has discussed workshops for creating new images of women and an awareness of pornography which does not fall clearly into either category (1995:23-4). While there is an emphasis on discussion and exploration, the structure and purpose of the workshop described by Cooper is to incite reflexivity and direct men towards certain conclusions. Jordan's 'confessional box' exercise similarly attempts to get men thinking and talking about their pornography use (1993:2). The 'confessional box' is not subjectifying in the sense that there is no correct interpretation presented, but it is subjectifying to the extent that it creates a demand for men to examine and verbalize their thoughts and desires. In a discussion group on pornography use presented by Jordan, there is a similar emphasis on self-disclosure (1995:30-2). This group is primarily discussion oriented and does not impose particular expectations in regards to changing behaviour, but it does present pornography as an addiction and explicitly adheres to a self-help format. In this instance, then, the exercises are not dogmatic but nonetheless aim to construct the self as requiring constant interrogation and verbalization.

Examples of workshops and exercises developed and conducted by profeminist men abound. Rex Bradley discusses his experience of attending men's sexuality groups, which are offered at levels from 'basic' sexuality through to the advanced level (1992:227-8). These groups require participants to set aside one hour a day to focus on

the self and do homework relating to the group. The homework exercise involves taking a relaxing bath, breathing and movement exercises, and reflecting on specified topics.

Other profeminist men offer more structured exercises. Stoltenberg, for example, has developed a detailed, interactive workshop for getting men to feel repulsed by and to challenge pornography (1994). Pease has discussed the 'patriarchy awareness workshop' developed by 'Men Against Sexual Assault' (1997:71). This two-day workshop involves group discussions and exercises. While there may be some openness in the discussions, the topics – such as “alternatives to patriarchal power” – clearly establish the direction that will be taken (1997:71). There is now even a profeminist 'ReBOOT Camp' where men receive training in uncovering their own oppressive behaviours, work on their selves, as well as practice techniques for reaching out to other men (Anonymous 1996:6).

The degree to which these exercises attempt to instill reflexivity and constant self-monitoring versus an acceptance of a particular subjectivity is relative and not discreet. There is no clear dividing line between insisting that men need to do or become something specific and efforts that insist men need to always be conscious of their selves.

An examination of the work of Pease helps illustrate this distinction. Three group methods to assist in over-coming patriarchal subjectivities are presented by Pease, including consciousness-raising, collective memory-work, and conversations with interlocuters. Pease has also used each of these as a research method for exploring the subject positions of self-identified profeminist men.

Pease supports consciousness-raising groups because they offer a means to link personal life with the social context, although he warns of the danger of men becoming overly focused on emotions and personal issues (1999:272; 2000a:55). The purpose of

the consciousness-raising group Pease conducted in his research was to identify the difficult issues involved in identifying as profeminist. This was facilitated by a series of open-ended questions addressing the problems and dilemmas profeminist men face (2000a:41-2), and “necessarily involved an interrogation of our masculinity and a questioning of the privileges that are afforded to us by our gender” (2000a:41). These questions encouraged the participants to engage in critical self-questioning.

The most interesting aspect of Pease’s use of consciousness-raising is his acknowledgement that it is not intended to access a ‘true’ identity but rather is used as a way to destabilize notions of a unified self (2000a:144-5). Pease recognizes that all masculinities, patriarchal or not, are socially constituted. Citing Seidler, Pease expresses an interest in avoiding rigid, moralistic positions, while at the same time developing an anti-sexist practice that acknowledges and incorporates an understanding of relationships of power and subordination (2000a:44). Profeminism, for Pease, is a “starting-point for men to constitute non-patriarchal subjectivities and practices” that, if it is to be fully realized as a subject position, “will require the promotion and extension of profeminist discourses and this will be the subject of both psychological transformation and political struggle” (2000a:55).

Consciousness-raising can assist this process and offer men the opportunity to “change their experience of sexuality” through “a re-education of their minds and bodies.” A “progressive sexual politics” for profeminist men requires that men “live the changes out in our lives” (Pease 2000a:43-4). The types of issues that came up frequently in Pease’s consciousness-raising discussion involved dealing with the ‘perpetrator within’ (2000a:42-3), feelings that participants are never ‘doing enough’ to

combat sexism, problems around the extent to which profeminist men should ignore their own needs, and concerns over whether men can trust themselves (2000a:44-6). While Pease does not dictate specific criteria required to be profeminist, he does establish the framework within which profeminist identities and practices must develop and advocates for constant work on the self.

Pease also uses group conversations with interlocutors, such as feminist-identified women and gay men, as both a research method and a way for profeminist men to evaluate their own ideas and to introduce different subject positions into their theorizing (2000a:146-7). This helps address conflicts and can bridge gaps between ideological positions and group practices, resulting in an increased potential for successful alliance politics. This method is based on Alain Touraine's method of 'sociological intervention' (Pease 2000a:146-7), and in many regards is a modified version of Pease's consciousness-raising method that includes participants with different structural and subjective locations.

'Memory-work' is an additional group method used by Pease. It is adopted from the work of Frigga Haug and aims to assist in deconstructing the role of experience in the construction of subjectivities and the relationships between experience, subjectivity, and dominant ideologies. The goal is to "develop ways of subverting our own socialization" (Pease 2000a:145). Three steps are involved in the 'memory-work' group process: first, participants are asked to write about particular sorts of memories; second, these memories are collectively analyzed by the group; and third, memories are reviewed and re-appraised according to different theoretical perspectives.

Pease's use of 'memory-work' is particularly interesting because he specifically applies this approach to objectification:

Participants were asked to recall a situation where they were conscious of objectifying a woman's body as a basis for sexual arousal. This could be an incident involving use of pornography, staring at a woman who is a stranger to them or using objectifying images while having sex (2000a:85).

Pease's account of this session presents numerous stories, provided by the participants (all of whom identified as profeminist prior to the session), of instances where they were conscious of looking at woman's bodies, thinking about pornographic images while having sex, and, for instance, 'Tony's' feeling of letting himself down by having masturbated to visual depictions of women's bodies (2000a:87-8). Objectification, or not relating to women 'holistically,' and pornography use are constructed negatively in Pease's question. While the 'memory-work' session was oriented towards group discussion and exploration, the outcome was inevitable given the apparent acceptance of pornography use and objectification as entirely unethical practices. The session had little to do with evaluating whether objectification or pornography are indeed key problems, but rather focused on discussing how these problems are manifested in the history of the participants. In doing so, the need to examine the self is accentuated and the personal stories present objectification and pornography as indisputably problematic. The extent to which these are problematic versus the extent to which the discourse has constructed profeminism as requiring a flat-out rejection of these is not discussed.

The work of Pease is useful because he identifies with postmodernism and does not want to construct a 'true' profeminist identity. However, the methods he uses to spur and direct men's reflexivity contain explicit messages regarding what is unethical conduct. Pease may be interested in expanding the range of subjective possibilities, but

he is also interested in constructing objective boundaries as to which subjectivities can be accepted as profeminist.

A final way for profeminist men to work on themselves is by talking with and challenging other men's sexism (Flood 1990c, 1991; Funk 1993:4,118; Jones 2000; Klement 1996:13; 'Men's Rape Prevention Project' 2000; 'Real Men' 2000). Educating other men is not only a way to work on the self, but it is also a way to further the cause of profeminist men. In order to be effective at confronting sexist jokes and attitudes, profeminist men such as Flood have provided lists of potential scenarios and ways to intervene responsibly (1991). These interventions are required in order to authentically identify as profeminist. Put differently, one must address sexism in other men and spread profeminist beliefs as a sign of dedication and as a means to further one's own consciousness. Without actively pursuing anti-sexist politics, claims to a profeminist consciousness are susceptible to questions of commitment.

There are differences in the degree to which work on the self emphasizes accepting preconfigured codes of conduct versus a constant reflexive monitoring according to the self's relation to power and oppression. These two approaches are not discrete and are evident in all of the exercises on the self discussed in this section.

5.5 Telos: Political Selves and Inter-subjective Bonding

This section looks at the type of end-product desired through these processes, the ideal subject position or *telos* that is presented in the discourse (Foucault 1985:27-8; 1997:265). There is some difficulty in presenting this, as many profeminist men call for radical change in men's sexuality but do not always explain exactly what is meant.

There is a tendency to problematize men's sexuality and avoid articulating what constitutes an ethical sexual self.

Many profeminist men, as discussed in Section 3.6, do not believe that any man has yet secured an ethically ideal identity and that all men can do more to combat their own sexism and patriarchy. The direction for change is presented within the discourse, and while a few profeminist men do claim to know the content of a non-oppressive identity, there is generally some uncertainty around the specifics required. As a result, there is a tendency amongst some writers to call for radical changes to men's sexuality without elaborating upon what exactly this means (Barclay 1987; Rutherford 1987). In many cases, the intention is primarily to stir men to action, or the required changes may be assumed to be self-evident. Another reason, as is the case with Jensen (1998:113-5), is that some profeminist men believe themselves to be so inculcated with patriarchy that they cannot trust themselves and cannot truly imagine what would constitute a non-patriarchal world.

Some profeminist men provide an outline of the traits constituting an ethical identity, but these tend to be very broad and are not always applied specifically to sexuality. The magazine *XY: Men, Sex, Politics*, for instance, describes a 'good man' as one who embodies a "healthy, life-loving, non-oppressive masculinity" (cited in Flood 1993-4). Similarly, Flood wants a new culture and men committed to being profeminist, male-positive, and gay-affirmative, and he wants interpersonal relations to be guided by the values of justice, equality and liberation (1993-4). Funk's "greatest vision of 'being a man'" is "a man that lives, breathes, and *is* peace, equality, and justice" (1993:131; emphasis in original). By linking men's sexual identity and conduct with these and other

equally vague values, such as respect, dignity and integrity, Funk believes a “world free of rape,” where everyone is free and where no harm exists, is possible (1993:153). Each of the values presented by Flood and Funk, I will suggest, is open to interpretation and ultimately too vague to provide guidance. They do strike chords with many people, of course, and it is easy to profess them and easy to want their realization. What constitutes their enactment, however, is unclear because they are interpretive and subjective.

Other profeminist men provide a direction for subjective change, such as ‘Men for Change,’ who articulate a ‘personal growth’ approach to revamping men’s subjectivities (2000e, 2000c). The behavioural content of what constitutes an ethical subjectivity primarily relies on presenting emotional development as a moral requirement. This occurs as emotional illiteracy or a lack of spiritual awareness is linked with masculinity and immorality, resulting in prohibitions against *not* reforming the self in therapeutic and/or spiritual terms.

Pease presents a more political agenda for reconstructing patriarchal subjectivities, but does not explicitly describe what constitutes ethical sexual conduct. However, Pease does present an account of *un*ethical sexual conduct. This is an important aspect of the profeminist discourse: while negative prohibitions abound, for instance Pease’s rejection of objectification and pornography, there are few positive endorsements as to what would constitute ethical sexual conduct. Sexuality is treated with suspicion in the discourse and granted a great deal of causality, and, as a result, few profeminist men feel comfortable outlining acceptable sexual subjectivities and practices. The position taken within the profeminist discourse avoids dictating what is a positive identity, and while this may be seen as progressive because it does not tell men *exactly* how to be, the scope and depth of

what men are *not* supposed to be is so extensive that men are left with very little room within which to construct an ethical sexual self.

Despite the problems in presenting a profeminist account of what constitutes an ethical sexual subjectivity and practice, two predominant and interrelated themes are apparent within the discourse. First, men's sexual selves and conduct cannot be separated from politics, and second, sex requires a subjective connection with others and with the self.

The first theme is reflected in comments made by 'Brian,' who believes that intimate relationships need to emerge from participation in political activities and that the two must be congruent (1992:82). Dendy expresses similar sentiments when he argues that political will and sexual desire should not be mutually exclusive (1994). What aligning sexual conduct with profeminist politics requires varies, but there is general agreement on the importance of consent and the self-direction of participants (Ellison 1996:81; Hughes 1993:13), a need to end objectification and the use of pornography (Pease 2000a:84-90; Rowan 1991:31), and the destabilization of heterosexuality and its association with masculinity (Garland 1994; Thomas 1998:335). Getting rid of gender as a basis of social and sexual organization is also given an emphasis (Funk 1993:153; Stoltenberg 1989:30).

Many of the criteria I have listed as political, such as consent and removing gender and sexual orientation as basis for relationships, are also considered necessary for creating more intimate relationships. An inter-subjective emotional connection and its expression between sexual partners is strongly emphasized as a necessary component of a new male sexuality (Fracher & Kimmel 1995:374). Love relationships are also

considered to be a requisite by some profeminist men. Morphett, for instance, writes that, “we have to move to the point where sexuality is an act of love, not of contempt, between people who are not oppressing each other in any way” (1992:8). Some profeminist men extend this to the self, an example being Bevson’s refusal to “jerk-off” and his insistence on “making love” to himself (1977:43). Others extend the importance of knowing and understanding the self in spiritual (Shaw 1996:12, 17) or therapeutic terms (Banks 1995:19; Bradley 1992:228) as a means to construct ethical, emotionally connected relationships.

Refusing the limitations patriarchy imposes upon men’s sexuality and relational capacities is essential for Hughes, whose writing is illustrative of many profeminist men’s views on sexuality. For Hughes, men’s sexuality needs to be “based on touch, sensuality and a spiritual connection with our partners” (1994:24). Reconstructing men’s sexuality and developing meaningful connections with others will require self-disclosure, embodiment, and overcoming objectification. Hughes writes,

Getting over the beauty myth will mean discovering the rest of our bodies, and thinking of our entire bodies as sensitive receptors of other people’s touch and attention, irrespective of what those people look like. This could be confronting at first: to feel our bodies in a different way, to feel trust and to open ourselves up to a real acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the person we are with (1994:24).

Elsewhere, Hughes furthers his emphasis on sexual partners knowing what each other are feeling and the importance of “opening up,” talking and exploring one another in a reciprocal fashion (1993:13). Hughes also presents respect, mutuality, and consent as three important criteria for ethical sexual relations (1993:13).

Ellison’s four “value commitments of an ethical eroticism” (1996:81) are similar to the criteria presented by Hughes. The first value commitment involves appreciating

the goodness of the body, which includes valuing bodily pleasure and being responsive to our bodies. The second commitment is to bodily integrity or self-direction, which is essentially the same as consent, a recognition that everyone should have control over their own bodies. The third criteria, mutuality, is similar to consent but also carries the connotation of requiring sexual interactions to be reciprocal and beneficial to both participants. Lastly, Ellison considers fidelity to be an important value commitment. This final value commitment is different from those presented by some other profeminist men, such as Dendy (1994:3) and Trudiger and Frey's (1995-6) critique of monogamy as a patriarchal institution.

Stoltenberg's conception of truly ethical sex exhibits both themes of connecting sexual conduct to politics and of the necessity of inter-subjectivity. Ethical sexual conduct requires mutuality, respect and consent (1989:36-7) (although Stoltenberg dismisses the meaningfulness of consent when gender is present in relationships (1993:221-2)). It is also important to not care about the gender of the sexual partner, which is supposed to facilitate more expressive sensuality (1989:106), and to unconditionally reject sexual objectification and commoditized sex (i.e. pornography) (1993:308). 'Good sex,' according to Stoltenberg, "expresses an ethic in the relationship's history that is mutually valued because it is considerate and just" (1989:103). Not only is a relational history required, but it also must empower both partners equally (1989:103). Stoltenberg wobbles a bit on the relation between sexual conduct and the social context, for while he insists that sexual conduct must challenge oppressive structures and that the politics of any particular act must be explored, he also insists that ethical "intimacy is untainted by the cultural context" (1989:104). This last

point is a bit odd given that Stoltenberg's entire platform is based on men reconstructing intimacy and sexuality with direct but oppositional reference to an oppressive context.

Each partner must have full control of themselves, or be "self-possessed whole human beings" in order to prevent sexual ownership (Stoltenberg 1993:223). Numerous criteria are presented in Stoltenberg's accounts of ethical sexual conduct, many of which express a need for inter-subjectivity. For instance, Stoltenberg's 'erotic potential' requires,

...mutuality, reciprocity, fairness, deep communion and affection, total body integrity for both partners, and equal capacity for choice-making and decision-making are merged with robust physical pleasure, intense sensation, and brimming-over expressiveness (1989:112).

This is elaborated upon by Stoltenberg in his later work, which emphasizes the importance of having a moral link between partners and affirming one another's human selfhood:

Feeling sexual in selfhood mode [as opposed to 'manhood mode'] is driven by the need to experience our humanity emotionally and physically on the horizontal dimension of selfhood – to feel safe, to feel sustained, to feel seen and not alone, and to bestow the same human entitlement upon each one we *love* (1993:230; emphasis added).

Additional criteria are presented in a chart that aims to assist men in determining whether they are having sex in 'manhood mode' or authentically in 'selfhood mode.' Some of the 'relationship clues' from the selfhood column include: honesty; witnessing each other's subjectivity; mutual respect; affirmative and active consent; enjoyment and shared fun before, during and after; both partners being 'profoundly present' to each other the entire time; 'emotional warmth'; and a 'context of companionship' in which each partner has an interest in the other's interests (1993:231-3). The traits that are associated with 'manhood mode' include: deceit; objectification; manipulation; a lack of consent;

emotional withdrawal or 'anticompanionship'; harassing, teasing, or "some tiny sadism of mastery and alienation;" and fantasizing about someone other than your sexual partner (1993:231-3). In a later article, Stoltenberg elaborates upon his concept of 'selfhood' by joining it with his concept of *moral sonority*, which is the feeling of being completely attuned to someone else's emotions and fully recognizing someone else's value as a person (1998:154-5).

Stoltenberg sees men's sexuality as lacking in numerous criteria that are required for ethical sexual conduct, such as love, emotional bonding, and a relational history. These criteria are similar to more traditional accounts of the relationship between morality and sexuality. Bartlett has commented on this, noting that Stoltenberg's notion of the 'moral self' is a secularized version of Christian conceptions of our 'spiritual side' (1991:26). However, Stoltenberg's criteria differ from many other profeminist men's emphasis on emotions and inter-subjectivity only in that Stoltenberg is more colourful in his language and much more prolific in his writing.

There are some marked consistencies between the importance of inter-subjective connections presented by profeminist men and the 'pure relationship,' 'plastic sexuality,' and 'confluent love' discussed by Giddens. The 'pure relationship' is not directed by external criteria, such as reproduction, but rather is entered voluntarily by parties interested solely in the personal benefits the relationship offers. It is based in trust, which requires mutual self-disclosure (1991:6). These relationships also play a large role in defining identity and constructing the self (1992:75), particularly since sexuality has become a primary means of expression and intimacy (1991:164). Giddens believes that women's increased sexual autonomy and the rising acceptance of same-sex relationships

are indicative of what he terms 'plastic sexuality' (1992:28). Like the 'pure relationship,' 'plastic sexuality' is not grounded in external obligations. 'Confluent love,' another term used by Giddens, is the result of the reciprocal, democratic promise of the 'pure relationship,' and it too brings sexuality and emotional connectedness together (1992:84).

Giddens is far more optimistic about the emergence of democratic relationships than most profeminist men, although both posit that more intimate and mutually beneficial relationships have radical potential for affecting and possibly subverting institutional systems (Giddens 1992:3). For Giddens, changes in relationships are related to the tensions of 'high modernity' and eroding traditions which have, among other things, increased the autonomy of women and constructed personal relationships as the realm for "self exploration and moral construction" (1992:144).

The important similarities between Giddens and profeminist positions is the emphasis on emotional connectedness and self-disclosure as means to create democratic relationships. Indeed, both tend to accept therapeutic approaches to the self and see this approach as facilitating widespread social change. Lynne Jamieson has taken issue with the therapeutic and psychological¹⁸ approach offered by Giddens, particularly his explicit rejection of Foucault's notion that therapy is a regulative technology (Jamieson 1999:481). While I agree that therapy is regulative, I would like to note that this claim does not necessarily imply that all forms of therapy are regulative or that the effects of therapy are always negative for the individual or the social body. Giddens' claim that

¹⁸ Jamieson criticizes Giddens' somewhat deterministic reliance on a psychological approach to parent-child relationships as the basis for developing competency in adult relationships. Giddens' seems to exempt parent-child relationships from his recognition of the fragility of personal life (1999:481).

self-disclosure can be the basis for better relationships is also queried by Jamieson, who suggests that “sorting out fair ways to get things done” may be more important for creating equal relationships (1999:490). This last point is equally applicable to many profeminist writers who prioritize mutual self-discovery and expressive emotions as though they are the only authentic expressions and forms of love. Francesca Cancian makes the important observation that ‘instrumental’ love has been subordinated to ‘expressive’ love and that most studies on men’s ability to love use a “feminine ruler” (2000:317). There is also a class-bias in conceptions of love and emotions according to Cancian, who cites research supporting her position that “poorer people are more likely than they [the affluent] to see practical help and financial assistance as a sign of love” (2000:313).

5.6 Conclusion

Foucault’s prediction that emerging moral systems will emphasize purifying desire, deciphering the soul, and create new forms of ethics that tend towards self-renunciation appears to be accurate in the case of the profeminist men’s discourse (1985:234; 1986:239). Profeminist men purport to offer freedom, personal growth and the possibility of an ethical, non-patriarchal self to men who are willing to undertake processes of self-reformation. These processes are incited by claims that all men are imbued with patriarchy and are contributors to widespread sexualized violence and other harms to women and the social body. Men are encouraged to accept both individual and group practices of self-examination, confession, and personal change that involve, to varying degrees, both constant reflexivity and the adoption of specific codes and

principles. In order to secure the ethical sexual self, men must approach sexuality as an emotional bond and as a political activity. All sexual thoughts, desires and behaviours need to be interrogated and reconstructed such that they are aligned with specific morals and become a way of 'being.'

As I have emphasized throughout this thesis, reconstructing men's sexuality is presented as being ethically and socially necessary for the pursuit of free and egalitarian societies. While the rationale is different, the types of sexual relationships that profeminist men endorse are similar to older, more traditional forms of social organization. For instance, both grant agency and causality to sex such that it is suspected of infiltrating all social intercourse and threatens social harmony.

Understanding sexuality and its relationship to the self is presented as a radical political activity that promotes freedom and can access truth. However, as Foucault points out, this need to interrogate sexuality is one of the ways in which power operates through sex:

...the desire to have it, to have access to it, to discover it, to liberate it, to articulate it in discourse, to formulate it in truth. It [the deployment of sexuality] constituted 'sex' itself as something desirable. And it is this desirability of sex that attaches each one of us to the injunction to know it, to reveal its law and its power; it is this desirability that makes us think we are affirming the rights of our sex against power, when in fact we are fastened to the deployment of sexuality that has lifted up from deep within us a sort of mirage in which we think we see ourselves reflected – the dark shimmer of sex (1978:156-7).

Foucault is saying that sex has been constructed as a mysterious essence in which we search for ourselves and for truth. The desire to 'know' sex is not, as is often claimed, an act of resistance to power, but is rather one of the ways in which our identities and conduct are attached to power and subordinated to it. This circular relationship between

the production of truth and systems of power has resulted in a 'regime' of truth that links sexuality, the individual, and subjectivizing forms of power (1980b:133). For Foucault, the agency granted to sexuality, such that it can reveal truth and has wide-ranging social causality, needs to be rejected (1978:157).

Rose has observed that responsible social citizenship has been normalized and constructed as requiring particular ethical criteria that are rarely achievable (1994:379-80). This normalizing process is regulatory and therefore governmental, as is the equation posited between freedom and constant self-interrogation: "Achieving freedom becomes a matter not of slogans nor of political revolution, but of slow, painstaking, and detailed work on our own subjective and personal realities, guided by an expert knowledge of the psyche" (1990:253). It needs to be acknowledged that profeminist men do maintain an emphasis on politics, and while this is often united with therapeutic analyses of the self, profeminist men are not emblematic of the 'triumph of the therapeutic' criticized by Rose and Taylor for being focused entirely on personal fulfillment (Rose 1990:254; Taylor 1989:508). There are certainly 'new age' tendencies within the profeminist discourse, as is evident in the emphasis some writers place on forms of spirituality and self-realization, but because politics are not abandoned the profeminist position cannot be accused of the self-indulgent individualism that is apparent, I believe, in other men's movements (such as the mythopoetic men's movement).

Profeminist men take a postmodern ethical position that emphasizes the 'other,' although the belief in a non-aporetic, non-ambivalent morality is indicative of a more modernist perspective (Bauman 1991:7-8, 1993:83-4). This belief in the existence of a

universal moral practice is untenable and dangerous. The full pursuit of such an endeavor risks the immoral act of subjecting others to one's own values. As Bauman observes, even when the focus is on the other, 'care' can easily be turned into a form of power and an appropriation of the other as the other's interests are always subject to interpretation (1993:90-1). Taylor also argues that demanding high morals can be damaging, especially when guilt and obligation are used to secure their fulfillment. The requirements of benevolence are not always moral, according to Taylor, because they can inhibit self-fulfillment and self-love, which can in turn lead to self-destruction or violence (1989:516-8).

One of the problems with the term 'morality' is that it does little to distinguish between an autonomous 'moral' realm of 'right' and 'wrong' and forms of governmental subjectification (Dean 1994a:155). Basically, the term can be used to justify almost anything and its relationship to regulating and directing the conduct of others' is often invisible. As is evident in the profeminist discourse, morality is used to link subjectivity to governance and in the process establishes all domains of life as legitimate sites for surveillance and intervention. The way in which conceptions of privacy and individual attributions of meaning are subordinated to the political beliefs of a community is what Judith Butler has termed the "paradox of the personal is political" (1982:171). For Butler, dictating acceptable sexual conduct can be alienating and makes sex "radically public" and open to communal scrutiny. This is evident in the profeminist discourse as, for instance, Steven Schacht and Doris Ewing justify the need for feminists to inspect self-identified profeminist men's personal lives before accepting them as allies (1997:35). Pease takes the same position when he argues that "men must prove themselves worthy

of dialogue before they are trusted as potential allies" (2000a:140). A possible exception is Seidler, who has problematized men's felt need always to be proving themselves (1992b:245). Indeed, profeminist prescriptions for constructing oneself as ethical require a great deal of work and are required as a sign of dedication, as a means to prove one's worth.

Self-invention is a necessity for men who want to construct themselves in opposition to dominant discourses about masculinity and the meaning of being a man. The problem is that the profeminist discourse is regulative in that it attempts to dictate this identity and to define what is political and moral for all men. This is done in opposition to patriarchy, but patriarchy sets the standards for profeminist efforts. Men are urged to rid themselves of anything deemed patriarchal, and since patriarchy casts a wide net, very little is left. Furthermore, men's new subjective selves must consciously and constantly evaluate themselves in terms of patriarchy, and while this is intended to be resistant, a dogmatic interpretation of non-patriarchal life is turned into a life of vigilant therapy and the pursuit of a politically palatable ethical self.

Foucault rejects the notion that there is a correct political identity and he views any such notions as being subjectifying. As Halperin points out, Foucault's concept of *ascesis*, or *arts of existence*, is intended to reflect a form of individualized self-construction that is distinct from disciplining and normalizing forces (1994:108-9). The approach to self-reformation advocated within the profeminist discourse normalizes men and attempts to provide the substance for a new male identity. The non-patriarchal self is required to follow specified rules and to measure one's actions according to preconfigured standards of resistance.

The reason the profeminist discourse is prescriptive is to reduce harm by regulating acceptable subject positions. The problem with Foucault's proposal, as discussed in Chapter Two, is that it lacks any standards by which to evaluate the merits and the potential for resistance or for harm of any assumed identity. Nonetheless, while it may not offer the security sought by profeminist men, Foucault's approach does offer more freedom and the opportunity to avoid the subjectifying effects of the profeminist discourse. Foucault's *ascesis* aims to avoid the ways in which identities can be reintegrated into dominating systems of power through what he refers to as *technologies of the self*.

There is a need to construct a less subjectifying approach to identity that does not completely abandon the possibility of ethical standards of behaviour. The claims of harm to which profeminist men are responding are not baseless, despite a tendency to construct virtually all social phenomena, particularly sexuality, as harmful. Responses to sexualized violence and other social problems need to avoid subjectifying attempts at interfering in all activity and thought.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

There is a need to continue developing strategies that address sexual violence, sexism, and challenge sexual dominance within institutionalized systems. The profeminist discourse's approaches to personal change are not the only options available. No one has a monopoly on moral ways to be 'men.' Claims to know the content of the socialization of men, such as those presented within the profeminist discourse, are necessarily generalized and imprecise. Interpretation is a requisite for such claims, which, while offering insight, always sacrifice other possibilities. This is the constraint of purporting 'truth,' of claiming access to an objective understanding.

The 'truths' of men presented in the profeminist discourse are a form of moral regulation in that they construct all men as morally deficient and as contributors to forms of harm against women and the social body. These claims are applied to 'male sexuality' and linked to violence against women and the maintenance of patriarchy. The knowledge used to support these links is presented as objective, and so the content of proposed new male subjectivities similarly assumes the status of representing truth and a morally correct approach to reforming the self.

I indicated in Chapter One that my intention is not to deny the problems profeminist men respond to, but rather to inquire as to whether the ramifications of profeminist approaches are indeed resistant and liberating to women and men. Such an endeavor requires moving beyond reactionary positions that claim society is degenerating and that everything possible must be done to change it and ourselves. These claims tend to present intuitive moral arguments as critical thought, and they necessarily involve

presenting the social as uniformly plagued by one predominant problem. In order for social and personal redemption, clear solutions to the overarching problem are advocated. To go beyond this means accepting that the social is not unitary and always faces a plenitude of problems, and that solutions to each problem lead – perhaps inevitably – to new problems, both theoretical and practical. To judge the merits of arguments for social change, or for the status quo for that matter, requires detailed analysis and an acceptance of imperfection. In the case of the profeminist discourse, the problems and solutions presented need to be considered not just in the light of sexual violence and patriarchy, but also in terms of their relation to governance. Security and freedom cannot be promoted together as though they are one and the same. Both require the other, but the appropriate balance between them cannot be grasped intuitively and is not objectively self-evident.

I have raised four broad and related areas within the profeminist discourse that are not adequately theorized. These include the overarching conception of patriarchy, the essentialist presentation of masculinity (or masculinities), moralizing and essentializing approaches to ‘male sexuality’ and sexual conduct, and efforts to direct the subjectivities and practices of men. Each of these broad areas encapsulates a number of more particular profeminist arguments and positions that have been discussed, and I will briefly elaborate on some of the specific problems with the discourse’s approach to these four areas.

Profeminist men’s presentation of an overarching patriarchy represents an acceptance of a macro-theoretical approach that reduces all social phenomena to a single, undifferentiated and ahistorical source. Its implementation provides answers and

justifications for just about anything, but it has little meaning itself other than to reference vague notions of an all-encompassing male power (or, for some, an *almost* all-encompassing male power). The dichotomous presentation of power and social organization, with two clearly demarcated sides, is simplistic and neglects the abundance of contradictions and exceptions evident in social life. It is also incapable of incorporating change, which, particularly with regards to gender, has been significant in the West during the short span of the last thirty years.

The problem with profeminist theorizations of patriarchy is intertwined with conceptions of masculinities. There is a tendency to presume that male socialization is always successful in branding all men with a thorough patriarchal consciousness. For those writers that do acknowledge the presence of a multiplicity of discourses affecting men's subjectivities, these are limited to a small number of discourses representing other forms of structural oppression. The consistency demanded by theories positing the unrelenting power of patriarchy prevent incorporating difference beyond recognizing differential access to power. Indeed, power is considered definitive of all masculinities, such that the subjective content of men's identities, and differences between men, are only measured and evaluated in terms of it.

The emphasis on power prevents profeminist men from considering meanings and interpretations of any man's identity and practice beyond attaining or maintaining power over the 'other' (mostly women). This is posited to be the truth of men, as defining who men are and as an explanation for men's thoughts and actions. While many profeminist men recognize that men's lives aren't perfect, this is also explained through patriarchy and men's power. Many also argue that men aren't inherently bad, but by

referencing men's socialization and presenting it as consistent and thorough, the discourse nonetheless essentializes men's identities. I am not suggesting that identity categories are not relevant in social theory, but rather that their use needs to be tentative and not used to represent the fundamental truths of those who fall within them.

Sexual relations, and 'male sexuality,' are deduced from theorizations of male socialization within patriarchy and moralistic approaches to sex. These moralistic approaches perceive sexuality as a dark area of suspicion and danger that needs to be interrogated and carefully managed. The result of profeminist theorizations of male socialization and the moral ambiguity of sexuality has been the uncritical acceptance of a universal, socially constructed 'male sexuality.' Regardless of sexual orientation, 'male sexuality' is deemed to be uniformly aggressive, dangerous, unemotional, and to portray consistent meanings. Pornography plays a major role in the social construction of 'male sexuality.' Sexually explicit materials are deemed to be both direct causes and effects of patriarchy and the 'objectification' of women, a term that is used to problematize any and all thoughts that do not recognize the full subjectivity of another. Inter-subjective connections are paramount in profeminist attempts to reconstruct sexual relations, although the emphasis on emotions, commitment, and relational history, for instance, represent less of a *reconstruction* than attempts to re-appropriate elements of previous relationship models. The insistence that characteristics such as emotions are absent in men's sex lives is highly questionable, especially when this claim relies on particular interpretations as to what is truly expressive and emotive. The emphasis on emotional connections based on an idealized heterosexual model is also problematic in that it sets the standards by which gay and bisexual men are to be evaluated.

The moral ambiguity of sexuality and the suspicion directed towards it has led to a great deal of agency and causality being granted to it within the profeminist men's discourse. This is evident in the frequency of the claim that sex is how men realize their gendered identity.¹⁹ The agency of sex is also evident in problematizations of masturbation and fantasy. While some profeminist men question absolute denunciations of masturbation and fantasy, there is nonetheless a general agreement that these activities have social effects. As such, they too are potential sites for personal change and political activism.

The widespread agency attributed to sex and the moralistic tone of the profeminist discourse is particularly apparent in critiques of active-passive dynamics. For many profeminist men, any hint of a power dynamic is problematic; others go further and present this dynamic as defining property relations both within and beyond sexual encounters. This is construed as being true regardless of sexual orientation or the tentativeness and reversibility of sexual roles, which signifies that many profeminist men view the 'active' role as inherently aggressive and the 'passive' role as inherently victimizing. The solution seems to be to ensure that everyone is a sexual subject without an object (Bauman 1998:32), a position that maintains binary distinctions and ignores the possibility that the enjoyment of sexual relations depends on being both subject and object, active and passive. In my view, the problem is in the way these are constructed as binaries and then tied to gender.

A related problem within the discourse is the treatment of the penis. Profeminist critiques of phallocentrism rely on notions of the penis as the phallus and as a dangerous

¹⁹ If this is the case, then profeminist debates on the role of being a 'bread-winner,' or the role of sports, for example, as sites of gender construction are thrown into doubt.

‘weapon.’ Further, men are critiqued for not having a holistic appreciation of their bodies and more creative sexual imaginations. I agree with both of these latter claims, but neither of them in themselves can be concretely connected to harm and neither is the sole domain of men. Taking the position that the penis is dangerous because of its association with sexual assault and power is problematic because it challenges men’s very embodiment, something that few men are willing to change for political reasons. Such a problematization is a fruitless political maneuver that does little more than moralize men’s bodies and reify a connection between the penis and power.

All of these issues – viewing pornography, phallocentrism, sexual activity, etc. – are connected to social harm and violence against women through the continuum of sexual violence. Linking all sexual thoughts and activity to harm relies on totalizing depictions of patriarchy, radically conservative interpretations of sexuality, and a belief that everything – including all thoughts – *necessarily* have detrimental social effects. Any positive aspects of sexuality are rejected under this paradigm, which advocates for the possibility of non-oppressive sexualities but assumes none already exist. The logic behind the continuum, if extrapolated, would indict everyone for social harms. For instance, regardless of whether one is dedicated to environmentalism or labour rights, everyone has and will do something detrimental to the environment and everyone will buy something that was manufactured in abhorrent working conditions.

Measuring contributions to social ills in an all-or-nothing manner provides little insight for constructive resistance and maintains the possibility of absolute and separate ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides. These distinct divisions are also used to attribute responsibility, such that any indication that one has contributed to harm, however indirectly, results in

the assumption that one is responsible for all related and often severe forms of harm. This is the logic that indicts all men in all forms of sexual violence because all men have somehow contributed to a 'rape culture.' These contributions can take a wide array of forms, including, for example, sexual thoughts that do not consider the subjectivity of a real or hypothetical person, viewing sexual imagery or reading sexually explicit material, focusing on the penis during masturbation, and, for some, having consensual sex within patriarchy. Each of these activities is pathologized to different degrees and presented as further evidence of men's patriarchal indoctrination.

Since all men are tainted by patriarchy and are held responsible for all injustices against women, all men are also urged to undertake a thorough process of self-reformation. These processes range from directed explorations of the self to adopting prescriptive modes of thinking, feeling and acting. The goals of self-reformation are not only intended to decrease or eliminate harms against women and one's own complicity in them, but also to attain a degree of liberation of the self from patriarchy. The non-oppressive, ethical self is required to embrace forms of emotionality, and often spirituality, that are considered to be absent from men's lives. Therapeutic means are often commended as ways to discover the self and secure a commitment to constant self-criticism and self-interrogation.

The new subjective positions that men are encouraged to adopt are presented as being morally self-evident. In other words, reforming the self is considered to be an indisputable and morally necessary response to social ills and the proposed new self is presented as inherently ethical. I cannot argue with the intentions of the discourse in terms of the desire to not hurt others and to contribute to the well-being of the social

body. However, attempts to dictate acceptable moral practice usurp the moral authority of the individual and can result in less morality as men can uncritically adopt standards that are purported to guarantee a moral self. The emphasis on reshaping men's subjectivities such that men are deemed to have an intuitive knowledge of sexism and patriarchy does not solve the problem. Further, the assumption that a morally unambiguous identity is possible or desirable is problematic because, as I have argued, no such identity exists. Many profeminist men would agree with me on this last point, but their agreement would be centered on the argument that men can never assume that they have worked on themselves sufficiently. By insisting that men always need to work on themselves in accordance with a predetermined and purportedly anti-sexist format is subjectifying since the availability of moral identities is severely curtailed. Constraining the identities available to men leans towards an endorsement of conformity, which, while the intent may be ethical, is nonetheless an unethical imposition. It is unethical because it fails to account for diversity and assumes that therapeutic self-indulgence should be the priority for all men. It tells men how to think, act and feel according to particular interpretations of men and their relation to the social, and while security is sought, the effect is to regulate and dictate acceptable subject positions.

I am very much in favour of men exploring their identities and experiences in light of feminism and problems such as violence against women. I am also in support of destabilizing cultural notions of masculinity and of breaking connections between gender and biological sex. In these regards, I support Connell's (1995a:233-4) notion of recomposing cultural traits of gender such that they are open to everyone as practices and not attributed to biological sex. This approach can avoid bipolar moral distinctions

between sets of practices deemed corrupt and those deemed innocent. It also does not construct specific requisite criteria for obtaining an ethical identity.

In contrast, the profeminist discourse provides predetermined content for men to reference and incorporate if they want 'authentic' anti-sexist, ethical identities. Further, the profeminist discourse is insistent that men must consciously think of themselves *as men* within patriarchy throughout all of their endeavors. The logic behind this assumes that constantly being conscious of one's socially ascribed identity is a form of resistance against it, but, as I have argued throughout this thesis, such an approach risks reifying gender. If everything men do needs to resist cultural perceptions of masculinity, then men are forever tied to the identity they want to relinquish and patriarchy retains its position as a central reference point in all thought and action. Such an approach affirms and reproduces the principle of a binary by ensuring that arbitrary distinctions between masculinity and femininity are transposed into all areas of life (see Bourdieu & Passeron 1977:33-4). This, I argue, occurs regardless of the intentions of profeminist men.

It is preferable, I have argued, to emphasize the gaps and contradictions in the supposedly universal construction of masculinity. While many profeminist men acknowledge that cultural conceptions of masculinity are unattainable, these conceptions are nonetheless used to define men. The suggestion that all men uncritically embrace masculinity and accept its standards needs to be rejected. Such a rejection destabilizes and problematizes notions of a universal masculinity and can be used to advocate for the social acceptability and availability of a plethora of new meanings and characteristics from which men can construct themselves. By thoroughly rejecting a binary of

masculinity/femininity, in both theories of what is and what could be, profeminist men could actualize their claimed intent of destabilizing gender boundaries.

I have not dealt extensively with structural systems and institutions. This is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, anti-sexist political activities are important and need to be pursued beyond the level of personal change. Sex is no exception, and I wholeheartedly agree with Connell's (1995b:390-1) notion of democratizing sexual social relations by working to equalize resources and ensuring that cultural resources are available such that everyone can have autonomy over their sexual decision making. This is very different from efforts to tell men what and who to be and from pronouncements dictating acceptable sexual subjectivities. Such prescriptive dictates go beyond knowledgeable and informed consent and attempt to create security by imposing identities and ways of life that are discursively constructed as moral. Controlling the subjectivity of others is not an acceptable means to pursue social change and ultimately can create more barriers to new ways of thinking and the possibility of constructing more equitable societies.

The issue of control is a key element within the profeminist discourse. Control is an unimaginative response to social problems, moral uncertainty, and the intense suspicion that permeates the discourse. Indeed, profeminist politics center on a deep suspicion of men, and it is this suspicion that inhibits the discourse from adequately recognizing difference, granting men moral autonomy, destabilizing gender categories and, ultimately, it is this suspicion that leads to attempts to control debates on men and masculinities. Ironically, control of the self, of others, and of public debate are often considered masculine traits.

The control and self-governance exercised within the profeminist discourse cannot be adequately considered independent of the discursive formations within which it exists. In particular, feminist discourses have played a large role in the construction of the 'rules' and the preponderance of moral capital within the profeminist discourse. While initially this may have been difficult to avoid, it has not been forced upon profeminist men. For instance, the refusal of many profeminist men to critique any version of feminism or to delineate which feminism they support has been a choice. If profeminist men are serious about creating new options for men, and I believe they are, then their unconditional acceptance of 'feminism' is unhelpful. Indeed, using the term 'feminism' as though its meaning is clear and undisputed is comparable to proclaiming one's allegiance to the 'left.' Both mean little beyond a basic desire for gender, economic, or other forms of equality, and there is constant antagonism within both feminist and leftist circles. The definition of equality, the means to pursue it, and the type of society envisioned can only be vaguely deduced. To commit oneself uncritically to either position, and to hope that this will foster the acceptance of those already involved, is not only self-effacing: it is a refusal to accept one's own moral agency and to fully engage with the issues and politics involved. Uncritical and unambiguous certainties may seem more comfortable and stable, but, for me, there is far more anxiety involved in defending a preordained certainty than there is in accepting uncertainty.

Foucault (1988b:120-1) has pointed out that the 'left' often simply reverses predominant values and truths and presents these as liberating. While this can secure the notion of a 'good' and 'bad' side, and provide moral capital, it reifies a false dichotomy between the absolutes of freedom and repression. Rather than impose new truths and

continue morally righteous critiques of everything associated with the 'bad' side, discourses advocating for social justice need to destabilize these dichotomies and create the epistemological space for new ideas, critiques and debates. This space can be used not only to explore and advocate for the possibility of the revolution, but also to ask the politically essential questions of what form such a revolution should take and whether it will create more freedom or new forms of subjectivization. It is my hope that this thesis contributes to such an effort.

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