DEGENDERING AND REGENDERING: RECOMPOSING MASCULINITIES THROUGH ANTI-SEXIST MASCULINITY PROJECTS.

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by
Bradley W. Wing

Dr. Mary Jo Neitz, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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presented by Bradley W. Wing,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Mary Jo Neitz

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Professor Peter M. Hall

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Professor Barbara J. Bank

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Professor Catherine Holland

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Professor Glenn Good

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

The tremendous transformations in gender relations over the past century bear witness to the fact that constructions of masculinities and femininities can and do change. Most research has focused on the ways in which women's revolutionary entrance into paid work has not resulted in revolutionary changes in the division of household labor and childcare in homes (Hochschild 1989). Research on the "stalled revolution" has been and continues to be much needed. However, we also need to study those who are on the cutting edge of social change (Risman 1998a). This study proposes to explore some of the prospects for progressive change in gender relations by taking seriously the attempts of some men to adopt anti-sexist ways of acting and being in the world.

An interest in the politics of masculinities is anything but new. Scholars have been interested in "the man question" (how to change men and whether men can or will change) since at least the late 1960s and early 1970s (Astrachan 1986; Clatterbaugh 1997; Messner 1997; Segal 1990). However, actual studies of anti-sexist and egalitarian men have been rare, partly because few such men were to be found. This qualitative interview study of twenty-one anti-sexist men is intended to add to this body of knowledge.

This research documents what I call the masculinity projects of men who are in the process of de-gendering and re-gendering relations with their intimate partners (Risman 1998a; Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998). To speak of degendering and regendering (or recomposing) does not imply that these men are moving toward androgyny but rather that they are attempting to reduce some gender differences while

maintaining others in attempts to work out less hierarchical and dominating ways of being men in the world.

To find such re-composing of gender is significant, because it addresses the fundamental basis of gender inequality. As Lorber (1994, 2000, 2005) argues, gendering produces structured gender inequality. In the process of gendering, men and women are constituted as different. This difference is used to justify unequal treatment, with men as a category valued more highly than women and with men imbued with power over women as a category. Given this, it is important to undo gendering to be able to restructure our gender relations along more egalitarian and inclusive lines. Although it does not seem possible to envision a non-hierarchical society from the perspective of the present, we must work toward that end anyway. As Christine Delphy (1993) points out,

> We do not know what the values, individual personality traits, and culture of a nonhierarchical society would be like, and we have great difficulty in imagining it. But to imagine it we must think that it is possible. Practices produce values; other practices produce other values (P. 8).

If we take seriously the need to eradicate gender inequality, we need to understand how men might be engaging in projects that involve de-gendering (even as they engage in re-gendering) of gender regimes such as the family. A focus on their practices and their projects may point the way toward a better future.

This research is important to cultural sociology, because it demonstrates the usefulness of a relational, practice-based sociology that is historically situated, that eschews imposing structural and cultural determinism, and that refuses to assume too much creative resistance or voluntarism. It overcomes persisting dualisms such as micro/macro, structure/agency, and society/individual. This project is also valuable to the field of gender studies, because there are actually very few empirical studies on men

practicing equality in their everyday lives. This study also complicates our understanding of how to conceive of masculinities in relational terms. The meaning of the way anti-sexist men do masculinity is established relationally, with anti-sexist projects taking shape in contrast to other masculinity (and femininity) projects, even as they may share certain practices and draw upon similar discourses. Many scholars of masculinities assert that we should conceive of masculinities as configurations of practice, but too often authors resort to static categories and typologies of masculinities.

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

In chapter two, 'Theoretical Framework,' I discuss the theoretical framework for my study. I lay out the research problematic and ontological and epistemological assumptions for the study, demonstrating how my inquiry is inspired by one of the central concerns of social theory: how social structure and human agency are interrelated. As I explain, a relational approach to this problematic calls for a cultural account of human action that locates it in relational settings by examining both cultural practices and cultural meaning systems. I end the chapter with a discussion of agency, considering the implications of recursive and more expanded definitions of agency for a study of change in gender relations.

Chapter three, 'Methodology and Methods,' describes the methodology and research methods used in this study. This chapter builds on the discussion of ontology and epistemology in chapter two, explaining how the qualitative method of inquiry called institutional ethnography is well suited for accounting for the social organization of gender relations by grounding the investigation in the everyday/everynight worlds of

research participants. In this chapter, I discuss my sampling procedures, how I conducted my qualitative interviews, and how I analyzed the data.

In chapter four, 'Experiences and Relationships That Support Anti-Sexist Masculinity Projects,' I discuss men's anti-sexism and consider the experiences that influenced the men in this study to take it up. I demonstrate that the men draw on the experience of being different from other boys and men, which led them to question culturally ascendant images of masculinity and to cultivate relationships that facilitated challenging conventional expectations for being men. In particular, I discuss the influences of emotionally distant fathers and of strong mothers. I end by discussing the particular importance of close relationships with strong women.

In chapter five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance,' I discuss the implication of the variety of politics in which men struggle over the meaning of masculinities and the social organization of the gender order. I consider how cultural representations of men's attempts to effect anti-sexist change (or, at the very least, the prospect that they might try to do so) influence how men's anti-sexism is understood and practiced. I examine the masculinity projects of the men in this study in terms of an anti-sexist masculinity politics that calls for fundamental change in gender relations to benefit both men and women in particular ways. I also look at the way the men engage in strategies of degendering and regendering to practice anti-sexist exit politics.

In chapter six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality,' I discuss how the men in this study approach the moral dilemma of how to produce 'fairness' in their relationships with women. Drawing on a feminist

distributive justice literature, I account for the different meanings of 'fairness' apparent in the relationships adopted by more therapeutically inclined men and by those who are more focused on feminism and social justice. I do this by noting that the men adopt two different vocabularies of motives, one focused on needs and the other focused on equity and equality.

In chapter seven, 'New Fathers,' I look at parenthood. I begin by revisiting the cultural representations discussed in chapter five, focusing in more detail on the optimistic imagery of the 'New Father.' Although I do find evidence of significant change in parenting among the men in the study, as signified by my use of the term parenting instead of fathering, I also note that the image of the 'New Father' does promote somewhat unrealistic assumptions about the extent to which most men have changed as fathers. As I explain, the reason for my reservation is that most of the fathers in this study appear not to have completely rubbed out gender differences in parenting and are not completely equal parents. At the same time, I point out that one of the most encouraging findings of this study is that, when men do engage in degendered parenting and do become very involved fathers with their children on an everyday basis, the impact of their attempts to make anti-sexist change are extended, because they may be taken up by their children.

CHAPTER TWO – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

AN HISTORICAL AND RELATIONAL PROBLEMATIC, ONTOLOGY, AND EPISTEMOLOGY FOR THE SOCIAL[1]

In this project, I engage with what has been called the problem of action,[2] one of the foundational problematics of social theory that had its origin in the attempt to explain the nature of the modern Western world and its liberation from the traditions of feudalism. I adopt a practice approach that recasts this problematic (and its associated epistemology and ontology) by refusing to dichotomize agency and system in favor of conceiving of the social in relational and processual terms. This means rejecting the metanarrative of classical Western modernization that typically informs this problematic, because this master narrative denarrativizes and abstracts socially embedded agency[3] by setting up a false dichotomous opposition between society (system/structure/order) and the individual subject that is presumed to be struggling for autonomy from society (agency) (Ortner 1996b; Smith 2004, 2005a; Somers 1994; Somers and Gibson 1994; Somers 1996). This metanarrative establishes the terms of inquiry for sociology by posing for us the question of how society is possible given that it is composed of an aggregate of autonomous individuals. In the process, this metanarrative produces a distorted picture of order by resorting to the metaphor of a unified social system[4]

[1] Epistemologies are linked to the problematics we devise, which, in turn, are based on the answers we are prepared to give to the questions we pose. As such, they should be commensurate with each other. Further, problematics should determine the epistemology adopted, not the other way around as is so often the case in mainstream sociological practice.
[2] This problematic has also been framed as the problem of order (Parsons 1937).
[3] The actual activities of actual people that are grounded in the material conditions of their existence.
[4] Social structure is often allowed to go undefined and without an empirical reference despite its centrality in most mainstream sociological analyses (Hays 1994; Sewell 1992; Smith 2005a).

(Vaughan 1993) that is capable of subordinating and determining the actions of the individual subject via external constraint (or constraint through internalization of norms and values).[5]

The alternative offered by a practice approach to sociology (Connell 1987, 1995; Hall 1987, 1995; Ortner 1984, 1996a, 2006a; Connell 1987, 1995) involves thinking carefully about how to understand the *interrelationship* of social structure and human agency – to see that social structure constrains and enables agency in particular ways and also that agency makes (and potentially unmakes) social structures over time. This means taking seriously the dialectic process identified by Berger and Luckmann ([1966] 1990): "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man [sic] is a social product" (p. 61). The importance of this dialectic is that it establishes the ontology of social relations in the everyday practices of people. While 'society'[6] may be experienced by us as having an objective reality independent of our activities, it is actually produced by those activities, a process of construction that is subsequently often (but not always) misrecognized for what it is actually accomplishing. However, this does not mean that what has been called 'society' is merely epiphenomenonal. It is important to understand this as a process of mutual constitution. As sociologists, we must strive to understand how social relations are produced and reproduced, and it is equally important for us to consider how actors, who are so much products of their cultural context, are ever able to

[5] The dichotomy locks the two concepts together, so that, even when agency is defined in terms of voluntarism or free will, structure is inevitably reinscribed. The notion of a subject that is capable of resisting structure presupposes the constraint of structure that it is supposedly capable of evading (Abrams 1980; Somers 1996).

[6] Of course, we should substitute a concept such as relational setting for 'society', since society is a falsely totalizing and naturalistic way of thinking about the social world (Somers 1994:625-627).

transform the social conditions of their own existence instead of just reproducing the same social relations over and over again.

As Dorothy Smith has consistently pointed out, the problematic that I am attributing to a practice-based sociology was originally established for us in Karl Marx's relational sociology, one that did not claim to transcend indexicality[7] (Smith 2004, 2005a). She suggests that we look to the first part of *The German Ideology*, in which Marx and Engels (1973) frame the problematic in this way: "Individuals always started, and always start from themselves. Their relations are the relations of their real life. How does it happen that their relations assume an independent existence over against them? And that the forces of their own life overpower them?" (as cited in Smith 1987:99-100). It is important to recognize how this formulation sensitizes us to the need to understand practice in terms of power relations. Implicit in this problematic is an assumption that, while we produce social relations, those social relations form the basis of sets of ruling relations that, in turn, come to permeate, organize, and regulate our work and activities in our everyday/everynight lives. Social relations are definitely produced in local settings, but the local actualities of people's practices are subdued by monological institutional discourses. In this analysis, the reification of social structure is dissolved into an ongoing process in which the constraint (and facilitation) of the past-in-the-present is understood in terms of the coordination of people's activities through their participation in translocal institutional complexes, where their activities and experiences are represented selectively if at all. Although these ruling relations objectify the activities that produce them, they are always socially constituted and therefore subject to resistance and change in addition

[7] An indexical sociological analysis is one that attends to the actualities of people's everyday existence and that refers back to those actualities instead of attempting to subdue those actualities through the use of abstractions that have no concrete reference outside of sociological discourse.

to reproduction.[8] The task for sociologists is to develop indexical analyses of the local and translocal operations of these ruling relations to reveal their workings to the people who participate in them.

If we wish to recognize the essential dialogic of the social[9] (Smith 2005b, 2005e), then we need to adopt an historical epistemology[10] that is committed to sociological practices that "create an essentially dialogic relation between concepts and the actual social relations and organization in which the adequacy of the former to explicate the latter is subject to test" (Smith 2005a:57). Investigations of social relations must be grounded in the historical circumstances of their production. This means that categories or concepts of the social must not abstract outside of the historical and cultural context of one's inquiry in the search for invariant, universal laws about the social world (Smith 2004; Vaughan 1993). Although the processual nature of social relations will inevitably escape our grasp in the attempt to account for them, it is important not to move away from definite social relations in an attempt to generalize about the social world. Because the analysis should be indexical, research findings are "intended to extend rather than displace people's expert knowledge as local practitioners of their everyday worlds" (Smith 2005a:52).

[8] Agency is not to be reduced only to resistance and creativity (Hays 1994; Sewell 1999). A practice-based sociology understands agency both in terms of reproduction and change.

[9] Experience of the world for humans is always social. Embodied subjectivities experience the world in meaningful ways, because experience is only intelligible to us through culture. It is represented to ourselves and to others through language and significant symbols (Mead 1934).

[10] I use this term to characterize an epistemology that is sensitive to the fact that the social has to be approached diachronically – as existing in time (and I would add space as well). Somers (1996) uses the term "historical epistemology" to refer to a project of historical sociology for understanding "'how' competing sets of ontologies of identity, political life, society, and so on gain currency and shape the empirical problems we encounter as historical sociologists" (p. 73). The epistemology that I adopt here is congruent with that of Somers, though it is directed to different ends.

CULTURE

The question of how to understand the interrelationship between structure and agency is one that calls for a cultural analysis, because culture gives us a way of apprehending how subjectivities are constructed in particular places and times (helping us to understand how and why people are constrained and enabled to act as they do) and also how people enact particular everyday/everynight practices that reproduce or transform the culture that 'made' them (Hays 1994; Ortner 2006c; Sewell 1999). I draw on Sewell's (1999) characterization of culture as simultaneously practice and a system of meaning and symbols, and I regard this as an attempt to make use of the new-old concept of culture[11] (Ortner 2006c) rather than as an attempt to *replace* the concept of culture with narrative, discourse, or practice (Abu-Lughod 1991; Brightman 1995).

A number of scholars have opposed a conception of culture as practice to that of culture as a system of meaning, viewing the former as a corrective for the fact that the latter is too synchronic, overly coherent, excessively consensual, and mistakenly holistic.[12] However, as Sewell (1999) points out,

> System and practice are complementary concepts: each presupposes the other. To engage in cultural practice means to utilize existing cultural symbols to accomplish some end. The employment of a symbol can be expected to accomplish a particular goal only because the symbols have more or less determinate meanings – meanings specified by their systematically structured relations to other symbols. Hence practice implies system. But it is equally true that the system has no existence apart from the succession of practices that instantiate, reproduce, or – most interestingly – transform it. Hence, system implies practice. System and practice constitute an indissoluble duality or dialectic: the important

[11] According to Ortner (2006c), the new-old concept of culture "still embodies the notion, which was part of the classic concept, that culture is both enabling (allowing people to see, feel, imagine, understand some things), and constraining (disabling people from seeing, feeling, imagining, and understanding other things)," but that it "takes on a very different cast when it is embedded in narratives of power and inequality" (p. 14).

[12] Among a number of other claimed faults (c.f. Brightman 1995).

> theoretical question is thus not whether culture should be conceptualized as practice or as a system of symbols and meanings, but how to conceptualize the articulation of system and practice (P. 47).

THE SEMIOTIC DIMENSION OF CULTURE – NARRATIVE AND DISCOURSE

As I have discussed, an account of human action that doesn't resort to external constraint (or internalized constraint in the form of norms and values) requires us to understand agency as embedded in relational contexts. The experience of *becoming*-in-relations is one of narrativity, because social life is storied (Carr 1986). Our experience of time is not just a succession of isolated events (Mead 1932). Instead, we make sense of the sequence of events as episodes through a social process of causal emplotment in which we selectively appropriate certain happenings from a potentially limitless array of social experiences and make connections between them (Somers 1994, Somers and Gibson 1994). This is a fundamentally social and *dialogical* process, because the relational settings in which people live out their lives offer fields of discourse[13] in which people can participate and over which they can struggle in an attempt to establish preferred meanings (Steinberg 1993, 1998, 1999a, 1999b).

As Somers (1994) and Somers and Gibson (1994) point out, when we locate ourselves within multiple emplotted narratives, we endow ourselves with identities. In the process of constituting narrative identities,[14] we draw upon repertoires of stories as guides for understanding how to act in particular circumstances and across situations. This concept of narrative identity allows us to account for action without imputing

[13] Somers (1994) and Somers and Gibson (1994) offer the concept of a network of public narratives instead of discourse.

[14] This notion of narrative identity is established in contrast to categorical approaches to identity that create "'totalizing fictions' in which a single category of experience … will over-determine any number of cross-cutting simultaneous differences" (Somers 1994:610). Categorical approaches are similarly contested by so-called practice "theory" approaches (Connell 1987; Holland and Eisenhart 1990).

"objective" interests to people or presuming that it is possible to go inside actors' heads to get at their sentiments, values, or beliefs. Instead, the tasks for analysis are 1: to elicit people's ontological narratives, stories used by people to make sense of their lives by defining who they are, a precondition for knowing what to do (Somers 1994:618), and 2: to attend to how people construct those ontological narratives from discourse, inter-individual streams of semiotic practices and signs that occur in distinctive formations, or genres.

By temporarily arresting and stabilizing the flow of meanings (Steinberg 1998:854), genres of discourse are developed to make the coordination of our activities possible. However, our social relations are rarely, if ever, innocent of power. Establishing generic discourse also allows power holders "to objectivize and naturalize their power-laden definitions and meanings" in the form of hegemonic discourse (Steinberg 1998:854). To the extent that they are successful in converting the dialogue of discourse into a monologue, power holders can define the common sense of life for those who draw upon the same discursive field.

Still, this monologue is never complete and total as might be implied by the notion of a dominant ideology; hegemony is always contingent and incomplete. The limitation on the ability of a hegemonic discourse to suppress alternatives is based in the nature of discourse itself, which is multivocal, in flux, and subject to contention. Challengers *may* be able to establish a counter-hegemonic dialogue by exploiting silences and contradictions in the hegemonic discourse (Steinberg 1999a). In the process, although challengers may innovate and attempt to produce alternative discourses, they must build upon and reference hegemonic discourse within a field. They are not free to

select and combine genres in any way they choose, because genres are relationally bound together with other genres in discursive fields that are constituted by

> cultural assumptions as to how and when a genre can be applied to a social situation, the extent to which it can relate to other genres, institutional rules for its use (especially in relation to other genres), and the relations between the actors themselves (particularly in terms of recognized hierarchies and power differences) (Steinberg 1999b:748).

While the boundaries of these discursive fields are neither fixed nor clear, they do present particular opportunities for and limits to expression.

THE PRACTICE DIMENSION OF CULTURE

Cultural sociology that examines practice, often called practice theory, is not really a theory at all but is actually an argument about how culture and human activity are linked. As Ortner (2006a) points out,

> the fundamental assumption of practice theory is that culture (in a very broad sense) constructs people as particular kinds of social actors, but social actors, through their living, on-the-ground, variable practices, reproduce or transform – and usually some of each – the culture that made them (P. 129).

In conjunction with narratives and discourse, the cultural sociology of practice provides an alternative to the traditional view in the sociology of culture that had assumed that values (Parsons) or ideas (Weber) provide the ends toward which action is directed (Swidler 1986, 2001b). The older tradition in the sociology of culture accounted for action by going into actors' heads. Practice sociology eschews this move and focuses instead on routine activities (Bourdieu 1977), organizational routines and conventions (Becker 1982; Hall 1987, 1995) and cultural projects (Connell 1987, 1995; Ortner 1996b, 2006d; Sartre 1963).

Practice also implies a particular argument about the interrelationship of social structure and human agency. A practice-based sociology conceives of social structure as constraining and enabling agency in particular ways and conceives of agency as making (and potentially unmaking) social structures over time (Hall 1987, 1995; Hays 1994; Sewell 1992). While practice theorists may largely agree on this processual conception of social structure, they do not all agree on how to conceive of agency, as indicated by the distinction to be made between routine and habitual action and cultural projects. Therefore, I will briefly review some of the central issues in the sociological debate about agency and make an argument for a particular conception of agency before specifying the research questions that drive this study.

AGENCY

Critics of the concept of agency have often associated it solely with resistance, free will, and a privileging of the Western, bourgeois subject. As I have pointed out, because practice-based sociology rejects the dichotomy between society and individual as false, agency is reconceptualized as culturally-constituted and structurally-embedded. Obviously, not all practice sociologies treat agency in the same way. For instance, Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens have been so concerned to avoid imputing free will that they have utilized a recursive conception of agency that is generally considered to be best suited to examining social reproduction and to be less able to account for social transformation that is the result of intentional, active, and self-reflective agents.[15] As Sherry Ortner (1984) pointed out in her classic article, "Theory in Anthropology Since

[15] This privileging of reproduction is a recurrent problem in the reproduction, production, and practice literatures (Ahearn 2001:117-120; Connell 1987:94-95, 2006:254-255; Emirbayer and Mische 1998:1003-1004; Holland and Eisenhart 1990:26-42; Ortner 1996b:1-3; Sewell 1992:13-16).

the Sixties," there is an irony at the core of the practice approaches developed by these theorists:

> actors' intentions are accorded central place in the model, yet major social change does not for the most part come about as an *intended* consequence of action. Change is largely a by-product, an *un*intended consequence of action, however rational action may have been [emphasis in original] (P. 157).

In the sections that follow, I will discuss the recursive conception of agency promoted by Bourdieu and Giddens, and I will suggest that we consider adopting an expanded conception of agency that also allows us to account for how people project intentionality into the future.[16] I will argue that to adopt such a conception does not need to imply that we are unconcerned with routine activities, habits, and taken-for-granted senses or that we privilege free will at the expense of social structure.

RECURSIVE DEFINITIONS OF AGENCY

Bourdieu (1977) offers a practice perspective that accounts for the duality of structure without conceiving of agency in terms of intentionality. His central concept, the habitus, refers to an individually unique system of unconsciously internalized and embodied dispositions that incline actors toward thoughts and practices that are consistent with the limits of structure. While this conception does allow for a form of agency, since the habitus is recursive (both structured by structures and structuring of structures through the practice that it influences), the habituated action directed by the "conductorless orchestration" (Bourdieu 1977:70) of habitus tends to be reproductive of external objective conditions. Though social transformation of structures is possible, it is unlikely, and it is certainly not the result of intentional attempts to make change.

[16] This is particularly important to me given that my research focuses on men who are engaged in attempts to effect change.

Giddens (1979) agrees with Bourdieu (1977) that there is a habitual level to the majority of everyday action, though he does build into his conception of agency a limited potential for intentionality. He argues that all human subjects are always at least somewhat capable of some degree of discursive penetration into the workings of the institutions that they produce and reproduce (Giddens 1979:5, 71-72) and that their ability to act on and sometimes against the structures that both constrain and enable their action is based on a capacity for discursive reflection about their situated practices. However, because he wishes "to promote *a recovery of the subject* without lapsing into subjectivism [emphasis in original]" (p. 44), Giddens is critical of "notions about the purposive character of human action" (p. 41). His position on social practices, then, is that they:

> do not 'express' the intentions of social actors; nor on the other hand do they 'determine' them. Intentions are only constituted within the reflexive monitoring of action, which however in turn only operates in conjunction with unacknowledged conditions and outcomes of action [emphasis removed] (P. 41-42).

Therefore, Giddens asserts that, while "intentionality is a routine feature of human conduct" (p. 56), this "does not imply that actors have definite goals consciously held in mind during the course of their activities" (p. 56).

Giddens does conceive of the subject as discursively knowing, but this is qualified by the recognition of both the existence of practical consciousness and unconscious motivations for action, which often produce unintended consequences. While human agents have the ability to reflectively monitor their conduct and to rationalize that action (both to themselves and to others) by giving discursive accounts, action is also often based on skillfully applied tacit knowledge, or "knowledge embodied in what actors

'know how to do'" (p. 73) that actors are not able to formulate discursively. This practical consciousness enables actors to engage in taken for granted courses of action routinely. For Giddens, this relatively unmotivated and habitual action is the primary basis of the continuity that is the social reproduction of structures through practice (p. 217-219).

As I explain, there is reason to be skeptical of recursive conceptions of agency, because they do not allow for us to adequately address the intentionality of action and the possibility that people would engage in systematic reflection about their practices to change those practices over time. An ability to account for this is particularly pertinent in a study such as this, since the focus is on men who are *attempting* to produce change both in their lives with their partners and (for some at least) in the gender order. At the same time, it is true that recursive conceptions of agency can account for some change over time. While people may recursively or habitually engage in the same practices over time, when social conditions change, habitual action will not produce the same expected results, which can prompt change in future action (Swidler 1986). This is relevant for the contemporary period in which I am conducting this research, a time of changing conditions in which marriage is becoming increasingly deinstitutionalized (Cherlin 2004) and when the 'traditional' strategies for solving the moral dilemma of how to work out the social organization of families and intimate relationships between men and women are no longer widely accepted and practiced (Gerson 2002).

AN EXPANDED DEFINITION OF AGENCY

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) critique practice approaches influenced by Bourdieu and Giddens for promoting a one-sided conception of agency that emphasizes

the recursivity of social structures by focusing largely on habitual, repetitive, routinized, and taken-for-granted practices. At the same time, they do not suggest that we merely substitute a similarly one-sided conception of agency that stresses either purposivity and goal-seeking, a conception that they believe is promoted by the rational choice and phenomenology traditions, or decision-making and judgment, which they associate variously with Habermas (1990, 1993), Gilligan (1982), and Haraway (1988), among others. Instead, they argue that, when one or another dimension (iteration, projectivity, or practical-evaluation) is conflated with agency itself, "we lose a sense of the dynamic *interplay* among these dimensions and of how this interplay varies within different structural contexts of action [emphasis in original]" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998:963). The solution, they argue, is to turn to pragmatism.

I fully agree that a pragmatist perspective is useful for adequately exploring agency, insisting as it does that the human experience of temporality is one of *social* emergence (as opposed to merely a succession of isolated instants). Because humans are embedded in multiple temporally evolving relational contexts, they must continually coordinate with others through experience-based (and text-based) interindividual territories (Smith 2005e)[17] to refocus past and future in order to act in the present. The emphasis on interindividual territories is important. It reminds us that agency is always a dialogical process in which actors engage with others within collectively organized contexts for action. Even individual action carried out alone is social action.

[17] Although Emirbayer and Mische (1998) refer to intersubjectivity when discussing the relational nature of temporality, I agree with Smith (2005e) that Volosinov's notion of interindividual territory is more apt, because it directs our attention to the two-sidedness of language (which serves as the basis of social organization for humans) whereas intersubjectivity takes as its starting point *individual* subjectivity.

Drawing on this pragmatist perspective, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) offer this useful definition of agency:

> the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by the changing historical situations [emphasis removed] (P. 970).

In this view of agency, the three temporal orientations of agency are preserved, allowing one to examine habitual (or iterative), projective, and situational evaluative elements of agency and their *interplay* across time in response to structural contexts.

When we examine this interplay, it is possible to also acknowledge that,

> as actors alter or shift between their agentic orientations, dialogically reconstructing the internal composition of their chordal triad, they may increase or decrease their capacity for invention, choice, and transformative impact in relation to the situational contexts within which they act (Emirbayer and Mische 1998:1003).

It is also possible to see that different situations influence agents to emphasize particular elements of agency (iteration, projectivity, or practical-evaluation) and hence influence whether and how actors will reproduce structures or transform them.[18] As Emirbayer and Mische (1998) assert,

> The agentic orientations of actors (along with their capacity for inventive or deliberative response) may vary in dialogue with the different situational contexts to which (and by means of which) they respond. While human agency represents the possibility for imaginative distancing from (and communicative evaluation of) received structures, agentic processes themselves assume diverse empirical forms in response to the specific contexts within which action unfolds. We might therefore speak of the double constitution of agency and structure: temporal-relational contexts support particular agentic orientations, which in turn constitute different structuring relationships of actors toward their environments. It is the constitution of such orientations within particular structural contexts

[18] A fine empirical example is Eliasoph's (1996, 1998) study of civic practices. As she demonstrates, certain contexts make civic engagement more likely than others, and people create the contexts in which they interact through cultural work, the most central of which for her is the practice of talk.

> that gives form to effort and allows actors to assume greater or lesser degrees of transformative leverage in relation to the structuring contexts of action (P. 1004).

Since the focus of this study is on intentional attempts to make anti-sexist change by 'doing' and 'undoing' masculinity in particular ways in intimate relationships with women, I am particularly interested in the situations in which men can exert "transformative leverage." Since I will make extensive use of the concept of cultural projects, it is best to discuss in more detail what is intended by that term.

PROJECTS AND SERIOUS GAMES

Although a practice-based sociology recognizes agency, it does not begin with individual actors. Rather, the irreducible unit of analysis should be people-in-(power)-relationships-in-projects (Ortner 1996b:13), because this dissolves the dualism of objectivism/subjectivism by reminding us of the mutual constitution of agents and structures. Connell (1995) offers this useful definition of projects:

> Social practice is creative and inventive, but not inchoate. It responds to particular situations and is generated within definite structures of social relations. Gender relations, the relations among people and groups organized through the reproductive arena, form one of the major structures of all documented societies. Practice that relates to this structure, generated as people and groups grapple with their historical situations, does not consist of isolated acts. Actions are configured in larger units, and when we speak of masculinity and femininity we are naming configurations of gender practice. 'Configuration' is perhaps too static a term. The important thing is the *process* of configuring practice. … Taking a dynamic view of the organization of practice, we arrive at an understanding of masculinity and femininity as *gender projects*. These are processes of configuring practice through time, which transform their starting-points in gender structures [emphasis in original] (P. 72)

Therefore, the concept of project allows us to account for the trajectories of interactive and culturally embedded processes of engaging in social coordination and power struggles with others to infuse life with meaning and purpose by marking cultural and

institutional boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and by working out the social organization of interests associated with the subjectivities that are created by this cultural work (Ferree 2003; Ortner 2006d; Sewell 1992).

I make an issue of power here very intentionally, because this is a study of men who are engaged in attempts to make change in gender relations, a cultural project that leads them to engage with local and extra-local relations of domination and inequalities. As I explain in Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance,' the men I interviewed are engaged in cultural projects that are bound up in masculinity politics, "mobilizations and struggles where the meaning of masculine gender is at issue, and, with it, men's position in gender relations" (Connell 1995:205). While some of their projects may be focused mostly on changing their individual lives, all of them pose implications for broader change. For this reason, I feel that it is useful to also make use of Sherry Ortner's concept of serious games. She makes a distinction between cultural projects that are "simple 'goals' for individuals, as in the case of the fairy tale heroine who wishes to grow up, marry the prince, and live happily ever after" and projects that are "full-blown 'serious games,' involving the intense play of multiply positioned subjects pursuing cultural goals within a matrix of local inequalities and power differentials" (Ortner 2006d:144). In this sense, the men's dissident masculinity politics are definitely serious games that involve doing more than merely reacting to the power of culturally ascendant images of masculinities, even when their projects entail an attempt to *give up* power rather than to claim it (see Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance'). Indeed, these men are claiming the right to have projects that

those who deploy hegemonic projects would deny them, because they are embracing the possibility of an alternative world not structured by hierarchical relations of domination between men and women and among men.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

One of the questions that I posed as I entered into this project is what makes it possible for men to engage in anti-sexist masculinity projects? How is it that these men have come to question their masculinity practices and male privilege? What experiences do they have in their lives to make such projects more likely? What sources of support do they draw upon to be able to effectively practice their projects? The answers to these questions form the basis for Chapter Four, 'Experiences and Relationships That Support Anti-Sexist Masculinity Projects.'

I also posed questions about the masculinity projects the anti-sexist men I interviewed have taken up. What can we say about the serious games in which they are engaged? What sorts of practices do they adopt in their attempts to work out their masculinity projects? To what extent are their projects manifested as attempts to produce intended change? Are there inconsistencies and contradictions in their projects such that some of their practices, at least some of the time, produce conditions that may lead toward anti-sexist transformation while other practices produce conditions that reproduce gender inequality? How do their masculinity projects manifest as masculinity politics? Do they explicitly conceive of their masculinity projects as political projects, or do they eschew conceiving of them in political terms? When they work out the meaning of gender for themselves, what do they problematize and what do they take for granted? How do they conceive of the scope of the intended change of their masculinity projects?

What genres of narrative and discursive resources do they draw upon to construct their masculinity projects? How do they represent their projects to themselves and others? How do they position themselves in relation to cultural representations of masculinities and femininities? How do they position themselves in relation to cultural representations of masculinity politics? The answers to these questions are explored in Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance,' Chapter Six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality?' and Chapter Seven, 'New Fathers.'

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

As I established in the previous chapter, a sociology that is sensitive to practice is one that takes as its ontological starting point the assumption that social relations "come into being only as the doings of actual people under definite material conditions" (Smith 1999:25). Furthermore, I argued that a sociology that takes culture seriously is one that assumes that people's everyday/everynight experiences are embedded in relational contexts in which those experiences are only rendered sensible through narrative emplotment. Since epistemology must be consistent with ontology, the presumption of a materialist and narrative foundation calls for an epistemology that is based on the assumption that the way to know about people's experiences is to ask them to produce experiential accounts, dialogic co-constructions that represent their bodily experiences through narratives. In this chapter, I explain how institutional ethnography (DeVault 1999; Smith 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2005c) offers a methodology that is based on these ontological and epistemological assumptions. I also discuss the specific research methods that I employed to collect and analyze the data.

METHODOLOGY

As a method of inquiry, institutional ethnography calls for researchers to take account of the embodied standpoints of the people we study as a starting point in *explicating* the social organization of their worlds. This involves respecting people as knowing subjects and asking people to tell of their everyday/everynight experiences with the intention of producing accounts of the extra-local organization of that

everyday/everynight experience by examining institutional connections, the relations across and among various sites of activity, and the coordination of these sites via ruling regimes and their texts (DeVault 1999). In this way, institutional ethnographers avoid suppressing the subjectivities of the people they study by treating them as research objects and subjecting their lives to sociological explanation.

Beginning with the actual as presented by people's dialogically constructed accounts of their experiences does not mean framing one's inquiry in terms of the problems and concerns articulated by research participants (Smith 2005d). Instead, while inquiry may be influenced by those concerns, the purpose of inquiry is to examine how everyday/everynight lives are connected to a larger set of social relations that are typically not directly observable from the standpoints of people within their everyday/everynight lives. Soliciting data from multiple standpoints from multiple participants gives the perspective that makes this possible.

Using this method of inquiry, issues of generalization are reframed. The intention is to account for social relations in the making in order to explore the institutional order. The institutional order (in this case the ruling relations of the gender order), though historically specific and historically constructed, generalizes across many local settings of people's activities. By entering through a focus on everyday work/practices and moving to the institutional, institutional ethnographies produce knowledge that is grounded in the particular but that, at the same time, is applicable to a range of settings. As George W. Smith (1998) says, "Each informant, as a knowledgeable participant, provides an account … from his [sic] own location. It is the general ontological character of the institutional

form itself that makes for the general applicability of research using this method" (p. 312).

METHODS

SAMPLING

My sampling process involved two strategies. First, I used a snowball sampling procedure. I asked everyone I knew for referrals for a study of straight men who care about gender equality and who work with their partners to share decision-making, housework, and/or parenting equally. I also asked participants in the study to recommend potential participants from their social networks. Second, I advertised through email and through paper fliers. I sent requests for participation to the departmental email distribution lists for the Sociology, Women's and Gender Studies, Social Work, and History departments. I also advertised through fliers at the School of Medicine and at a local social welfare office. Although my advertising efforts yielded a few participants, most of the participants I eventually interviewed were recruited through referrals from feminist networks. In total, I interviewed 21 men.

Initially, I was inclined to use a screening survey to ensure that I was finding men who actually practice egalitarianism as opposed to merely espousing egalitarianism as a principle that they did not in fact practice. I decided against doing this, because I am not interested in setting myself up as an arbiter of who is "doing it" and who is not and because I decided that it would be much more interesting to recruit a range of men who are engaged in a variety of practices.[19]

[19] I did decide not to include one potential participant. During the first and only interview with this person, I found him to be likeable and interesting, but it became obvious to me that, while this man supported the idea of gender equality in the work place in principle, he is not particularly interested in egalitarianism in

I utilized 'dimensional sampling' (Arnold 1970) to select from among the potential participants that I located. This strategy involves selecting participants as cases based on important 'dimensions' in which one is interested. The intention is to complicate the analysis (Becker 1998) and establish what conditions make an attempt to give up the patriarchal dividend possible (and what constrains attempts to do so). The particular dimensions that I prioritized were age, relationship status, and parental status. I also viewed race/ethnicity and level of educational attainment to be important dimensions, but I was less successful in recruiting and sampling men for diversity on these dimensions.

I felt that it was important to talk to men from a range of ages, because I believed that men of different ages would have different life experiences that might make particular masculinity projects more or less likely. It makes a difference when talking to men depending on their experiences of: the beginning of a career, relocating to take a job, downsizing or layoffs from jobs, beginning of a long-term partnership or marriage, the birth of children, divorce or the break-up of a long-term partnership, the experience of becoming disabled, the illness of family and loved ones, the death of parents or other family members, and so on. Experience of these sorts of liminal transitions produces new experiences that potentially call for men to adopt new practices and to reexamine familiar and established ones. For instance, while the birth of children to couples is often a joyous occasion that deepens emotional connections within couples and between couples and their extended families, this event also creates a variety of scarcities (time, sleep, leisure,

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his personal relationships with women. He made it clear to me that he wants a 'traditional' relationship with his future wife and that he's actually anti-feminist in various ways. I do not report from that interview, though that conversation did inform my study by making me think about what it means to say that I am studying men who care about gender equality.

financial, etc.) that potentially call for new divisions of labor and changes in paid work schedules. These changes affect both relationships and men's masculinity projects in complicated ways depending upon the contingencies and conditions of particular people's lives. It is worthwhile to pay attention to these differences in experience when accounting for men's anti-sexism.

When thinking about men's lives in historical and cultural context, it is also clear that there should be birth cohort effects in how men of different generations live and practice masculinities based on their particular experience of broad-scale cultural and institutional transformations. For instance, the 1960s and, especially, the 1970s mark the acceleration of the transition from the companionate marriage 'blueprint' to an individualized marriage 'blueprint', with increasing emphasis on self-development, increasing flexibility in and negotiation over roles within marriage, and increasing emphasis on communication and openness in confronting problems (Cancian 1987; Cherlin 2004). Intimately connected to this shift were momentous changes, including the women's liberation movement and other movements for social justice, the beginning of the era of unrestricted divorce, the large scale explosion of women's labor force participation, the shift from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, movement toward the acceptance of cohabitation as a legitimate alternative to marriage (or perhaps more commonly as a legitimate prelude to marriage and remarriage), and the expansion of a therapeutic culture (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 1985; Furedi 2004; Nolan, Jr. 1998; Rieff [1966] 1987) that promotes introspection and "expressive individualism" (Bellah et al. 1985).

The post-WWII baby boom generation came of age during this time. The older men of the boomer generation may even have had to reevaluate relationships with women that were established before many of these changes became widespread. All men in the baby boom generation had to contend with these changes in one way or another, especially in their relationships with women. Subsequent cohorts came of age in a social environment that was profoundly changed by these developments. In many cases, it could even be possible for younger men to take these historical changes in relationships, marriage, and work for granted. In some cases, younger men may even have been raised by feminist mothers. At the same time, post-baby boomer generations came of age during the "stalled revolution" (Hochschild 1989), when changes in men's lives slowed down even as women continued to make changes in their participation in paid and unpaid work (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robinson 2000; Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie 2006). These younger men also witnessed the ascendancy of cultural images of 'New Men' and the subsequent disparagement of those same images (Astrachan 1986; Chapman 1988; McMahon 1999; Messner 1993; Mort 1996; Nixon 1996), transformation in representations that leave little mainstream cultural legitimacy for men who wish to adopt anti-sexist masculinity projects.

Another reason for wanting to recruit a somewhat age-diverse sample is that it would have been all too easy to recruit mostly young college-aged men, particularly given the fact that I conducted this research in Columbia, Missouri, a mid-sized, Midwestern college town with one state university and two colleges. While I did not want to exclude young men, I felt that men who were post-college aged would have a different set of experiences that could inform my questions about work and family in

more than just a speculative way. In the end, I recruited and interviewed men aged 21-55 years of age. Six of the men were in their 20's, seven were in their 30's, six were in their 40's, and two were in their fifties at the time of the interviews.

Parental and relationship status were also important dimensions for my sampling. About half of men (10 out of 21) were fathers at the time of the interviews, with children ranging in age from two months old to twenty-one years old. I was definitely interested in talking with men who were in what they defined as long term and serious relationships, but I did not want to privilege this group in my sampling by excluding men who were not currently in such relationships. I'm very satisfied with this decision, because some of the men who were most reflective about their relationships and their everyday practices in those relationships were men who were currently not married and, in one case, divorced and not currently in a relationship. Ten of the men were not married at the time of the interviews, while the remaining eleven men were married. Of the married men, nine were in first marriages, and two were in remarriages. Of the men who were not married, four were not in relationships at the time of the interviews, two were in long term relationships with no intention of ever marrying, two were in dating relationships, and two were engaged to be married. Of the men in relationships, four indicated that they were not currently cohabiting with their partners.

Although I explicitly recruited straight men for this study, I did not screen out men who did not identify as straight. Social identities are always complicated. Sexual identities are no exception, and the range of actual sexual practices often includes more diversity than categories for sexual identifications would suggest. I let the men decide if participation in this study was relevant for them. All of the men indicated to me that they

had been in sexual and/or romantic relationships with women in the past, and they were either in relationships with women at the time of the interviews or assumed that they would be in relationships with women again in the future. Three of the men said that they identify as queer, one typically refuses to answer questions about sexual identification but says that he lives a straight life, while the rest indicated that they are straight.

My sample was fairly homogenous in terms of race and ethnicity. I believe this was largely a consequence of my snowball sampling strategy, which tended to produce men who were more similar to each other than they were dissimilar. The relative lack of racial and ethnic diversity in Columbia was also a factor. I asked the participants to self-identify their race and ethnicity. Sixteen of the men identified as white, one identified as half-Jewish/white, three identified as Jewish, and one man identified as Latino.

Last, my sample turned out to be very well educated overall. This is common in studies of anti-sexist and feminist men[20] (Blaisure and Allen 1995; Deutsch 1999; Ehrensaft 1990; Hertz 1986; Kimball 1983; Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998; Schwartz 1995). In their study of what they called 'post-gender' families, Risman and Johnson-Sumerford (1998) argued that a high level of educational attainment (and the ability to attain a high-paying professional career) are necessary (though not necessarily sufficient) pre-conditions for women to be in a structural position to be able to negotiate fairness in relationships with men. It's also the case that research consistently shows a positive relationship between college education and gender detraditionalization (Astin 1993; Bryant 2003; Etaugh and Spandikow 1981; Funk and Willits 1987; Lottes and

[20] See Christian (1994) for an exception in a study of anti-sexist men. See Mack-Canty and Wright (2004) for an exception in a study of feminist parents.

Kuriloff 1994; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Renzetti 1987). In any case, all participants in this study were either college students or had a college education. Two participants were currently undergraduates at the time of the interviews (one was a non-traditional student), five had Bachelor's degrees, ten had Master's degrees, three had Ph.D.'s, and one had an Ed.D.

INTERVIEWS

I relied on qualitative interviews[21], open-ended and unstructured conversations about the participants' everyday experiences and practices. The intent of the interviews was to explore the variations in how men construct anti-sexist masculinity projects, reasons for their engagement in those projects, conditions that constrain and facilitate taking them up, and their experiences of practicing these projects. These interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed.[22] I asked the participants to decide where they wanted to be interviewed. I conducted ten interviews in participants' homes, ten in their offices, eight in my office, a few in coffeehouses, one at my home, and the rest in meeting rooms on campus.

All names used in this study are pseudonyms to preserve the confidentiality of the data. In virtually every case, I offered to let the participants choose their own

[21] Initially, I had planned to conduct ethnographic observation of the meetings and events of 2 activist groups in order to observe the context in which collective masculinity projects are produced. I wanted to focus on the talk and other cultural work that is necessary to engage in an alternative masculinity politics (Eliasoph 1998) so that I could better understand how masculinity projects are produced and carried out in the everyday/everynight world and also so that I could make a comparison between the masculinity projects of men in organized and bounded settings (Neitz 1994) that are directed toward and explicitly political and activist project of social change and the projects of men who are constructing masculinity projects in the contexts of their private lives. I solicited permission to observe a men's anti-sexist and anti-rape group on campus, and I conducted observations of their meetings for a couple semesters. I failed to locate a second similar organization, and I ultimately decided that the data I had collected about the men's group was not as interesting or relevant as the interview data.

[22] Quotations are reported verbatim except that I occasionally deleted repeated words and filler words such as 'um' or 'uh'. I also occasionally insert parenthetical statements to clarify a speaker's meaning.

pseudonyms.[23] Only Ted Evans and Tucker Kinsey took me up on the offer.[24] In some cases, I also disguised particular identifying details about the participants and their lives. A table detailing information about participants is available in Appendix A.

I began interviewing on March 5th, 2006, and I finished interviewing on February 26th, 2007. I interviewed the majority of participants twice, though four participants could only commit to one interview each, while one participant agreed to talk with me three times. Two of the participants talked to me for five and a half hours each, while one participant talked with me for one hour. On average, the combined interview time for each participant was three and a half hours.

The interviews were similar but not identical. The interview guides are available in Appendix B. I used a core set of questions, but the interview guides were flexible enough to allow the conversation to follow interesting leads and lines of discussion. I let the participants influence the direction of the interviews by encouraging them to talk about whatever was of interest to them. I also encouraged them to ask me questions throughout the interview, which they sometimes did. I also focused on picking up and following the markers dropped by the participants whenever possible (Weiss 1994). Overall, the interviews were relaxed, and the participants talked freely. As the interviewing progressed, I followed up on emerging themes raised by participants in subsequent interviews with other participants.

[23] I stopped this practice when it became clear that they did not seem to care what they were called.
[24] I had to reject Ted's choice of pseudonym, because it was too revealing of his identity. Tucker also asked me to name his partner Becky Sue.

ANALYSIS

As I have explained, institutional ethnography requires an attention to everyday/everynight practices in relational contexts. As such, my task is to engage in a secondary dialogue (Smith 2005b) with the interview data I collected in a primary dialogue with the participants of the study. This involves embarking on a process of discovery in there is an opportunity to expose preconceptions (including theoretical presuppositions) that I held about anti-sexist men and their practices before beginning the research[25] and to learn how to represent the social organization of their experiences that may not be wholly visible to them or others.

While the analysis is emergent, beginning as it does in everyday/everynight experiences and then proceeding on the basis of the particular stories told by participants, it is not grounded theory in the sense that analysis is conducted inductively to produce a theory that may be refined and evaluated over the course of a study (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001). Instead of generalizing beyond local settings to produce theory with concepts that are presumed to have the property of universality (Smith 2005c) and that, therefore, are divorced from those local settings, institutional ethnography explicates the social organization of relational contexts. As such, I intend for this to be regarded as an 'interested' account that tells us something meaningful about how the participants of this study are both facilitated and constrained in their attempts to practice anti-sexist masculinity projects and also whether and how their projects pose implications for particular kinds of personal and collective change. In the process, by examining how these men's masculinity practices are both shaped by and directed toward resisting

[25] As an example, I did not anticipate finding that so many of the men would have been in therapy or the influence of a therapeutic culture on the particular masculinity projects that some of the men adopt.

gender inequality, I hope to bring the textually-mediated ruling relations of the gender order into view.

I attend to discourse, but I'm careful not to allow discourse to displace actual subjects in the analysis. Instead, the goal is to treat fields of discourse as mediating between people, as "an actually happening, actually performed, local organization of consciousness" (Smith 1999:134). Toward this end, while I identify a variety of discourses: popular discourse about changes in masculinities and about 'New Men', therapeutic discourse about the moral boundaries of the relationship between self and other, and feminist discourse about equity and equality, I consider the ways the participants in this study dialogically engage with these discourses. To do this, I look at how their talk and practices express the "intentions, perspectives, experience, and social organization" (Smith 1999:140) of the speech genres with which they are engaged and also how they 'talk back' to these discourses by questioning, resisting, and attempting to rearticulate them in various ways.

CHAPTER FOUR – EXPERIENCES AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT SUPPORT ANTI-SEXIST MASCULINITY PROJECTS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I review relevant prior research about anti-sexist men and attempts by men and women to establish egalitarian relationships. I then consider experiences that make men's engagement with anti-sexism more likely. As I show, many of the men in this study had the experience of being different (or at least *feeling* different) from other boys when growing up. This experience encouraged these men to question conventional expectations about masculinity. In some cases, it also encouraged men to empathize with oppressed groups based on a feeling of being marginalized and excluded. I also focus on important relationships that influenced these men to want to engage with anti-sexist masculinity projects. For instance, I show that the men are very likely to establish their projects in a reaction against negative exemplars such as 'traditional' men[26] and emotionally absent fathers. I also note the central importance of relationships with women for motivating the men to take up projects of change and in influencing how these projects take shape. As Deutsch (2007) points out, "Men sometimes need and want love and care from women enough to be willing to trade power for it. Love for mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends may even be a force that propels some men into becoming allies in a feminist movement" (p. 122).

[26] Despite the fact that so-called 'traditional' families are better understood as historical exceptions (Coontz 1992, 2000; Stacey 1996), representations of 'traditional' families and 'traditional' men still carry a tremendous amount of weight in defining 'the' family and men's responsibilities within 'it.'

A SELECTIVE REVIEW OF STUDIES OF ANTI-SEXIST AND FEMINIST MEN AND ATTEMPTS TO CREATE EGALITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS

In *The Making of Anti-sexist Men*, Christian (1994) found that the majority of the men he interviewed had experienced a combination of "two interacting and reinforcing influences in their lives: (a) early life experiences which departed from conventional gender experiences; and (b) adult experience of feminist influence, usually in a close relationship with an active feminist" (p. 183). However, Christian actually found some diversity in their non-conventional gender experiences. He claimed that it would be unlikely for anti-sexist men to develop an anti-sexist outlook without one or more of the following types of experiences that he documented among the men in his study:

- Non-identification with traditional fathers or identification with nurturing fathers;
- Experience of strong mothers, usually involved in paid work;
- Parents who did not conform to conventional domestic roles;
- The influence of sisters or brothers – as examples to follow or reject or as younger children for whom to care;
- Childhood friendships with girls, friendships with both sexes in situations where gender was not emphasized, or adverse experiences of macho behavior by other boys or male teachers; or
- Influence of feminist women with whom they had close relationships (1994:20-21)

Similarly, Kimball (1983) found that the egalitarian men in her study of '50-50 marriage' were not threatened by strong women, because they had experience of a mother who worked outside the home. She argued that such mothers were the single most critical factor in encouraging men to become egalitarian, though she also noted that some men sought out strong women in a reaction against mothers who lacked a firm sense of self. For those men who did not have a personal history that encouraged sharing, wives who insisted on equality accounted for their egalitarian marriages. She also found that

the men in her study felt that they were different when they were younger and that this helped them to avoid adopting more 'traditional' ways of being men.

In her study of the marriages of two-career parents, Hochschild (1989) found that, while the 'upbringing stories' offered by wives of men who shared the second shift often emphasized their husbands' relationships with their mothers, the only recurring theme that she could identify across all of those stories was the men's "disaffiliation from a detached, absent, or overbearing father" (p. 217). The men who shared differentiated themselves from their fathers by treating them as negative role-models that defined what not to do as a father. How much their fathers actually 'helped' around the house appeared to be less important than their actual parenting.

In her study of Australian environmentalist men who were trying to 'reform' their masculinity to make 'new-model' relationships possible with women and other men, Connell (1995) found that each of the men she interviewed initially made substantial commitments to hegemonic masculinity projects before eventually distancing themselves from those projects and adopting projects of masculinity reform in the attempt to produce new, non-sexist selves.[27] As part of their engagement with hegemonic masculinity projects, each of the men identified with their fathers, older brothers, and male peers. At various points however, each of the men began (or resumed) identification with their mothers and, later, with feminist women. The strength of mothers and women who were important to them facilitated their (limited) engagement with the feminism that they encountered when they became involved in the broader Australian counter-culture and with the environmentalist movement. In conjunction with the themes of the

[27] I discuss Connell's (1995) treatment of these projects in Chapter Five, "Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance." As I will explain, these projects represent one possible form of dissident masculinity politics.

environmentalist movement,[28] feminism inspired the men to embark on individualized paths of personal growth that, interestingly, involved attempts to limit themselves in various ways even as it involved attempts to enhance their emotional capacities.

In her study of 'peer marriage,' Schwartz (1995) found that, while the couples she studied based their marriages on a mix of equity and equality, they were "distinguished by more than their dedication to fairness and collaboration; the most happy and durable among them also had refocused their relationship on *intense companionship* [emphasis in original]" (p. 2). Her interpretation of these couples, and the basis of the term 'peer' marriage, is that equity and equality were "in the service of an intimate and deeply collaborative marriage" (1995:2).

Therefore, despite the emphasis on companionship, they were not organized around the complementarity of 'traditional' companionate couples. Instead, their 'peer marriages' were based on: 1. no more than a 60-40 split of household work and parenting responsibilities, 2. the belief that each partner in the couple had equal influence over decision-making, 3. the belief that each partner had equal control over finances and reasonably equal access to discretionary funds, and 4. each person's work was given equal value and weight (Schwartz 1995:4-5).

While Schwartz (1995) found that many of the men in her study sought out 'peer marriages' after having experienced 'traditional' relationships that didn't work for them or changed their minds about 'traditional' relationships in the wake of bitter divorces, other men had life experiences that led them to avoid 'traditional' relationships in the first place. Among these experiences were: growing up in homes with mothers and/or sisters

[28] Connell (1995) identified four themes: a practice and ideology of equality, emphasis on collectivity and solidarity, a practice and ideology of personal growth, and an ideology of organic wholeness (p. 127-128).

that they respected, being required to do a fair share of household tasks or do babysitting, and feeling uncomfortable with "macho standards" of masculinity and preferring to be around women. Many of the men liked children and wished to be involved in the day-to-day experience of raising them. Many also wished to avoid sacrificing personal relationships with women so that they could be successful at work. It's noteworthy that, while Schwartz observed that the likelihood of establishing 'peer' marriage was influenced by the fact that most of the 'peer' wives had comparable incomes to those of their husbands, it's also the case that the men reported that they had chosen to become 'peers.'[29] Overall, Schwartz (1995) found that "the combination of a man and woman working *together* to have a peer marriage ultimately made their partnership possible, stable, and rewarding [emphasis in original]" (p. 13).

The strength of women partners proves to be very important among couples who wish to produce egalitarian relationships. For instance, in their study of self-identifying feminist couples, Blaisure and Allen (1995) found that the women, who entered marriage with advantages most women lack when entering into 'traditional' marriages (income, education, social status), carefully chose their partners before marriage to make equality more likely. They described feminism as helping them to maintain a sense of their own identities in their marriages. They also described the ability to care for themselves and their children financially and even to divorce their husbands if necessary.

Barbara Risman and her research team studied heterosexual married couples that were attempting to work out feminist arrangements (Risman and Myers 1997; Risman 1998c; Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998). Risman and Sumerford (1998) referred to

[29] Likewise, Deutsch (1999) asserts that, while it is important to note women's senses of entitlement to fairness and their assertiveness in pushing for equity, it is also important to acknowledge that men who wish to produce equitable relationships with women work with them to make this a reality.

these families as 'postgender' families.[30] They found that the 'postgender' families in their study showed four trajectories. There were dual-career couples, in which "both partners had always been interested in their own career growth and success, as well as in co-parenting their children" (p. 106). There were dual-nurturer couples, who were "more child-centered than work centered, with both parents organizing their work lives almost exclusively around their parental responsibilities" (p. 106). There were post-traditional couples, who had lived in traditional marriages at one point but who had come to reject that model for the family. Last, there were couples who were pushed into an equitable division of household labor by external circumstances, such as a wife's very high income or a wife's chronic illness. The most common trajectory was the dual-career one. The partners in these equity-oriented families assumed that a fulfilling life involves both paid work and parenting.

Interestingly, Risman and Johnson-Sumerford (1998) found that dual-career couples tended most often to divide tasks according to personal preference rather than explicitly negotiating a division of labor. At the same time, even in cases where wives held higher standards of cleanliness, none of the couples used this difference to legitimate an inequitable distribution of household cleaning tasks. However, it is important to acknowledge that they found that the majority of families in their study employed paid help for cleaning tasks.

[30] Risman and Johnson-Sumerford (1998) found it difficult to find a language to describe "heterosexual married couples who have moved beyond hegemonic conceptions of gender as they organize their daily life" (p. 24). They found 'egalitarian,' 'equity,' and 'fairness' to be limited, because, although they clearly indicate couples that had moved toward role-sharing, they do not necessarily communicate "a divorcing of gender from family and work responsibilities" (p. 24). They also found Schwartz's (1995) "peer marriage" to be inadequate, because, although the term refers to couples who have moved beyond gendered marital roles, it does not imply moving beyond gendered expectations in marital roles. They adopted the term 'postgender' couples to indicate those who, though they continue to live in gendered worlds and to present themselves in gendered ways, have moved beyond using gender as their "guidepost" in the negotiation of marital roles and responsibilities.

When probing for power and control issues among the 'postgender' families, Risman and Johnson-Sumerford (1998) found that none of the couples evidenced an arrangement in which husbands had more power. In fact, in the majority of cases, there were no significant signs of inequity in power and influence between the partners. In six out of fifteen couples though, they did find that wives had more influence in the relationship, exerting decision-making over issues such as when to marry and when to have children and demanding equity from their husbands. Risman interpreted this as an indication of a "pattern of strong women and quiet, adaptable men" (1998c:117), though she also points out that, in the majority of cases, the couples were power-balanced.

While Deutsch (1999) found that not all 'equally sharing' parents in her study entered into marriage intending to work out egalitarian parenting arrangements, a number of them did. Women in her study indicated that, for them, men's willingness to engage in shared family work was a precondition for marriage. In addition, she found that 'equally sharing' mothers were not afraid to use power and the language of power (e.g., referring to "strikes" or "hard negotiations"). As she observed, "Simply communicating one's expectations in a clear and direct way doesn't always work; it may take an exercise of power to change the division of labor at home" (1999:65). Women's willingness to use power in their relationships was strongly related to their senses of entitlement to fairness in the relationship, though Deutsch also pointed out that women's power is as much about men's willingness to share power as it is about women forcing men to give up power to them. Interestingly, she observed that the equally sharing women in her study did not mainly report relying on 'economic power.' Instead, their power "is derived from their husbands' love for them and their husbands' desire to have children" (1999:66). As

in Blaisure's and Allen's (1995) study though, the women in Deutsch's (1999) study indicated that they were willing to back up their desire for equal sharing with divorce, though this was mainly implied instead of explicitly stated.

FATHERS

One of the most consistent patterns in the participants' relationships with their fathers is that most of them did not have particularly close relationships with their fathers while they were growing up. Fifteen out of twenty-one of them told me that their fathers were generally emotionally distant, unable to express their love openly,[31] and were unsupportive to them. Even men who were careful to describe their families as happy and loving reported that their fathers never matched their mothers for love and openness. A couple men indicated that, despite their relatively cool relationships with their fathers, they have been able to model their lives after their fathers in certain respects. However, most of the men indicated quite openly that their fathers were negative exemplars for how to be in relationships and for how to parent children.

[31] In a somewhat extreme example of a general pattern, Roger Blackburn told me that the first time he can remember hugging his father since he was a very little child was when Roger was 43 years old. When Roger recalls his experience of his father while growing up, he speaks of a "strong, macho, potentially scary" man who was a bigoted, very 'traditional,' fundamentalist who favored corporal punishment for children and for whom intimacy was "foreign." Roger told me that his father has really surprised him as he's aged, because he has "softened," becoming a more caring and tolerant man than he was for most of his life. While most of the men described fathers who were somewhat more openly caring than Roger's father in the first place, seven other men also described in various ways how their fathers "mellowed" with age. Typically though, while the changes may be dramatic, the expressions of love and empathy are still somewhat limited. For instance, Roger told me that, outside of hugging a couple times since that first one two years prior, other demonstrations of intimacy from his father have been superficial and unemotional. Doug Silverwood told me that his father now tries to engage in emotional support for him occasionally, but he's still fairly narcissistic so that this typically involves Doug supporting his father more than the other way around. In another example, Benjamin Moraga told me that his father will write "love ya" in a letter but won't say it in person. Just seeing "love ya" in a letter was a revelation to Benjamin, though he was convinced that his father loved him before that.

EMOTIONALLY DISTANT FATHERS AS NEGATIVE EXEMPLARS

While the men in this study were very clear that they want to be in respectful and equal relationships with strong women, several of them told me that they lacked clear models for how to actually *be* egalitarian men in those relationships, unless one counts negative exemplars such as 'traditional' men. For instance, Doug Silverwood regards an attempt to be feminist and egalitarian as particularly difficult given that it involves "trying to forge a new path" with no "role models," no "clear expectations," and "not a lot of societal support for it" and "a lot of pressure to fall into those traditional roles." He views equality as requiring more work at "trailblazing" to break out of "natural patterns." Even so, the rewards are big, since one can have a "mutually satisfying partnership of equals."

Like Doug, Mark feels that his attempts to be a feminist man are somewhat frustrated by the lack of positive male role models in his life, and he directly implicates his father in his criticism of other men. He rejects his father's periodic attempts to influence him, because he feels that his father allowed alcoholism to "fuck up" his marriage and even his entire life, because he lost his job and failed to provide the financial support that could have prevented Mark, his mother, and his sister from plunging into poverty after divorce. At the same time, he also regrets the fact that he and his father only relate to each other through getting drunk together instead of talking deeply about issues. Likewise, his other male relatives were absent from his life, depriving him of connections to men that he feels could help him better understand how to be the kind of man that he feels he should be. As he said,

> My uncle passed away, and … it wasn't even a big deal, 'cause like I barely knew him, you know? And then that like pissed me off, because

> here's like another man in my life that like I didn't even get to know. You know. And like he could have been like a positive role model or something, but instead like I hardly even knew the guy. … It's like frustrating when you start to realize that like the only models that you have as a man are like what NOT to do. Who you DON'T want to be like, as opposed to like having someone that you can be like, 'I want to be like him.' [Brad: Yeah, no kidding.] Like, the best model I have is like I don't want to be my dad. I don't want to be my uncle. You know?

Often, 'traditional' cultural ideals were quite close to home, because they were embodied in the masculinity projects of emotionally distant fathers. The stories my participants told me clearly illustrated the point that the often painful experience of growing up with emotionally distant fathers can have lasting negative consequences for men by leading them to mistrust other men and to feel intense bitterness and disappointment about lost opportunities with their fathers. At the same time, even when fathers represent negative exemplars – models for how *not* to be men, it can be possible for men to work out masculinity projects that are quite affirming and positive precisely because they are directed away from the examples set by their fathers for how to be workers, fathers, and partners.

Josh Lewin offers a good example. After parents divorced, his father became angry, emotionally remote, and physically absent from his children. Josh strove to make a connection with his father for many years, but this was complicated by the fact that his father was defensive and unwilling to tolerate any criticism (perceived or real) of his fathering. Josh finally gave up when he decided that he would never have the relationship he imagined a son should have with his father. When he stopped making himself vulnerable to his father's criticism and rejection, he discovered a sense of empowerment in the relationship, because it is now his father who has to work to make a

connection with him. It is always on Josh's terms when and whether that actually happens.

Even though Josh gave up trying to make a connection with his father, he told me that he has an abiding fascination with masculinity and that he is constantly trying to develop relationships with other men. He sees this as developing out of his search for a "father-figure." When he was young, he would attach himself to older men – a local candy store owner, a family friend – and call them dad, much to his mother's chagrin. Later, he replaced his search for a father with a search for a connection with other men in other ways. A good example is his attraction to men's talking groups where he finds emotional and intellectual support for particular issues of masculinity that he feels he can't address through his other support networks. It's also apparent in the fact that he became a writer who focused on fatherhood and masculinity issues in his work. Now that he is no longer working as a professional writer, he is training to become a therapist who specializes in masculinity issues. It is also interesting that, despite his interest in masculinity and his search for connections with men, he did admit to me that he trusts women more than he trusts men and avoids typically masculine settings and activities.

Josh said that he viewed his father very explicitly as an anti-model for his own masculinity for many years. He told me that he fought against his father bitterly and despised the fact that his father was a misogynist. I find it interesting that he eventually stopped making reference to his father as a way of understanding how he should be a man, since rejecting his father can only take him so far. The alternative appears to be focusing on his relationships with women instead. As he explained to me, he decided

that he would rather think about masculinity in positive terms rather than in terms of rejection and negativity. As he said,

> It was real important for me NOT to be like my father. That was something that, you know, MATTERED. I didn't want to be like that. I wanted to be connected to people. If I was going have kids, I wanted to be involved in their lives. I really wanted to be part of it.

It seems to me that Josh was able to develop more perspective on how to understand his father than most men in the study. He learned to account for his father's misogyny by placing his father's life in historical context as a member of a generation of Jewish men who are deeply threatened by strong women, whom they fear will control them. As he said,

> My father also comes from this generation of Jewish men, um, that, you know, you can represent by Philip Roth, … Saul Bellow, [and] Woody Allen. You know, there's a whole bunch of them. And their insecurity about masculinity is great. This generation. … The idea that they … share in common is … of women wanting to grab men by the balls and, you know, hold on and control them, and they're fighting against that for their own, you know, ability to have some space independent. So my father was like that, and I didn't see it that way. That wasn't my experience. My experience was a little more supportive. Women were, you know, something I needed in my life and relied on. … My father's entire attitude about women was something that I found OFFENSIVE! You know? … What he wanted from women was a woman who supported him in everything and never questioned anything he did. … Basically. Um, and, you know, that's not what I wanted. And that's not what I wanted to model for my child. … He really was ANTI-feminist, and so that was an issue for us. You know? And he felt rebuked by me on that too, and he felt like my mother brainwashed me. And blah blah blah blah blah blah. You know, because I didn't agree with him. … But I also didn't share his experiences. You know, his experiences were very different. And, you know, I have a little more sympathy for him now, 'cause I can see the generations and how things progressed and what happened. Where it probably came from.

Developing sympathy for his father and wanting to understand him doesn't indicate a willingness to embrace anti-feminism and place limits on his relationships with women

though. Josh acknowledges that his own life experiences have made possible certain changes that his father's own life experiences did not, and this tempers his criticism somewhat even as he continues to reject his father's misogyny. While Josh admits that he has sometimes experienced ambivalence around his need to depend on women, he told me that he has consistently desired connection with women more than he has wanted to fight against them. It's clear that the extended, mostly positive examples set by his feminist mother and the other women in his life are responsible for his ability to move beyond merely reacting against his father. The same is true for other men. I address this below.

While Josh may have thought more about these issues than most of the other men in this study, his practice of establishing a masculinity project around being the kind of man his father was unwilling or unable to be is common. For example, Ted Evans told me that his relationship with his workaholic and alcoholic father was very distant. As he said,

> My dad was an alcoholic for 15 years, so that would have started when I was 6. Up to that time, it was your average everyday normal family relationship. Parents got along with the kids. The kids got along with the parents. My dad started drinking. He also became a workaholic. … I don't remember seeing my dad much. He traveled a lot for his work. He was gone. When he was home, he was in the office. When I was 6 or 7, my dad quit doing stuff with me. I didn't interact with him AT ALL until these past few years. So, my dad and I didn't have a relationship. It wasn't a bad relationship, but we didn't really have one. … It was hard on my mom too. She told us on a number of occasions that if it wasn't for the kids, she would have left him YEARS ago. … After a while, you don't think about it. It is just expected that you don't talk to him. I never really felt bad about it. I never really thought that he didn't like me, because he didn't want to talk to me. Dad didn't talk.

Because of this, it is very important to Ted to be emotionally close with his wife, Beverly, and their children. He said, "I constantly think about spending time with my

kids every day, because my dad didn't do it with me. I don't want to make that same mistake. Every time I have a beer, I think, 'I'm only going to have a couple, cuz I'm not going to be an alcoholic.'" As he explained, the problem for him is that this is not something that comes very easily to him as a result of his family experience, since his family was very formal and distant. As he said, "You didn't talk about anything personal. You didn't do that in my family. You didn't talk about those things. … You didn't talk about your feelings. About anything really. You kept all of that inside. My parents both certainly did. I think that just rubbed off on us kids." While emotional connection may not come easily, Ted has been working on it. As he said, "I guess part of me has always thought it was okay to show emotion, and so I do it, despite my parents almost. Um. They were so anti-emotion, you know. I almost feel like I need to be emotional just so I'm not going to be like that. I don't want to be like that." He admits that he's not always successful. As he said, "I would like to think that I'm a lot different than how they were, but, if you ask my wife, I'm sure she would tell me that I hold everything in all the time also. I don't talk about much. It takes a lot for her to get it out of me." Still, he has taken on equally shared parenting,[32] an experience that has helped to transform him.

Tucker Kinsey reported a very similar experience, and he too reported that he has made great strides in developing a capacity for empathy. He told me that his father was distant and angry when he was younger and that he only became less unhappy and less unpleasant to be around when he downshifted from his job in corporate management to

[32] As a man who is physically disabled and unable to work, Ted did not make a choice between family and work. At the same time, it's important to acknowledge that not all men would take on a project of establishing deeper emotional connections with their families and sharing equally in housework and childcare. I suspect that this is perhaps even truer for men who share Ted's experience of emotionally distant fathers and emotionally distant mothers.

start his own contracting business. Although his father has since become a source of emotional support for Tucker, he in no way provided that for Tucker when he was younger. As a result, Tucker had to depend on his mother instead.[33] Tucker told me that, when he was growing up, he was incapable of listening to others and truly respecting and empathizing with them. Even his father partly attributes this to his parenting of Tucker, as he made clear to him one day when Tucker was yelling at his relatives while debating the relative influence of nature and nurture. His father interrupted him to tell him that, if he had held Tucker more when he was young, Tucker probably wouldn't be yelling at people.

Gary Estes' experience with his father was very negative, though he told me that he has been making more attempts to provide emotional support for his father since his mother died of cancer. This is made somewhat easier by the fact that his father is "mellowing a little bit" in his eighties. When he was living at home though, his father's alcoholism and his rigidly 'traditional' way of being masculine made everyone miserable. In fact, Gary and his brothers ran away from home one time just to get away from him. Though his father wasn't violent physically, he was emotionally and verbally abusive to everyone in the family, especially to his wife, whom he dominated almost completely.

Gary's father was a man's man, and this was a problem for Gary, who didn't measure up to his father's standards. Whereas his father enjoyed sports, women, and hard drinking, Gary was interested in none of these things. Even though his father treated him better than his half-brothers for being his "natural" child, Gary was a constant disappointment for his father. Gary couldn't shoot a gun properly, wasn't athletic

[33] Tucker told me that this is how he learned how to be depressed, because his mother has experienced depression all of his life.

enough, and didn't date women often enough to assuage his father's persisting fear that he was gay. In response, his father mocked Gary for years and accused him of being too effeminate. For Gary's part, he said that he didn't really doubt that he was straight, but he found it difficult to attract women given that he was tall, lanky, nerdy, and shy. Today, Gary says that he very explicitly tries to live his life the way he wants to live it and downplays open conflict with his father as much as possible to maintain a relationship at all. While he has a lot of anger toward his father because of the way his father treated him, most of his anger is directed at the way his father treated his mother. This translates into an aversion to anything hinting at a 'traditional' relationship with his wife, Kate. As he said, "Basically, I feel like it's a stereotypical kind of sexist guy thing. … In my mind, I still see, you know, a woman doing all the housework with kind of the male dominated household." As I will demonstrate in the Chapter Six, wishing is not the same thing as having, because Gary struggles with producing equality in a relationship where his partner is somewhat reluctant to have him do certain tasks.[34] Even so, Gary strives to share domestic work, because the alternative is to be a person he can't respect: a man like his father.

It's also important to acknowledge that not every father was emotionally distant. For instance, Geoff Riley told me that his father could be warm, and not just because he was warmer than Geoff's childhood friend's father, whom Geoff's father called "stoneface." As he said, "That's not my dad. My dad like expresses his joy. … Like hug and kiss, you know what I mean? … So I mean, in that way, that's a model." But in

[34] This is very common. Many families that strive to be egalitarian often find this to be difficult to accomplish in practice. See Blaisure and Allen (1995), Deutsch (1999), and Hochschild (1989) for just a couple examples.

most other respects, his father was an anti-model for Geoff, because his father dominated the family and was easily angered. As he said,

> My dad definitely, uh, sort of dominated the family. … I'm sure that's not uncommon. Um, but, by dominated, I don't mean always like iron-fist *rule* as much as I mean, um, his interests came above my mom's in terms of … what we spent money on. … My mom … earned more than my dad. Substantially more. So that, without her, there was no [chuckles] house or family. And so, um, it's interesting, because, even though my mom made more money and does all of the taxes, [pays for the] appliances, [does the] banking, and all that – my dad doesn't even have a bank card, you know – um, he still gets to decide where that money goes a lot of times. … [There was] no violence or anything. … But, still, my dad [short pause] was very like easily angered, and, when he was angered, the whole family was altered. You know, that's what I mean. … So, in the same way, his mood or interests triumphed, you know.

Overall, it should be clear that, although there was no logical necessity for the men in this study to reject the models established by their dominant and emotionally distant fathers given that many other men do not, the fact that their fathers placed emotional (and sometimes physical) distance between themselves and their sons and did not live up to their sons' expectations for the kind of father they felt that they needed was significant for working out how to be men as they grew up and beyond. These emotionally distant fathers were often negative exemplars to be rejected, though it is the case that this was not always true. Some of the men in this study found ways of referencing their fathers' examples in somewhat positive ways.

FINDING WAYS TO EMULATE EMOTIONALLY DISTANT FATHERS

Not all emotionally distant fathers served as completely negative exemplars for practicing masculinity. Joel Sewald was never able to establish a close relationship with his father despite trying to talk to him, because his father was silent and wouldn't talk with his family. Joel was careful to point out that his father demonstrated that he was

attached to his family but that he wouldn't let anyone become intimate with him. As he said,

> I won't say [my father's death] wasn't a big deal for me, but it didn't have the kind of emotional impact on me that my mother's death did. … To say that he was remote is not exactly right. It wasn't like he was emotionally cold. He was just kind of closed in on himself and was not engaging with the world. And it was clear that he was very attached to his family, but not in a way that he would, you know, articulate just in terms of doing things and that sort of thing. … I guess I'd hoped that I would be able to talk to him more, but I tried to talk to him. I didn't have that kind of conflicted relationship [with him] that I had with my mother, [but] I didn't get very far, and I saw that other people didn't get that far with him, and, you know, when I realized that even [my mother] didn't get that far with him, I guess I kind of gave up.

While emotional detachment appears to be conventionally masculine, examining how Joel's father's biography intersects with history helps to make sense of it, because it turns out that his life was profoundly disrupted by Nazi persecution. He came to the U.S. as a refugee who had fled Austria during World War II, and he never completely adjusted to living in the United States. After coming to this country, his father was never able to become very successful in his career as a statistician, and he didn't make much money. On top of that, Joel told me that his entire family felt very beleaguered for their leftist politics during the 1950s.[35]

Even though he never learned much about his father or had much of a relationship with him, Joel did learn from his father that it could be possible for men to support women in being powerful and in having careers outside of the family, a lesson that was not exactly typical for the time period of his youth. As he said,

[35] This feeling of being beleaguered is a big part of the reason he embraced the leftward shift in the U.S. in the 1970s. As he said, "I had been this kid who … grew up in this weird family doing these weird things with these weird commitments, … and [I] was totally marginalized. Considered completely a freak. And then, suddenly, in the late '60s and early '70s, I felt like, you know, the world was coming round to my point of view! [chuckles] … So it was an immensely empowering thing."

> I'm not going to say that I understood [that it could be possible to do masculinity differently than most men do] suddenly at the age of twelve, but I do think, without the academic categories, I DID have some glimpses into that at a fairly early age, because of the ways that my father did NOT fulfill the ideals of masculinity. … So there was a question about, you know, what exactly DOES it mean to be a man?

His mother was considerably more forceful than his father, and she eventually out earned him, but his father was always supportive of her work and of her decision to pursue a Ph.D., even though that meant living away from home for one year. His father participated in some of the work of caring for the children even before that year, and he took on the remainder of the housework and childcare when she was living away from home. Although he has not tried to be like his father in most respects, Joel *has* prioritized supporting the careers of women with whom he has relationships, and he told me with some pride that he considers himself to be fairly good at assisting women in getting their Ph.D.'s. As I will explain later, he's been less successful in sharing housework and childcare, though he agrees with the principle that men should.

Chris Simpson has had a more affirming relationship with his father than Joel did, though he somewhat reluctantly had to admit that his father acted more like his supervisor than as his father much of the time. He harbored resentment about his father's aloofness, but he also told me that he learned important lessons about how to be supportive of women from his father. At the same time, I believe that Chris's engagement with social justice coursework in college and with feminism in particular is probably what allowed him to translate his father's 'traditionally' gendered approach to supporting his mother into a strategy for engaging in mutually supportive caretaking with his partner, Kelli. Whereas his father provides financial and physical security for his mother, Chris tries to be an emotional "touchstone." As he said,

> It's a little bit of a different take, because it's not so much in terms of finances or in terms of, um, physical security, or going out and killing things, or anything like that. But a little more, um, just kind of being a little bit of a touchstone for Kelli to hold on to, because her family's pretty nuts. So. And I come from a pretty stable family situation, so we're able to balance each other out in that way.

Similarly, Doug Silverwood attributes his egalitarianism partly to his father, a fact that I would have thought would be somewhat unlikely given that his father is a hyper-masculine, workaholic man who did not want his wife to work and who elected to deliver furniture across country for months at a time as an alternative to divorcing Doug's mother, with whom he could not share a house for more than three days at a time without fighting with her. Doug admits that his parents did not provide a workable model for how to be married, and he attributes this lack to some of his own difficulties in sustaining long-term relationships with women.[36] As he said,

> It was chaotic, with a lot of yelling and screaming and crazy nonsense. Um. And I think it also had an impact on me in regards to relationships, because, [while] I got to spend a lot of time with my dad[37] and a lot of time of time with my mom, I NEVER really got to be around both of them together. … Um, so I never got a lot of modeling about how relationships should be.

He also acknowledges that his father was often not supportive at all of the fact that he was a sensitive youth who did not want to objectify women and who accused him of being gay for not wanting to go into a strip club with him when he was sixteen. Still, Doug indicated to me that he admires the work ethic of a man who still drives truck and "humps furniture" all day at 72 years of age, working harder than men much younger

[36] At the same time, he takes responsibility for his life, because he pointed out that he has spent as much of his life as an adult as he did as a child in his parents' house.

[37] Doug went on the road with his father from the age of three years old until he was in kindergarten. After that point, he lived with his mother during the school year and then traveled with his father in the summers.

than he is, because Doug sees this work ethic as motivated by a desire to provide for his family. Doug told me that he updates and translates this work ethic to fit his feminism:

> [My dad] always told us … that it's a man's responsibility to work hard to take care of his family. … So I've tried, you know, to work hard. Um, and tried to take care of my family, but I've tried to have a different view of what that is. You know, to me, that's that hard work of egalitarianism. That's [chuckles] much more important than, um, how much money you make or being a provider.

Of course, translating this ethic into a feminist commitment to egalitarianism wouldn't have been likely (possibly not even possible) without other significant experiences that fostered a commitment to social justice and social change. Among the most important for Doug, and for others, was experience of a strong mother who challenged sexist images of women and how men should relate to them.

MOTHERS

Although not all of the men in this study had positive relationships with their mothers, the majority of them did so, and this appears to be quite significant in accounting for the fact that they have engaged with anti-sexism as adults. Their mothers inspired respect for women, and they demonstrated that women did not have to fulfill 'traditional' expectations for being wives and mothers. What appears to be particularly important is the fact that most of their mothers worked.

WORKING MOTHERS

All but three of the men indicated to me that their mothers worked in paid jobs when they were children. Among the stay at home mothers, only one never worked.[38]

[38] Paul Denbigh's mother never worked. Ray Morrow's mother owned her own successful small business until the landlord sold the building in which the business was located. At that point, instead of relocating the business, she closed it. The reason is unclear to me, but Ray did tell me that his father didn't want her

Among those with working mothers, the fact that their mothers worked was very important for how they thought of their mothers. In several cases, they connected this fact to their overall impressions of their mothers as strong and capable women. As expected on the basis of prior studies, these men informed me that their respect for their mothers for their strength and independence influenced their later engagement with feminism and influenced their adoption of anti-sexist practices in their relationships with women.

Joel Sewald accounts for his ability to engage with feminism (as part of the broader left movement in the 1970s) in terms of the relatively unusual family situation in which he grew up in the late 1950s and 1960s: a mother who worked full time outside of the home in a professional career and who earned a Ph.D. and began teaching full-time at a college. As he said,

> That was a fairly unusual family situation to grow up in. … It's one of the things that made it possible for me to sort of negotiate the new era of feminism … in a way that, you know, has nothing to do with my particular virtue or even my choice. … I saw the way other men of my age or even especially a couple years older had so much trouble with the emergence of feminism, and, you know, I had my problems too. It was on a completely different level. I, you know, completely understood what the issues were, and I completely understood that, you know, a woman would want to have a career. … And, in fact, even beyond that, it was never even a consideration for me and HAS never been a consideration for me that I would ever even THINK of getting involved with a woman who didn't.

This is another reminder of the importance of understanding men's lives in historical and relational context. As Joel pointed out, his somewhat exceptional experiences made it possible (perhaps likely) that he would be exceptional himself when compared to men who had different experiences. I find it to be less surprising to find more anti-sexist and

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to work. Ray never had experience of his mother working, though his older brother did. Doug Silverwood's mother didn't start working until she was in her 50s.

feminist men today than when Joel was younger based on the fact that more men are growing up in households with mothers who work full-time or in single mother households.

Further, when Joel raises doubt about his own virtue as a 'profeminist' man (his preferred term), he actually includes other men as well, implying that they deserve less praise than they often receive for being exceptional men. As he said,

> I'm a little skeptical of the term, you know, anti-sexist men, because I think that relations between men and women on the whole are fairly situational, partly having to do with, you know, negotiation between two people but also, you know, what their, uh, experiences were growing up.

Men's anti-sexism is likely to be very dependent upon particular relationships with particular women, which suggests the possibility that anti-sexist men could be less anti-sexist in different relationships if the women are not as committed to egalitarianism themselves (Greenstein 1996).[39] This argument seems absolutely consistent with the persistent finding that men's feminism is often precipitated by entering into relationships with confident and strong women.

Although he is twelve years younger than Joel, Josh Lewin's experiences were similar in certain respects, though there were important differences as well. One important difference is that Josh's parents went through a bitter divorce, with his non-custodial father becoming absent both physically and emotionally. Another is that, in contrast to Josh's mother, Joel's mother felt that younger women did not fully appreciate

[39] Sam Youngblood actually hinted at this when he expressed pessimism about his prospects for establishing an egalitarian relationship with a woman in the future even though he argues that gender relations are socially constructed and therefore open to feminist reworking. I pressed on this point, saying that I didn't understand why he would feel that it would be inevitable that he would be expected to do stereotypically masculine tasks given that he rejects the assertion that housework and parenting must be gendered. He admitted that he's never met a woman who was on the same page as he is, so he assumes that equality will be less likely given that. The woman he was dating at the time of the interviews was a woman with fairly 'traditional' expectations for relationships, and, despite his guilt about this, he submitted to the domestic services that she routinely performed for him.

how hard she had had to work during the 1950s to get where she was and that these younger feminists wanted things to be handed to them on a silver platter. Still, like Joel, the fact that, after the divorce, Josh's mother obtained her Ph.D. while raising him and his sister influenced his engagement with feminism, especially since his mother became politicized as a feminist during graduate school.[40] Another similarity is that both mothers were strong and forceful women who worked while raising children.

The experience of becoming divorced and attending graduate school was defining for Josh's mother. She had been raised by a mother who valued men more highly than women, so Josh's mother had grown up feeling somewhat inferior. She tried to meet her mother's expectations for her to marry and have a family, but Josh's mother found that she wanted more for herself than to just be a stay at home mother, so she continued her education. As Josh said,

> [She] really blossomed, and she became a feminist and a Marxist and, you know, found out who SHE WAS. And sort of really went through a second adolescence. And bloomed. And, you know, became the person she is. And I kind of get teary when I talk about this, 'cause it is kind of neat. … You know, um, a key moment. So WE WERE THERE with my mother as she goes through all of this … and becomes incredibly politically active. And that had a major impact on both my sister and I. … Watching her struggle to bring us up, you know, to get her Ph.D., put us through school, feed us. You know, do everything that needed to be done, um, all on her own. Pretty much. With a little bit of help from her mother and a little bit of, you know, very begrudging [financial] help from my father, you know, that had to come through the courts basically. ... So that was really key for both of us in terms of our politics. In terms of our view of everything. So, you know, we were both raised … in a feminist household! A household that aspired to be feminist I would say. Um, because, you know, the ideals are not always how one lives. … I think my mother embodies that really well, because she is a VERY STRONG feminist, and yet she has this – she also would say that she knows this. She said this to me. You know, she grew up in a non-feminist world and a

[40] According to Josh, his maternal grandfather was a Labor Zionist, so his mother already had socialist leanings prior to graduate school, but her commitment to Marxism strengthened at the same time as she adopted feminism in graduate school.

> very 'traditional' world, and some of that stuff she still has in her, you know.

When he was younger, Josh embraced his mother's radical politics, and he and his sister participated in her political activities, such as leafleting and boycotts. As I will discuss in Chapter Six, Josh eventually became less enthusiastic about direct political action, but he remains committed to the feminism that his mother inspired in him.

Tucker Kinsey also credits his mother's work among other experiences for making it easier for him to develop a consciousness about gender and gender inequality when he grew up. His mother worked as the only female draftsperson in her office. He said, "I remember that being a thing. You know. And so that, as a kid, was probably a very good primer. Where I wasn't conscious of it, but, when the things came into consciousness, it set me up for it. … For the click. … You know. Which I think happens. Is there is a click that happens, you know." He indicated to me that "the big click" came when he was exposed to feminist theory in college classes and began his job at the local domestic violence shelter.

Most of the men in this study experienced working mothers who did the 'second shift' (Hochschild 1989), though few experienced fathers who were not, at the very least, 'helpers' (Coltrane 1989, 1996; Deutsch 1999; Gerson 1993). They respected their mothers for the fact that they worked and also for the fact that they did so much for their families when they weren't at their paid jobs. Their mothers inspired in them an acceptance (and expectation) that women could (and should) work in paid jobs. In a number of cases, as represented by Tucker's story, their mothers' struggles with gender inequality at work and at home sensitized them to these issues when they grew older,

though, as Doug points out, this perspective or consciousness is something that calls for reflection and a certain amount of struggle to completely accomplish.

MOTHERS' STRENGTH INFLUENCES MEN'S RESPECT FOR OTHER WOMEN

One of the more pronounced impacts of strong mothers was in influencing their sons to respect other women and to seek out relationships with strong women. It was very common for the men to talk about being able to discuss issues with their mothers and to maintain friendships with their mothers into adulthood. The mothers motivated them to be better men. When taken up in the context of relationships with women who share that aspiration for them, the result is anti-sexist masculinity projects, though there is substantial variation in what those projects actually entail, as I discuss in the next two chapters.

A good example is Jon Webb, who has been heavily influenced by his mother. He told me that he often thinks of his mother standing behind him, observing his actions, and this encourages him to do the right thing. He came to respect women as an extension of his respect for the strength of his mother (and also through learning not to harass his sister – recounted elsewhere). He said,

> My mother's a very strong charac-, like I feel like, [sighs] like some mothers are like, I don't know. Overbearing or whatever like, and maybe you could say that about my mother. I don't know. But like I feel like she was so strong in a way that … like she commanded your respect. … For good and for bad, … I can see my mother in a lot of [other women]. … Like when I talk about my mother, you know, always standing behind me, like if I'm talking to a woman, I feel like she's in front of me too. … Just as my mother commanded respect, you know, I feel like all these other women deserve respect. You know? And that carried on. … In college, you know, a lot of the women … were just as strong as my mom. I mean, they were educated, you know, and … they were living on their own.

Jon's mother also explicitly countered the racism of his father and encouraged him and his siblings to question the "culture of ignorance" of the rural community in which they lived. She particularly emphasized the need to be critical of religion, suggesting to them questions that most people do not pose about their faith. Her influence on Jon was so positive that he chose to emulate her by becoming an elementary school teacher. Eventually, Jon was emboldened enough to challenge some of his father's views, and he was gratified that his father was willing to listen to him and even change some of his beliefs.

Although Josh says he also felt the need for contact with a man who could help him to understand how to become a man, he appreciates the fact that he grew up with his mother and his sister. This life experience taught him to deeply respect women and encouraged him to seek out a strong partner. As he said,

> I've always been attracted to strong women. … It's still the case. You know, I like women with, you know, strong personalities, strong character. … That's … definitely who I'm attracted to. You know, maybe it's related to my feminist upbringing. Maybe it's related to my mother's strong character, but, you know, actually, in my family all the women have strong character. ALL of 'em did. I mean, my mother, my grandmother, … ALL my grandmothers. Women were always STRONG. I mean, that's what I SAW. … And when I … came across the sort of demure, quiet [women], uh, I didn't know what to make of them. I was like, 'What's wrong with you?' You know, I was looking at it as a disease or something [starts chuckling] that I couldn't relate to. [chuckles] So, I mean, at some gut level, … you create these ideologies around them, but a lot of it is so much beYOND any of your ideologies. … It just comes out of experience. And this is probably the therapist in me talking, but, you know, it's like it just comes out of your experience and … all the other things that have happened around you. What you're familiar with. … And it appeals to my ideology TOO, you know. I like a woman who's strong. I want a woman who's, you know, professionally taking care of herself, and who's a feminist, and, you know, Diane's all those things.

It is interesting that Lewin sees this preference as based in his life experience and not necessarily as coming out of a political ideology.[41] Of course, equally as important as his experience with a feminist household and strong mother was his experience with an anti-feminist father. Josh's attraction to strong women stands in marked contrast to his father's misogyny. He said,

> Uh, my father, you know, I didn't like his politics. … You know, frankly, I think he was a misogynist! You know? … Out of fear of women and, you know, everything. But yeah, I think he's pretty misogynist. I mean, strong women scare the hell out of him. I'm attracted to strong women. … So there's fundamental differences there.

Mark Holland is similar to Josh in the sense that he respects his mother for being strong and was highly disappointed in his father. As he said, she's "a little like a pit bull, 'cause like most pit bulls aren't that big. They're like little, but they're just like tough as nails. Like my mom's tough. Like somehow, she just like hangs in there, you know?" Likewise, it's important to Mark to date strong women, though he said he had never thought about it in those exact terms until I actually asked him. Mark has often remarked to himself and others that women he dates must be politically-minded, which, by implication, means being strong. He said,

> I've heard myself say this like many times. Like, 'I don't want to date any woman that's not like politically minded.' You know? … I want a woman who's like politically active. So, I mean, to be politically active, I think you have to be pretty strong. … What I'm looking for in women is like … someone that's like trying to make the world better like I am.

It is in this respect that Mark differs from Josh, because Mark much more explicitly embraces political ideology as a guide for everyday life. Although both men identify as

[41] Josh consistently shifted my questions away from politics and toward a focus on interpersonal dynamics. I discuss the implications of this in Chapter Six, "Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality?"

feminist, Mark is more overtly activist in how he approaches his feminism. I return to this issue in Chapter Six.

Like Jon, Mark, and Josh, Tucker attributes the fact that he likes and respects women to the positive relationship he had with his mother, though he's not sure why other men don't view women similarly. He said,

> I like women, and I always have. … I just like women. … My mom was the primary caregiver when I was growing up. … But then there were other people whose mother was the primary caregiver, and they don't like women one bit! [chuckles] … And their mom may have been nice to 'em like mine was, you know?

In particular, Tucker enjoys being around feminists, which is why he feels honored to have worked at the local domestic violence shelter. He said,

> Oh. Wow, … I felt so privileged to work at the shelter. … I mean, … forget about male privilege. … That's a bigger privilege. … I was amazed, you know. It also makes me realize how much I can't or don't multitask, you know. I can see these women, and … they're all doing eight different things at once and know how to handle it or seem to anyway quite well. And like, 'I've gotta do that.' … That's another thing that is exciting about this. … If you've got the right ideas you can get to hang out with some of the coolest people. You know? … So, … if you click with … feminists, you get to hang out with feminists. … And it's fun.

Although some of the mothers were in 'traditional' relationships in which they had to defer to their husbands' interests and decisions, this does not mean that they could not also be strong.[42] The men who grew up in these homes found that to be remarkable, and examples of their mothers' strength stand out in their stories. I have already discussed Joel Sewald's family. He told me that, even though she was the more forceful and professionally successful person in the family, his mother insisted that everyone in the family defer to her husband. The same was true in some other cases as well. For

[42] Miriam Johnson's (1988) distinction between weak wives and strong mothers may be apt here.

instance, as Paul Denbigh pointed out, his mother was assertive with her husband when there was need to do so. He said,

> My mom was pretty assertive at times. Actually, my mom … was pretty wise in, in figuring when to be ESPECIALLY assertive. … [For a couple years], my dad went through a real intense time of alcoholism. And he was real, real hard on the family. … There was verbal abuse. Not really much physical abuse. And intimidation at times, and it was a really frightening time for us at times. … At one point, um, he came home really drunk. We'd have to pick him up once in a while from bars, and my mom would do that a few times. But, at one point, he came home really rip roaring drunk and was verbally abusive, and I can remember kind of hiding up in one room at one point. … We got swatted. He had a paddle. … It wasn't standard. He did come looking for us particularly. … When he was angry with us, we got a swat, you know. … Compared to what I'm aware for a lot of other kids, it didn't seem like I had a particularly brutal childhood, but it was … a little [emotionally] difficult at times. … My mom … just finally said, 'Look, you know, leave the house now. Move out. Go into treatment. You figure between the bottle and the family, and you choose.' … She didn't buckle in and enable him and his behavior, and he moved out. He was out for about two months. Went to … an in-house treatment program and, uh, medical detox. I'm suspecting it was. You know. .. And, uh, he came out … refocused. You know, he cared enough about the family. I mean, there's no doubt in my mind all along that he did care about us, but, you know, but he'd kind of gotten caught up in that pattern.

Roger Blackburn's mother provides another example. Although his father was strict and violent toward the family, his mother could "go head to head with him [chuckles] and back him down. She was a very strong person." In addition to opposing his father's attempts to use corporal punishment on the children, she countered his father's racism by explaining to Roger and his siblings that she didn't agree with their father. She demonstrated in multiple ways to Roger that she was very open and accepting of others. He doesn't recall her specifically telling him that he didn't have to share his father's beliefs (something he worked out for himself by the time he was 17, when he

defied his father's insistence that the bible be read literally by displaying an interest in evolutionary theory), but he feels that she influenced him by modeling independence.

THE EXPERIENCE (OR PERCEPTION) OF BEING DIFFERENT

While relationships with emotionally distant fathers and with strong mothers seems very significant for our understanding of these anti-sexist men, it is also important to recognize other life experiences that may make adoption of anti-sexist masculinity projects more likely. For instance, Alexander Tucker told me that he suspects that he is open to sharing housework and parenting as a consequence of experiencing egalitarianism on his family farm while growing up. Everyone did work around the farm, and, because women were never defined as incapable of doing hard labor, the jobs were shared by men and women alike, whether they were domestic tasks or baling hay. As he said,

> I don't really see myself negotiating too much like while I'm doing the dishes. Like stewing [about having to do them, thinking], 'This isn't for me.' It doesn't occur to me at that level. It is just that I have always done the dishes. Even growing up. I grew up on a farm [with seven siblings]. As soon as you are old enough to go out and milk the cows and feed them, you have to do stuff around the house. I washed dishes when I was little, before. Maybe that is it. The egalitarianism of the farm. I don't know. … Because all of my sisters drove tractors and baled hay. When it was time to do the physical demanding work, everybody was just the same as everybody else. It is heavy lifting and hard work, but it is not more work than a woman can do. … Even the average woman is physical enough to lift hay bales or drive a tractor that doesn't have power steering. Maybe it is all of that socialization that I don't see myself as having to regender the jobs that I do or I don't have to refocus to feel masculine or to identify as masculine.

The most common type of life experience that the men reported though was the experience of being different. It became quite obvious to me that this experience of being different (or what may actually have been the perception of being different) from other

boys and men both made it more likely for these men to reject culturally ascendant models of masculinity (based on the fact that they would be unlikely to be successful at fulfilling those expectations as men) and to seek out alternative settings and relationships in which they could be recognized and rewarded for their particular strengths and abilities.

Physicality and athletic prowess was a big issue for a number of the men. For instance, Chris Simpson was aware of gender at an early age, because he lagged behind other boys in developing physical coordination. In response, he sought out other friends and other activities that didn't require physical skills. As he said,

> Gender was something I was pretty sensitive to at an early age, because I was [laughs slightly] a-physical. [laughs] … So, um, from the beginning, I was sort of on the bottom of the heap there. .. When I saw something I wasn't good at, I wouldn't put a lot of stock into it. I would just be like, 'Forget you guys. I'm going over here.'

"Going over here" translated into forming friendships with other marginalized boys in school. It also involved getting highly involved in Boy Scouts. Ironically, while Boy Scouts was initially created to provide masculine involvement in boys' lives at a time when fears that mothers were feminizing boys were quite high (Kimmel [1996] 2006), Chris experienced Boy Scouts as a welcome alternative to the gendered hierarchy of school. He acknowledged that it was hierarchical as well, but he argues that it doesn't fit into the freaks, cool kids, and jocks cliques and therefore allowed a different kind of expression, such as cultivating leadership. As a student affairs professional, this is highly relevant for him.

Boy Scouts couldn't shield Chris from the discomfort he felt about the fact that he had difficulty appealing to girls when he was in junior high. As he said,

> I felt like I didn't hit any of the skills. I felt like there was a strong emphasis on being able to attract a mate, like being able to get the girl. And I didn't have any of the 'sexy skills' that would land a girl. … 'Cause, in junior high, you know, people don't walk up to you and be like, 'Oh, you're really good at group facilitation! Like, do you want to go to the dance?'

In any case, Chris attributes his heightened sense of empathy for others to the fact that he experienced what it is like to feel different from others. I have discussed the issue of physicality, but it is also true that Chris felt different on the basis of social class. Although he grew up in an affluent area, his family had less money than his peers, so he was acutely aware of class distinctions from a young age. As an underdog, he came to champion other underdogs. He said,

> I really feel like there's a thing to … perceived difference. Perceived difference is something that I know was really important in my development. Whether that was around class or … around social status questions. … For a long time, when I was growing up, and even like formative elementary years, I remember perceiving myself as different or as kind of, I don't know, more the underdog or not as cool or not as smart or whatever. … So I think that led ME to look at how other people were feeling.

Like Chris, Doug Silverwood reported that he had difficulty with physicality too. He told me that he was a "short, little, fat kid" who wasn't good in sports and who cried easily. What interests me about Doug, and what would surprise critics of 'soft' and 'sensitive' men, is that Doug believes that he was able to develop a sense of himself as masculine through engaging with feminism as opposed to losing masculinity. As he said,

> I was not a masculine kid, you know. I didn't excel in sports. I was a short, little, fat kid who was easy to come to tears. … I've become more manly in my [snickers] post-feminist than in my pre-feminist days, and a lot of that's probably just based on self-assurance and self-esteem that has allowed that to blossom. … I was already degendered prior to, you know, politics in a lot of ways, 'cause … it was just never in my nature to want to dominate people and to want ta hurt people if they hurt me. But, if somebody hurt me, I've always been able to cry about it. [chuckles]

Being able to cry and wanting to avoid dominating people is very consistent with the expectations placed upon men who wish to engage in anti-sexism (and feminism) as I discuss in Chapter Five. I will revisit this notion of 'degendering' in that chapter. For now, it is sufficient to note that Doug's experience of himself as different from other boys and men allowed for him to (eventually) become the kind of man who was open to feminism.

As someone who was born with a congenital degenerative condition, Ted Evans has known his whole life that he is different from most other boys and men. He accepted this long ago. He recalls from an early age his parents talking with him about how others respond to him and that he needs to respect difference in others, so he tries to practice that ardently. The physical difference wasn't the only significant difference however, because, while he's not as emotionally expressive as his wife would like him to be (largely due to the influence of his parents he says), he's always felt a willingness to perform domestic work and never found that to be threatening to his masculinity. His friends in graduate school noted this in him. As he said,

> Well, like my roommates in graduate school put it one day, well, they put it lots of times. They always said I would make somebody a good wife some day. [laughs] So I've always kind of felt that way. That has always been true, you know, because I do cook. I do clean. I don't mind doing it. I keep up with it for the most part. So yeah. I've never really thought of myself as a MANLY MAN who refused to do all those kinds of things or thought it was BENEATH me or not MY JOB or responsibility to do all those things. My mom instilled that stuff in me. … The stuff you have to do growing up. She thought it was important that I learned to do it. Once I moved out, it was just commonplace to do it. I did my laundry when I stayed at home, so, when I moved away, I already knew how to do laundry. I knew how to cook. My mom taught me. Plus I worked in restaurants for many years and learned to cook. So I knew how to do those things, and it didn't bother me to do those things. So I never thought

> of myself as a true *manly man*. And I don't want to be thought of as a TRUE MANLY MAN.

In contrast, the same was not quite as true for Gary Estes. As I discussed before, the primary difficulty Gary experienced was in not being manly enough to satisfy his father. While he felt uncomfortable at school for not developing the kind of body that is culturally valued as masculine, he had to contend with his father's disapproval for not being proficient in his father's favored activities. He shared Chris' unhappiness at having difficulty in attracting a date. It has taken him a long time to feel comfortable about his masculinity.

Ray Morrow was both more fortunate and less fortunate than Gary. He too felt different when he was growing up, but, like Chris, he was able to cultivate friendships that somewhat shielded him from this, though it's true that his friends were among those who highlighted his 'difference.' For instance, Ray's closest friends regarded him as a 'fag' for the various ways in which he was different from them: for being "the little drama geek" who performed in musical theater, for being worried about Greg Luganis when he hit his head on the diving platform at the Olympics, and for admiring Brian Boitano, the professional skater. However, he says that the friends in his group all got along well (partly based on a shared experience of being Jewish in the Archdiocese of Long Island, where Catholic boys would taunt them for being "kikes"). The fact that he was different from his friends actually allowed Ray to feel better about himself in some ways. As he said,

> They are all somewhat emotionally detached themselves [like my father], so I was their social committee chair. [chuckles] You know, making sure we were all getting together that night. … So yeah, no, it wasn't awkward. You know, … I felt good, because, … they were just so smart, these guys. They were just so smart. And um, so I felt like … I had an

> intelligence that they did not possess. You know? … So. It was, you know, before I … knew anything about Howard Gardner and the multiple intelligences, but, uh, yeah it was where I felt, you know, 'Wow, I can do something they can't do.'

At the same time, Ray also didn't fit in with most other boys outside of his friendship group, and, while this helped him to work out how to be a man in a different way, his experience of being different among these boys had unpleasant consequences. His parents sent him to a summer camp for seven years from age eight until age fifteen (when they started sending him on six week 'teen trips' instead), and he found that camp to be awful and terrifying.[43] While he appreciates learning how to camp, sail, water ski, and shoot an arrow, his interactions with other residents of this camp involved coercion and intimidation and possibly some form of assault, though he wouldn't specify. As he said, "This kid would just tie me up with this other kid [in this bunk]. I mean, it was just terrible! It was awful. It was a traumatic experience." Still, as terrible as that experience was for him, it does represent a time when he recognized that he didn't need to fit in and be an 'alpha male.' He said,

> It was an 'Alpha Male Training Camp.' … I mean, it was, and I just didn't fit in. So, I mean, I think I … realized that I was not this 'GUY.' And I don't know what that means, you know. … I don't think I compromised, because I wasn't a 'guy.' I just realized that it wasn't that important to me to, [pause] to 'rule.' You know? To realize that everything is sharing. I don't know.

Ray indicated to me that he still has the experience of being different from other men now that he is an adult. He recounted a story about going to parties with the teachers at

[43] Ray's story about camp was heartbreaking, because he made it quite clear that it was very hard on him to be sent away from his family all the time. He pointed out that it was ironic that his mother would agree to do this, because her parents sent her away when she was a girl, and she hated the experience too. While Ray's father was definitely emotionally unavailable to him (Ray said that he felt more like an employee than a son at times, particularly given that his father would summon Ray and his brothers to his office using the intercom), the experience of being sent away created distance between himself and his mother as well. Because he didn't want to disappoint them, he lied and told them that he loved going to the camp.

the elementary school at which he worked before he was offered an assistant principal position. He said,

> [The husbands of some of the women who taught at that school] are just so 'bleh!' [chuckles] I mean, 'Hey, how ya doin?' 'Hey.' And they are just nothing. … [One time,] I brought Karaoke Revolution [snickers], and we are all doing Karaoke, and all the husbands were standing in the back against the wall. … I remember I brought some sort of Micro Brew that they didn't want. They only drank, you know, … what guys drink. … Bud in a can and just watching. And I know they were going, 'That guy's a fag. I know he's a fag.' You know. … I was like, 'You guys want to sing?!?!' 'No.' So I was like, 'Man!' You have to work so hard to be that way! It's got to be such hard work! [chuckles]

Not all of the men experienced sports and physicality to be a problem when they were younger, but being different from others was still meaningful for them. Josh Lewin indicated to me that, while he was more into academics, he was able to play sports. As he said, "[I was] not good enough to be on a team or anything like that, but good enough to, um, you know, to kind of feel like that was one way in which I participated in being a man." Jon Web actually excelled at sports, particularly football. He may not have had much of a choice about that, given that his father named him Jon because he thought 'Jon Webb' would make a great football name. While Jon's father was not particularly good at expressing his feelings to Jon, they were able to establish a connection through football, one that persists to this day.[44]

Although Andrew Sutherland played sports in high school, he never developed enough of an interest in sports to define his masculinity according to his ability to play

[44] It's also true that they established a connection through music, which implies to me that there was more than just the typical father-son bonding that depends on athletic participation (Messner 1990). When Jon and his sister became interested in music enough to move beyond just listening to pop on the radio, Jon's father got interested in their musical tastes and went to concerts with them. Jon is proud that his father attended a Pavement concert with him.

them. In his case, his attraction to the counter-culture was stronger than any need to fit in at school. As he said,

> I didn't fit in good enough. … Of course, that was back in the late 60s, early 70s where the long-haired musician culture is what I was fascinated with. Of course, if you are going to be a jock, you have to have short hair and be conventional. So, of the two things, one had to go. It wasn't me who thought this up. I was pretty comfortable really. The coaches were like, 'This isn't going to work kid. You got to be our way or no way.' So I was, 'No way.'

Andrew also pointed out that he "lacked a certain amount of competitiveness." That certainly would make a difference in one's ability to remain engaged in organized sports, and I find it significant for the project of "electing not to participate" that Andrew has adopted. I discuss this in the next section, and I return to this in Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance.'

Tucker Kinsey didn't participate in male peer groups when he was in school, though his non-participation was not entirely voluntary as compared to Andrew's. He hung out more with girls, because he wasn't as active or coordinated as other boys when he was younger. Somewhat like Chris, Tucker told me that the experience of being ostracized (both based on this and also his later mood disorder) helped him to relate to women's experiences of oppression and marginalization. He said,

> I was always just … a little bit, um, different. OK, there was something. I both felt it, and people noticed it. … There was something different. I made different choices. … I can't really put … my finger on it, but I was … a weird kid. And more than just … your average weird kid. … I recall feeling, uh, mildly ostracized, OK. So I hung out with the girls more. And, uh, so I was a little bit, uh, less active. … Uh, I was not very coordinated in my younger years. I had a lot of difficulty with that. T-Ball, and batting, and throwing, and catching were hard. And, uh, so I would skip … T-Ball … practice. … I felt so uncomfortable about it, whether it was because of teasing or just because I felt uncomfortable I'm

> not entirely sure. … But then, as a result, I didn't do those 'traditional' 'boy things', OK. So what you end up doing then is hanging out or wanting to hang out with girls more. And taking on more 'traditional' 'female things' that you like to do. You know. Less aggressive stuff. … Uh. So I think that [short pause] allowed for an understanding. … I could relate to … being maligned in similar ways. … Not necessarily to the same extent. Actually, because I am … a white male in America, or in the world even, you know, I have a great amount of privilege.

According to Joel Sewald, it shouldn't be surprising for men who are different from other men to take up alternative masculinity projects. He speculated that men who give up male privilege do so because it is in their interests. He said,

> I'm kind of like a believer in the class struggle, and, in some ways, I think it's no different for gender. And, um, men who give up masculine privilege, men who give up the sort of traditional forms of male privilege, you know, maybe it's because they're terribly virtuous, but I think that probably in most cases it's probably because, uh, you know, that traditional male privilege wasn't really working for them to begin with, … and, uh, they think they can make a better deal for themselves [chuckles] with a different kind of masculinity. … So, I think that was certainly true in my case.

I think he's probably correct, though I don't think this is all there is to say about men's anti-sexism. The fact that anti-sexist men often display a commitment to and a capacity for feeling empathy for women persuades me that men's attempts to make anti-sexist change with women is more than merely about their own self-interest. Also, the fact that a number of the men indicated that they were mobilized to work toward change as part of their engagement with movements for social justice suggests that there is a collective aspect of their anti-sexism that goes beyond their individual experiences.

ENGAGEMENT WITH MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

For some of the men, becoming involved in movements for social justice was transformational, inspiring them to critique existing social relations and adopt a more egalitarian stance toward relationships with women. In several cases, but not all, this

involved adopting the label of feminist for themselves too.[45] Joel Sewald, Josh Lewin, Doug Silverwood, Mark Holland, Paul Denbigh, Brian Mason, and Andrew Sutherland were all influenced by counter-cultural movements in one way or another.[46] I have already discussed Joel Sewald's and Josh Lewin's experiences in some detail, so I will focus on the others here.

Doug was a fundamentalist Christian when he was a youth,[47] and his biggest political issue was anti-choice. The fact that he became political at all was influenced by the church, because his family was quite apolitical overall. He moved away from fundamentalism[48] when he was inspired by the pacifist message of the bible and began to read more broadly. As he said,

> Once I picked up on that peace issue, … within a month … I BRIEFLY flirted with anarchism, … and then I thought it was too idealistic and fell into socialism where I kind of stayed for a long time before I really became dubious of centralized authority. Then I called myself a decentralized socialist for a number of years, until I realized, 'Well, that's the same thing as anarchy.' And I was resonating more with the anarchists, so I kind of went back to anarchy. But I've been a devoted far left radical since … sixteen years old I guess when I had that experience. I was still a Christian for a long time and still kept that, because then I discovered the Social Gospel movement, um, at the turn of the century

[45] As I explain later, adopting the label of feminist does not always translate into feminist practice. Joel Sewald is a good example of this, as he quite honestly explained to me.

[46] Charlie Adkins could be discussed here, though I'm less sure about the relative influence of his childhood experience of living in a commune, since he speaks of hating that experience. I find this a little ironic, given that he is currently involved with a venture to purchase land and develop it to allow a core group of families to live together on weekends and during summer vacations. I asked him about this, and he admitted to me that he hadn't made the connection between this and his past experience with his parents. When he talked about his decision to scale back at work by job sharing with a co-worker to make equally shared parenting possible, he referred to reading scientific literature about child development as the inspiration.

[47] He explained to me that his parents were not particularly religious. His aunt influenced him to begin attending church, and he did so initially as much to have something to do as because he was interested, though he also noted that he felt uncomfortable at his public school when other children demonstrated knowledge of biblical stories that were discussed in class.

[48] I was quite amused when Doug told me that his family actually preferred his turn to radical leftist politics to his earlier adoption of fundamentalism, because he was less intolerant as a lefty than he ever was as a "fundy." It reminded me of my own experiences growing up in a mostly apolitical family in which having strong views and wanting to make arguments about inequality is interpreted as 'ranting' and being extreme.

> through the thirties. … There's a whole left Christianity, um, historically, you know, um, that I discovered and started to read about. And so that still, uh, resonated with me until I got into … college and learned about ethnocentrism kind of, which put the final nail in the coffin of my fundamentalism, because I thought, 'Well, … that's kind of ethnocentric to think that Jesus is the only path to salvation!' It's like, 'What is the fairness of this system, where, if you happened to have grown up in a Christian society, your chances of reaching salvation are infinitely greater than people who are Hindus, you know.' … It just struck me as ludicrous.

Doug's college experience supported his radicalization, combining coursework in sociology with protests against the Persian Gulf War and against the attempt to locate a toxic waste incinerator in his local community. He became heavily involved with SEAC, the Student Environmental Action Coalition, which proved to be another defining moment in his transformation from a man who was sexist and "as empathetic as a rock" into a feminist man who prioritizes active listening, empathy, and radical egalitarianism with women.

Mark Holland's experiences were similar to Doug's, though anarchist direct action is more central for him, and he was never as religious as Doug was.[49] He became interested in the punk music scene in high school, which prompted a critique of capitalism and class inequality[50] and which made the fact that he grew up in poverty after his parents divorced considerably easier to tolerate. He just simply didn't care as much that he didn't have nice clothes or lots of material possessions. When he came to college, his coursework, particularly that in sociology, supported his leftist views and helped to

[49] While Doug has remained committed to faith, Mark has mostly abandoned the Catholicism of his youth.

[50] Despite his mother's poverty, Mark had close personal experiences with people who were much more affluent than he was. His paternal grandmother was quite wealthy, and she paid for him to attend an all-boy private school. To this day, he is disappointed that she insisted on spending the money that way instead of offering to help make sure they had food to eat and money to pay bills. During high school, he also dated the daughter of a wealthy man who was quite connected to Republican politicians. Mark encountered a number of politically influential men during this time, and he was horrified at how phony he perceived them to be.

radicalize him even further, though the fact that he became associated with the local anarchist community is also very important. During the course of becoming radicalized, he encountered and embraced feminism, which sparked a project of personal transformation that is intended to make it possible for him to be truer to his leftist and feminist principles and better able to effect collective change through protest and resistance.

Despite the fact that Paul Denbigh's parents were reactionary (as he characterized them) and tried to shield him from alternative viewpoints, Paul eventually moved away from his parents' conservative and 'traditional' influence. While in college, he grew disillusioned with journalism, his chosen major. He and some other journalists were covering a demonstration by some Iranian students about the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and a woman appeared on campus with a gun, threatening to kill herself. The other reporters just wanted her to hurry up and get it over with, some so they could go back to meet their deadlines and others happily pointing out that they could make the front page if she did kill herself. This repulsed him. He decided that he had greater respect for the woman who came from the Counseling Center to talk to the woman, so he decided to seek service opportunities as an alternative path. He considered enlisting in the military for a time, which is ironic given that he is now the coordinator of a peace and social justice organization. As he told me though, he hadn't adopted pacifism at that point and had the idea that the military entailed service: "'Maybe I'll see about joining the military. Yeah, service. Service, service! That's what it's called, right? The service.'" In the end though, he opted to volunteer with VISTA, Volunteers in Service to America, because the military recruiter lost his test results, and he didn't want to have to retake the test.

VISTA sent him to Alaska, where he was radicalized through his experience of working with a non-profit native corporation, because he came to recognize the 'Other America' that was "much more invisible to the general public unless you're in the middle of it." It was there that he realized the problems of overconsumption and the need for social justice work.[51]

Within a year though, his father died, so he decided to return home to help financially support his mother and his siblings, but this was challenging, because, by this point, he was trying to work out an 'alternative lifestyle' that was unlike that practiced by his parents. He said,

> I was really torn. … I felt like I was starting to become aware of the world more so and wanted to be about service and doing some kind of alternative lifestyle. Not to be so hooked up into the material world and trying to help be a social agent for change. … And sometimes I kind of … wonder if … part of my inspiration, you know, to do this was … not to be another [man like my] father. … I was telling my mom, you know, I said 'Hey, you know. … I'm not going to try to pretend to replicate what dad did … monetarily. I mean, I can't see doing that, and I don't want to. I don't want to encourage that. … We're going way beyond our needs, you know.' … I didn't want to support that way of living. … My mom was never pushing me and saying, 'Oh, you need to, you know, work and help support our family.' I mean, she was never urging me to do that. It was just more of an … ambivalence I had really. … I didn't want to bail out on my family. They had been there for me and supported me, but, you know, realizing that … I was willing to help with needs but not with wants. You know. It was kind of determining.

As a result, he worked in a slaughterhouse for a while to make enough money to support his family. He eventually returned to college to finish his journalism degree at his mother's insistence, and it was there that he was exposed to the Catholic Worker

[51] Part of the reason I recount this in so much detail is that it is useful to acknowledge how contingent lives can be. Often, men tell chronological narratives about their lives that stress intentionality, giving the impression that they made decisions based on knowing how things would turn out ahead of time (Passerini 1989). Paul's example demonstrates that this is often not the case.

Movement[52] while taking a Peace Studies class. He then proceeded on a long course of activism and service: working for a Catholic soup kitchen, moving into a local Catholic men's homeless shelter and helping to run it for a year, protesting to encourage nuclear disarmament, living and working on a Catholic Worker farm for a year, helping to run a Catholic hospitality house for homeless women and children, working to oppose the war waged against the Nicaraguan people by the Contras, assisting with the local men's homeless shelter again for another five years, and then eventually coordinating an interfaith peace and social justice organization. During this time, he became an involved father of three children, and he has striven to practice egalitarianism with each of the women with whom he has been involved, even after his romantic relationships with them have ended.[53]

Like the other men just discussed, Brian has had a long history of political involvement in left causes and with the counter-culture. During the 1970s, he was raised

[52] While he had grown quite critical of Catholicism and Christianity by this point, particularly after learning of the experiences of Native Peoples who were forced to assimilate to Christianity, he was moved by "people who were being serious about their faith." Despite his involvement with the Catholic Worker Movement and various other Catholic service organizations, his approach to religion is quite eclectic, and he speaks of Jesus and Buddha in the same sentence. Like Doug, he believes there are multiple paths to salvation.

[53] When he began his relationship with Julie, he had to scale back on his activism, because, although she is a "dear-hearted, compassionate person," she is "apolitical." He and Julie opened a day care center together during this time. Eventually, he felt that he was compromising the person he needed to be, so he ended the romantic relationship with Julie, stopped working on the daycare, and resumed his political involvement and service work. This was hastened along by the fact that, around this time, one of the mothers became very distraught to discover that he had brought a homeless man to the house where they ran the daycare to give him an opportunity to get a bath and a hot meal. Julie and Paul remained friends after the breakup, and he remained very involved in the life of his son and in the life of the daughter that Julie had with another man after her relationship with Paul ended. As he said in reference to Julie's daughter, "we kind of adopted one another." He later met Cassandra and began a relationship with her. Despite the fact that she was not supposed to be able to conceive a child, she became pregnant, and they had a daughter together. At one point, Paul, Julie, and Cassandra decided to live together so that the children could live with their parents in one household. This worked for a while, but Cassandra eventually moved out, because she didn't get along with the two older children. Paul still lives with Julie as friends, and he works to maintain the relationship with Marie, the child he had with Cassandra, even though he doesn't get along with Cassandra very well any more. He is now involved in a romantic relationship with a third woman, and he has no current plans to move in with her.

in a commune. Later, he spent 4 ½ years in an ashram, an intentional community that emphasizes spirituality. He told me that he always jokes that he is "left of Lenin." While he wasn't particularly progressive as a teenager, by the time he was in college, he had become involved with CISPES, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. He participated in the March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights in 1987, and he viewed gay and lesbian issues as very important to him at that time, because he lost people he knew to AIDS. What hit him particularly hard was losing his best friend from high school, and he helped take care of his friend's lover during his friend's illness and death. Later, during graduate school, he worked in an organization "which is an offshoot of the NOW Legal Defense Fund." At that time, he also affiliated with the people who created the Communications Consortium Media Center, a public interest information dissemination organization designed to assist nonprofit organizations in their efforts to influence social policy. His counter-cultural experiences and his progressive activism set him up to engage with feminism, particularly because he figured out that the women he was interested in were engaged with feminism themselves. It is somewhat less clear that accepting feminism in principle translates into practicing feminism though, something I consider in more detail when I discuss Brian again in Chapter Six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality.'

Andrew Sutherland has been somewhat less activist in practice than Doug, Mark, Paul, and Brian but he was equally as influenced by the fundamental transformations of the last half century and by the left movements of the late-1960s and 1970s. As a considerably younger child in an older family, Andrew identified more with liberalizing

social changes that were going on than with the politics of his "Uber-Catholic" mother and his anti-church, uninvolved, alcoholic father. As he said,

> We had four kids in the family. Mom and a dad. … The first three [children] were sort of in a group, and then I came along about ten years after the last one, so my parents were both in their forties when I was born. … That was kind of a big deal, because, um, I happened to be born and raised right in that … era of the fifties and sixties when a lot of stuff changed society-wise. … And my family, being so much older than me … always produced a little bit of a oddity.

Andrew channeled his energies into music and into being different, which mightily displeased his father, who literally wanted him to get a haircut and get a job. He met Mary at one of his shows and began a long-distance relationship with her before eventually moving to Missouri to live with her. He became a social worker, and he has quite intentionally remained in an entry-level position for his entire career, partly because he feels that he can make a difference in peoples' lives if he is actively involved in working with families but also because he sees himself as part of a group of artists who are "electing not to participate." He refers to the men with whom he is friends as bums, men "who are not living up to their potential in the economic sphere. … They might be able to quote a bunch of strange books, but they are hard pressed to buy a new car." While his project of "electing not to participate" is clearly (to me) a class-based one, it poses implications for how he does masculinity at work. At the same time, because it is primarily a class critique, this doesn't necessarily translate into as many anti-sexist practices in his relationship with Mary as I find with certain other men who have engaged with feminism along with their engagement with socialism and anarchism.

STRONG WOMEN

Humorists and critics have roundly satirized 'New Men'[54] for being feminized, domesticated, and wimpy to the point at which the men in question have even been suspected of being gelded by women (McMahon 1999). It seems obvious to me that these charges are designed to police masculine behavior and to obscure the possibility of engaging in egalitarian relationships with women whom men respect and regard as equal partners. The hysteria of the more extreme anti-egalitarian criticism appears to be unfounded in light of the kinds of relationships established by the men with whom I talked. They *were* virtually unanimous in declaring the importance of being in relationships with *strong* women who could maintain a sense of autonomy in the relationship, from whom they didn't have to expect deference, and whom they could respect as equals. However, the explicit goal was equity in the relationship (though the men differed in the strategy of arriving there), and at no point did the men indicate that they were seeking to be dominated or that, in fact, they were dominated by their women partners. Actually, some of the men talked about taking steps to empower their partners when they felt the women weren't sufficiently strong and autonomous. While some of the men expressed discomfort about being regarded as less than masculine in earlier periods of their lives, they expressed almost no concerns that strong women would compromise their feeling of being masculine.[55]

[54] I discuss 'New Men' in Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance.'

[55] One of the few exceptions to this was Charlie Adkins, who told me that, if he and his wife don't avoid talking about the fact that she out earns him, they have a harder time feeling passionate when they want to be intimate. He said that the reason for this is that they both interpret her earning more as a sign of power that is typically associated with masculinity.

When talking about his wife, Kate, Gary Estes expressed what appears to be a very common sentiment: "There's so many qualities about her that I really admire. … [I] love that she's not sort of a passive, wilting flower kind of personality." Likewise, Josh Lewin told me that it was very important for him when he met his wife Diane that she be a feminist and a strong woman. He said that he recalls thinking that she wasn't feminist enough at the time, and he finds this to be very funny since she has developed into a strong ally for women on campus.

Despite the fact that he engaged in womanizing for years before entering graduate school in social work, a change of career that also marks a shift toward a more reflective engagement with feminism, Ryan Ostrin is also attracted to "very strong, assertive women." He finds rebelliousness and a desire for self-protection to be very attractive. He said,

> I'm generally attracted … to very strong, assertive women. … I used to make a joke about, you know, the majority of the women that I've … dated or been attracted to … didn't shave and were vegetarians. I mean, it became almost a cliché, you know. … There's a rebelliousness. There's a … self-protection element that … I find very attractive. [That] they're aware of, um, the oppressive forces that are at work against them. And that they're willing … to protect themselves from that.

Just finding a strong woman with whom to have a relationship doesn't guarantee equality however, if the relationship is based more on struggles for control instead of on striving for cooperation. In his longest relationship to date, Ryan and his then-partner, Renata, conflicted quite a bit. Ryan partly attributes this to Renata's borderline personality disorder, and he told me that his relationship with her affected how he related to women later. For a number of years, he avoided relationships and intimacy and sought only casual sex. He said,

> I think I equate power with manipulation. … In my [longest] relationship … with … Renata, … a lot of just really nasty habits that … developed in that relationship, and there was a lot of power/control issues. … She was brilliant and a double major in political science and philosophy, and we had some humdingers of discussions. … But intellectually, … it was fiery and fascinating, … and socially and emotionally it was just terribly destructive. … We were both combating … for control in the relationship. Um. And … the behaviors and attitudes that carried over from that relationship, um, meshed nicely with my idea of … the successful, wild, rock and roll musician. … One who manipulates his environment. Are you a player? Um, do you manipulate women? Do you manipulate money? Finances, power. I mean, it's all wrapped up in that. … Pimp is an extension of that. That specifically refers to having sexual and physical power over women and using abuse often to do that. So, I mean, … it becomes part of … the cultural mythology.

Ryan eventually recognized that he needed emotional connections with women to feel whole, so he made a conscious effort to establish actual relationships with women instead of just using them for sex. Since he made an issue of power, I asked him to put the issue of trying not to use power over others in context by talking about his current relationship. I specifically asked him whether it is a goal to avoid engaging in the kinds of practices he had just described, whether he feels successful at doing that, and how he goes about doing that. He said that the two relationships he's been in since he moved to Columbia have been the first relationships in which he's been conscious of those dynamics. He's pleased with the fact that he's been respectful to those women and aware of the power dynamics between them.

Ryan said that his current partner, Tracy, is a little bit different compared to most of the women he's dated, because she's less assertive. He said that he's encouraged her to become more assertive and that's she's "becoming more comfortable with that," so I asked him if it would matter to him if she wasn't. He said it would. He said,

> Tracy's been kind of the one person outside that box. Uh. [Brad: Meaning that she's less assertive?] She's less assertive. … I've kind of

> tried to encourage her to become more assertive, … and she's becoming more comfortable with that. … [Brad: What if she wasn't? … Would that … matter?] [short pause] Huh. [sighs] Yeah. … I think … it's extremely important to be aware of … the socializing, um, forces that are at work, whether it be the media, um, oppressive ideologies, whatever, that are at work against you. … That are … looking to compromise your health … for profit. … That's just a really important value of mine.

Ryan said that he is careful not to take advantage of Tracy's naivety and inexperience, and he has introduced her to empowerment and alternative concepts of femininity through feminism. He said,

> These are the first two relationships where I've been … very conscious … of those kinds of dynamics. … And I'm very pleased … with my behavior in … those and being respectful and being aware of power dynamics. … [There is an] age discrepancy with my … current girlfriend. … She was twenty when I met her. … There's a … lack of … world experience … and insight that goes along with that, um, which made me kind of uncomfortable. … I didn't want to take advantage of any of that kind of naivety or inexperience, um, which made me nervous at first. … I think I've guarded against that very well. … She came from a very traditional background. … I've introduced her to a lot of topics … of feminism and … power [dynamics], … and, you know, uh, alternative concepts of femininity. … So, yeah! … I have a good conscience … in the current relationship.

I wanted to probe a little further, so I said,

> It's really actually quite common for people to end up in relationships where … they don't really share the same ideals and ideologies about men and women. And usually that's men wanting more inequality and women wanting more equality. You know, so I was just wondering what would happen if you found yourself in a situation where … you didn't move toward, um, common ground in terms of what you both thought about these sorts of things? You know what I'm trying to say?

He replied,

> I, I think so. … So you're saying in situations where she would want less equality [chuckling], and I would want –? [Brad: Or where she wouldn't feel the necessity of becoming assertive and independent and strong in her own right.] Um. Y-, yeah? I mean, um. [pause] We would have a lot less in common. … It would make her less attractive to me. … [Brad:

> Would it make her less attractive to you to a point at which you would want to be … in a different relationship?] Maybe.

Sam has a similar experience in that he and Faith aren't quite evenly matched in their commitment to equality. Initially, Sam thought that he was dating a woman who 'needs' to be in control, who makes a lot of decisions, and who seemed independent and strong-willed. He said that it turned out that this impression turned out to be not entirely true. He said,

> For instance, in the relationship I'm in now, Faith wants to cook for me. … And like there's other similar things like that. Like any … physical contact, I'm supposed to initiate it. And things like that. … When I first started this relationship with Faith, she's really the kind of person that needs to be in control. And so she makes a lot of decisions in the relationship, so that is different. You know, I'm not the one making every decision. … Which I think men are typically expected to do. … And so I thought, at first, that that was kind of how it was, but then she's, you know, got the cooking thing … and will do my laundry or so. That's an issue. So, at first, I think I might have been attracted because this seemed like a really independent, strong-willed individual. … And, you know, you get into it a little bit more, it turns out that's probably not the case.

This provokes some discomfort in him, because Faith appears to want to create a more traditional relationship that he doesn't want. He went on to describe the woman with whom he was involved before Faith. He described a woman who was strong in certain respects, as she demonstrated to him when she chose not to follow him to a different place when he went to graduate school for his Master's, but who also wanted a big wedding and took for granted that their children would take his name. He said,

> And, for that matter, my ex-girlfriend is the same way. … She knows what she wants to do, you know. When I first moved to my Master's program, … I said, 'You know, you can move to [new city] with me if you want to do that.' And I actually admired that she said, 'There's a job I want here. I'm going to try and get it.' And I thought that was great. You know? … Because I always wondered … why would a woman … follow [a man]. Kind of frowned on it in my own way. … So I think there are certainly strong characteristics about most of the women I've dated. Like

> independence and stuff. … For that matter, my ex-girlfriend I think cooked for me twice ever in five years. … So, … um, maybe that one was more equal than I thought. But she's all about, you know, having a big wedding. … So, uh, it seems that I haven't seen it ALL in one place anyway.

He doesn't think he's attracted to one type of woman, though he noted that all of the women he's dated have been older than him and taller than him, and he recognizes that this is not typical. Since strength came up in both descriptions, I asked him if something else that is common among the women is that they are strong-willed and independent. He said that this is definitely true and that another way of saying that is to say that they are autonomous and that both of them can do their own thing so that a woman would not rely on him to be a provider. He does want them to need him emotionally though so that they will want to come to him to talk about problems. He said that he would feel jealous if his partner was sharing things with another man instead of with him. He added that he would feel inadequate if a partner wouldn't let him talk to him about issues in her life. He said,

> Another way of saying that would be it seems like they really don't need me, which is good and bad, you know. Like I can feel like we can be autonomous. … Do our own things. But, at the same time, it's nice to be needed a little bit. … [Brad: Could you talk a little more about that idea of autonomy?] Yeah. I suppose, um, emotionally. Like, in our relationship, I want to be the person that the other one talks with about problems and stuff. … For instance, when I see somebody struggling through something, especially if it's somebody I care about that much, I want them to talk with me about it and help. You know, at least I can be there for them. … Whereas I'd feel REALLY inadequate when they just won't let me in to understand what's going on. Like that's been a problem for me in my current relationship and elsewhere. So that's one way I really like to feel needed or included in what's going on. … But how I DON'T want to be needed [is with] some of the really materialistic things. … I don't want to be expected to pay for every meal, … pay the rent and all those things. [Brad: So … when you referenced autonomy, … um, like the flip side of that would be dependency then?] Yeah. … There was a theory of dialectical tensions. … That, in every relationship

> supposedly, … you're trying to find the right balance between you and the other person in terms of dependence and independence and autonomy. … So yeah. Um. But dependence, if they're depending on you emotionally, usually that's fine. There can be a line where it's too much, like, 'Hey, I got a lot of stuff I gotta deal with too.' … But emotionally dependent I don't mind as much as financially.

He stressed that he doesn't want a woman to be emotionally dependent upon him to the extent that it would give him control over her. In the process, he seemed to be saying that emotional connection is a natural need since he contrasted that with financial dependency, which he regards as socially constructed and arbitrary. He said,

> That's something for me that all people need. You know what I mean? … And that's how I would justify it. 'Cause I know that some guys would probably want their partner or their girlfriend to be emotionally dependent, because that gives them some kind of control, … but … I think every single person needs that to some extent. Some more than others need to have somewhere to go with those things. Whereas the financial one … seems to me just, again, socially constructed. … And arbitrary.

Concern about women's dependence was a definite theme for several of the men. For instance, Geoff Riley broke up with his last partner partly because he was uncomfortable with the fact that his preferences mattered more in their relationship. He wanted a partner who would be more of an equal. It became obvious to him that his career choices had and would continue to have greater weight in their decisions for where to live, and this troubled him. As he said,

> Well, I feel like … there grew like … a power imbalance between us, because it was more that she would be willing to drop anything for me, and I wouldn't for her. … I don't mean I put it that directly in my head, but it's really kind of what it felt like. … I felt like, 'Wow. She would move here to this … shit place, you know?' [chuckles] … That bothered me that she would do that. … It didn't bother me about her. … That was just a problem for me. Just fundamentally. So, I didn't feel comfortable with that. You know? I just thought, 'Well, maybe there's something wrong here then.' … Something wrong with me. … At least wrong with us on my side. [Brad: Right.] And … that was when I really first started to think about like breaking up, you know, as a possibility.

Geoff said that he believes Jane was aware of the imbalance before he was, claiming that a future breakup would affect her more than him. He said,

> She said this early on. … It was our first sort of, um, tiff [chuckles], you know? And she said something about what … worries her is that, … IF or when the relationship ends, that … I'll be fine and she'll be sort of … more affected than I will be. … You know, in the end, heh, … I was … devastated, you know, even though like I was the one [who broke up with her]. … So, um, but, at the same time, like she kind of … was very early on aware of that imbalance I think.

Geoff said that he came to understand that Jane was more willing to place her interests and wants second to his, though it took him a few years to recognize this about the relationship. He believes this imbalance between them was due more to Jane's experience with relationships than with any preference on his own part to have power over her. He said that Jane was aware that:

> She had more [invested in the relationship and] was more pliable, … and I didn't even know this. You know, I mean, that's not something I want. I don't want someone to … listen to my every whim or something. You know what I mean? [Brad: Uh huh.] Uh, but that's not … what happened either. But just that -. [Brad: There was that potential.] Yeah. Fundamentally, … because of the relationship that she came from, you know. … 'You sort of morph your interests and … things you like and want to this partner.' … I don't like that, you know. At all. Um, and I didn't even realize it was necessarily happening. You know, until like three years into it. … And then I was like, 'Wow,' you know. And that how I sort of understood this power imbalance, you know. Because it's like, 'No, no, no!'

Benjamin Moraga has concerns that are not unlike Geoff's reservations about inequity in decision-making about careers and other important relationship issues, but he is not using it as a basis to end his relationship with his partner, Lila. He says that he deeply respects Lila's talents as a writer, but he is troubled about her current lack of direction. He said,

> This is another thing I've had a serious problem with. She's decided that she doesn't really … have a career path. Um. And that's fine, but I told her, you know, that it's not fair. … I really don't think she knows [chuckles] what she wants. … I do know she knows that, for us to be together, it kind of constrains what … she can pursue. Right? … That's partly where I feel uncomfortable with that stuff. [Brad: You initially used the word … unfair. That you feel that way. Do you mind talking about that?] Saying that that's unfair? [Brad: Yeah.] Because we're choosing my career path over … hers. Yeah! I know, it is unfair. Yeah, it is. It's extremely unfair. I mean, like I said, because, you know, um, she doesn't know what she wants, and I do, … mine gets privileged. … I don't know if she doesn't know what she wants because she just doesn't KNOW or because we've already privileged mine and it limits hers. Right? So, I don't know. [short pause] I know she tells me she's happy about that situation. … At least in terms of … making that decision about my career. She tells me she's happy about it. Um. And so that's all … I can base it on.

While Chris Simpson's relationship with Kelli differs from Benjamin's relationship with Lila in that Kelli has embarked on a clearly defined career trajectory, Chris reported similar concerns about his need to draw out Kelli to ensure that she doesn't merely minimize her own needs in the relationship. He attribute this to the fact that she learned from her family to place the needs and interests of others before her own. He rejects that, because he wants his partner to be independent from him. He said,

> [Kelli's] been programmed that way through her family where her mother was always very much the center of attention on everything, and the only way she could realistically cope was to just, um, minimize her needs or not care about things or just kind of decide to shut down completely. … She'll yield to my interests more often … than not. … In order to achieve an equitable balance, I have to work really hard to draw her out of her shell. … I've never been attracted to either friendships, … or relationships, or even work situations where I have people, um, yielding to … my requests or trying to guess what I want, or I don't know. Kowtowing to me. … So in a relationship sense, … it's always made more sense to me to have somebody who … is their own person and is independent and trying to, you know, negotiate a balance between those personalities, and I … just find it more interesting.

Overall then, it should be clear that these men have sought out relationships with strong women, are sensitive to inequities of power in their relationships, and are willing to take steps to empower women if they perceive a lack of autonomy in their relationships. This was one of the most consistent findings in this study, a commonality that links together men who are otherwise engaged in fairly different masculinity projects in their attempts to produce 'fair' and deeply satisfying relationships with women (discussed in Chapter Six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality?').

DISCUSSION

As indicated by the literature cited at the beginning of this chapter, in their attempts to account for how and why men become anti-sexist, scholars have focused largely on significant relationships in men's lives. As that literature indicates, we should expect anti-sexist men to have negative experiences with fathers, often emotionally distant and uninvolved, that leads them to reject their fathers as models for their own masculinity, to have experience of strong mothers (and sisters) who both inspire respect for women and who demonstrate to the men that it is possible (and desirable) to balance self-development and one's commitment to caring for others through their participation in paid work, and adult experience with strong women and feminists who expect to be respected and treated fairly as a condition of having a relationship with them.

As I have shown, my findings are very consistent with this prior research. For instance, the common pattern of experiencing emotionally distant fathers is significant. These emotionally (and at times physically) absent fathers affected the men profoundly, and they focus on the loss that they feel as they look back across their lives to account for

their attempts to be different kinds of men and different kinds of fathers. Of course, it's equally important to acknowledge that many men experience emotionally distant fathers without becoming anti-sexist men in any way. Indeed, I believe that what we learn from the data that I have discussed in this chapter is that, while the men in my study may be exceptional men who intend to produce anti-sexist changes in their own lives with women (and beyond those relationships in certain cases), they could easily have become different men if they had undergone different life experiences. As I see it, one major factor is the importance of strong mothers in their accounts.

As the men have told us, their mothers were not only emotionally available and caring to them. They were also strong women willing to stand up to their husbands (and other men) when the need arose, and they were women who worked to help support their families. In some cases, they even served as the main source of income. While emotionally distant fathers provide negative exemplars for the men, their mothers provided mostly positive models for the kind of relationships that can and should be established with children and for the kinds of women who would make good partners and wives. Some also tempered the racism of fathers and encouraged their sons to keep open minds about controversial issues. Given that men's anti-sexist masculinity projects typically involve a certain amount of degendering and regendering (as discussed in Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance'), strong mothers likely provide models to the men for how to be different kinds of men than their fathers were to be able to sustain new kinds of relationships.

Perhaps as significant as strong mothers is the influence of strong women partners and wives. These women inspire men to make change, and they also demand such changes (though there is obviously some variation in this as indicated by men who express concern about lack of autonomy in their relationships). As should also be evident, the men with whom I talked were very concerned about issues of power. They saw rejecting power as central to their efforts to practice equality with women, but this was not about subordinating themselves to women. Despite popular images that characterize equity-minded and feminist men as weak (discussed in Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance'), I found these men to be confident, strong men who prefer to be with women who can match their strength. The men reject double standards that discourage women from being strong and men from seeking relationships with women who defy that proscription. It is very important to them that women be able to maintain a sense of autonomy in the relationship. Equally important is that the men want to be with women from whom they don't have to expect deference. I view this to be very important, because it calls upon us to recognize the relationality of constructions of gender and to remember that relationships are jointly produced. While women's strength appears to be important, so too is the fact that these men both expect it and work to support it in women because they are attempting to rework our expectations for gender. Although not all people who work out equal sharing relationships do so on the basis of egalitarian gender ideologies (Deutsch 1999), for those couples that do so, when women in these relationships appear to be strong, we should understand their strength not only as what made equal sharing possible in the first place but also as potentially a consequence of

working out equality with men who respect them and who are willing to share with them. To do otherwise might lead us to blame women in unequal relationships for simply being too weak to win their 'sharing showdowns' (Hochschild 1989) and therefore to fail to focus on the men's intentions in the relationship.

I have also presented findings that support Christian's (1994) contention that anti-sexist men are likely to have negative experiences in settings and relationships in which hegemonic expectations for masculine behavior were stressed and/or positive experiences in settings and relationships where conventional expectations for gender were not emphasized. It is certainly the case that at least some of the men experienced what Connell (1995) referred to as the moment of engagement, taking up hegemonic masculinity projects as their own before separating themselves from that project in a series of renunciations and negations of these conventional expectations for masculinity (discussed in Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance'). At the same time, a number of the men I interviewed were quite explicit about the fact that they felt (and were made to feel by others around them) unsuccessful in displaying competence in practicing culturally ascendant masculinity projects and that they explicitly distanced themselves from the people and settings that made them feel inferior for being different. In some cases, men have little choice in this, because they are marked as different by others. In other cases, there is more voluntarism involved, with men opting to be different in various ways. As I have shown though, they clearly ascribe to these experiences the motivation for practicing an alternative masculinity project that has the capacity to make them feel good about being men. In seeking out alternative settings and avoiding those that highlight

their difference from other boys and men, the men were encouraged to develop alternative masculinity projects based on rejecting competitive, physically dominating, emotionally distant, and sexually aggressive ways of being men. It is evident that these projects involve adopting practices that have conventionally been gendered as feminine, with the emphasis on emotional expression and empathy key among them.

CHAPTER FIVE – MASCULINITY POLITICS I: DEGENDERING/REGENDERING AND CONTESTING DIFFERENCE/DOMINANCE

Introduction

At the center of this project is a concern with masculinity politics, "those mobilizations and struggles where the meaning of masculine gender is at issue, and, with it, men's position in gender relations" (Connell 1995:205). Recognizing the historicity of gender relations and that masculinities are "configurations of practice that are constructed, unfold, and change through time" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:852), I focus here (and in the next chapter) on how particular men attempt to work out in practice dissident masculinity projects that contest the pattern of hegemony based on men's dominance over women (and other men) and/or gender difference between men and women.[56]

Although the term masculinity politics may evoke the image of men actively engaged with men's movements,[57] it is important not to treat gender politics too narrowly. Given that men must negotiate the meaning of masculinity within a matrix of domination (Collins 1990), their everyday/everynight practices are thoroughly political,

[56] I made no *a priori* assumptions about whether or not the men in my study would, in practice, contest both. It seems to me that it is possible to attack dominance while wishing to retain distinct gender differences and vice versa. However, I do assert that contesting one or the other ultimately implies contesting both difference and dominance when taken to a logical conclusion. In fact, when I refer to regendering (or recomposing) masculinity, I mean by this that it should be possible to do difference without also doing dominance. When based in exit politics (discussed below), regendered (or recomposed) masculinity represents doing difference in a fundamentally transformed way to make this a possibility.

[57] Although it is common to speak of *the* men's movement, it is more accurate to refer to men's movements given the diverse (and often divergent) range of interests, objectives, and strategies represented by men's rights groups, mythopoetic men's groups, the Promise Keepers, men's therapeutic talking groups, male gay liberation groups, groups promoting racialized masculinity politics, and various anti-sexist and feminist men's groups (Clatterbaugh 1997; Messner 1997).

whether or not they recognize that the personal is political. For this reason, I recruited men who are members of men's groups and men who are not. Some of the men explicitly defined their everyday/everynight practices in terms of political activism, while others did not. Not surprisingly, I found quite a range of anti-sexist practices, and I found examples of both social transformation and reproduction. Whether or not anti-sexist change among individual men in their personal lives signals encouraging prospects for broader collective change among men in general,[58] men's attempts to make this kind of change are both exciting and relevant to the extent that their prefigurative politics give us partial glimpses into a possible future in which gender difference does not have to be equated with gender dominance.

Masculinity Politics

Not surprisingly, there are a number of possibilities for framing masculinity politics. As Messner (1997) points out, a variety of masculinity politics have been created as men's movements have contended with issues such as: men's institutionalized privileges, the costs of masculinity for men, and differences and inequalities among men. As Messner points out, particular men's movements gain coherence as they emphasize, deemphasize, or even completely ignore certain issues. Likewise, Connell (1995, 1998) argues that it is possible to identify multiple sets of masculinity politics that arise in response to crisis tendencies in power relations, relations of cathexis, and relations of production in the contemporary gender order. Those that she regards as the four main forms of masculinity politics in core countries are: the gun lobby, masculinity therapy,

[58] In her appraisal of future prospects for what she calls men's anti-sexist exit politics, Connell (1995) is not optimistic about the prospects for this form of gender politics to appeal very broadly to men, based on her assumption that men have material interests in maintaining the patriarchal dividend. She argues instead for more energy to be devoted to alliance politics based on mobilizing overlapping interests in social justice.

gay liberation, and exit politics. I will briefly review each before focusing on the last form of masculinity politics in more detail.

THE GUN LOBBY

As Connell (1995) points out, most of the time, "the defence [sic] of the patriarchal order does not require an explicit masculinity politics" (p. 212). The institutionalization of gender inequality and the cultural ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity projects[59] typically serve to render these configurations of practice as invisible and taken-for-granted. When an active defense of hegemonic projects becomes necessary though, it is possible to identify what Connell (1995) has characterized as a "gun lobby" type of politics that is oriented toward maintaining competitive and dominance-oriented masculinity practices based on: glorification of hyper-masculine violence; the production of exemplary masculinities that embody masculine heroism, physical prowess and athletic ability, and/or heterosexual sexual conquest; and the legitimation of the continued (global) domination of ownership and management of corporations by men.

MASCULINITY THERAPY [60]

Whereas gun lobby politics represents the politics of hegemonic masculinity projects, Connell (1995) argues that masculinity therapy provides a politics for the masses of men who are mostly complicit with the hegemony of a male-dominated gender

[59] It is important to recognize that hegemonic masculinity projects are multiple and not monolithic. See Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) for a useful review of critiques of the concept of hegemonic masculinity and for their recommendations for how the concept should be reformulated.

[60] Although I do not focus on masculinity therapy in this chapter, I will discuss the importance of understanding the influence of therapeutic culture on men who wish to engage in exit politics in Chapter Six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality?' Some of the issues raised in Chapter Six are anticipated in my discussion of Connell's characterization of individualized exit politics among environmentalist men below.

order. She claims that masculinity therapy represents a therapeutic reinterpretation of Men's Liberation critiques of the limitations and costs associated with the "male sex role." This represents a rearticulation of a masculinity politics that was initially close to liberal feminism into one that shifts political allegiances away from women and that modernizes masculinity by helping men to reduce their male guilt, recover from their emotional 'wounds,' and connect emotionally with other men, all without substantially giving up patriarchal power and privileges.

GAY LIBERATION

The third form of masculinity politics considered by Connell is gay liberation, which she considers to be the main alternative to hegemonic masculinity projects, though she by no means regards this form of politics as homogenous. As Connell (1995) argues,

> Plainly a gay community does not automatically generate an oppositional masculinity politics. Yet the presence of a stable alternative to hegemonic masculinity [projects] – the irreversible achievement of the last quarter-century – reconfigures the politics of masculinity as a whole, making gender dissidence a permanent possibility (P. 219).

It is the existence of this visible alternative to the cultural construction of masculinity as opposed to femininity (and feminized masculinities) that provokes such a *violent* response in the form of gun lobby politics.

EXIT POLITICS

In her life-history analysis of the gender trajectories of Australian men involved with environmentalist activism and influenced by the counter-culture and feminism, Connell (1995) found a set of gender projects that took the form of explicit resistance to

pressures to actively engage with and appropriate hegemonic masculinity projects[61] [62]. One is a personalized (or individualized) project of reconstructing the masculine self,[63] in which men may distance themselves from their fathers and other men and come to identify with their mothers and other women (the moment of distancing/negation[64]) and come to renounce masculinity by attempting to become non-sexist individuals (the moment of separation).[65] The other project, which Connell favors, is a collective project of social transformation that is directed at contesting the patriarchal gender order (the moment of contestation) by targeting the social organization of institutions that supports gender inequality while, at the same time, still targeting the social organization of masculine personality.

An individualized project of masculine reform may involve feeling guilty about 'being male' (which motivates the attempt to reform one's personality), adopting a stance of passivity toward women, and otherwise working to degender oneself through

[61] Connell (1995) terms the active appropriation of hegemonic masculinity projects the moment of engagement. The moment of engagement commonly involves engaging in competitiveness, adopting strong career orientations, suppressing emotions, and expressing homophobia.

[62] Connell (1995) argued that it is actually quite common for anti-sexist men to have taken up masculinizing practices that were strongly influenced by hegemonic masculinity projects before rejecting those hegemonic projects and taking up anti-sexist masculinity projects instead.

[63] Drawing on the existential psychoanalysis of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir as well as later feminist object-relations theory, Connell understands masculinity in terms of a personality that is typically constructed through "a process of Oedipal masculinization under the influence of fathers, brothers, or symbolic patriarchy" (1995:135). What she assumes makes it possible for men to engage in a project of reconstructing the masculine personality is a re-alliance with mothers and recognition of women's strength. Likewise, she argues that men who undo 'Oedipal masculinity' are more likely to feel empathy for women based on their reconnection with the emotional solidarity that they experienced with their mothers in their pre-Oedipal relationships.

[64] The use of 'negation' here elaborates on the practical consequences of this form of distancing in that it refers to a negation of earlier appropriation of a hegemonic pattern of masculinity during the moment of engagement.

[65] As Connell (1995) notes, distancing oneself from other men and from hegemonic projects does not automatically lead to appropriating a dissident masculinity project. While it may produce experiences that make it more likely for men to empathize with women's experiences and perspectives on gender politics (and with those of anti-sexist men as well), it may not. As many people have pointed out, raising consciousness requires an active engagement that comes about through struggle against relations of oppression.

repudiating one's masculinity.[66] At the same time that degendering is central to this personalized project, it is also important to note that regendering is likely as well, since the purpose of degendering is to make it possible for the men to engage in personal change. Connell (1995) found that the men she interviewed were in close agreement about what qualities they wished to cultivate in themselves:

> Two [qualities] are central. The first is the capacity to be expressive, to tell the truth, especially about feelings. … The other quality most admired is the capacity to have feelings worth expressing: to be sensitive, to have depth in emotion, to care for people and for nature (P. 132).

For those men, these qualities were to make 'new-model' relationships with both women and men possible based on openness, emotional vulnerability, empathy, and trust.

However, as positive as that seems, Connell has reservations about a gender project that is mostly about renunciation at the personal level, especially if it involves adopting passivity as the main response to inequality. As she points out, demasculinization (or more strongly put – the annihilation of masculinity) – even when it accompanies some attempts at regendering – can be quite unsettling for men, and the discomfort they feel in response to the 'gender vertigo' that accompanies degendering may lead them to set limits on the changes they are willing to make. As she says, "such limits are visible in the paradoxical assertion of the masculine self in the act of renunciation" (Connell 1995:137).

[66] Based on my research and on Connell's, it seems apparent that any number of renunciations could be possible. A couple examples may suffice for now to illustrate what this could entail. Men may renounce their careers by downshifting, giving up higher incomes in favor of time spent with families. Men may renounce everyday/everynight male privileges and styles of interaction by assiduously avoiding interrupting others when talking. Men may renounce expectations about heterosexual masculine sexuality by refusing to initiate sexually or by restricting the range of sexual practices that they will engage in with women partners (practicing only non-penetrative sex for instance). Passivity has already been mentioned, and this may represent a generalized strategy of renouncing masculine interactional styles.

Additionally, she found that most of the environmentalist men who engaged in masculine reform articulated a somewhat inadequate analysis of the role of embodiment in their practices of change. Connell argued that, to the extent that the project of the men in the environmentalist movement addressed the body, it was "treated as a natural object and thought of as ideally harmonious with other parts of nature" (1995:134). They engaged in a mind/body dualism, speaking of 'my body' and 'me.' On this basis, she argued that the reformed self is not understood by these men as being embodied and that they regarded masculinity as something that could be separated out into social conventions, which could be discarded, and natural features of the body, which could not. She characterized this as operating with a sex role theory that could not take them very far. She strongly advocates instead that men actively engage with the body through body-reflexive practices to thoughtfully and strategically recompose masculinity. Instead of striving for disembodiment and elimination of difference, difference might be maintained but transformed to break the link between difference and dominance. She also firmly believes that collective projects of explicitly political activism are needed to bring this to fruition.

Since the collective project represents a move away from an individualized project that is based in therapeutic methods for reforming personality[67] and toward a collective political mobilization that directly contests the patriarchal gender order, Connell argues that the hallmark of this form of collective masculinity politics is recognition that the emotional dilemmas of remaking the masculine self cannot be resolved at the level of personality. As Connell (1995) says,

[67] Not all men engaged in 'personalized' projects necessarily draw on therapeutic culture as the inspiration for the kinds of changes in 'masculine personality' that Connell (1995) describes. She saw the Australian environmentalist men as drawing on this resource though.

> A degendering practice in a still-patriarchal society can be demobilizing as well as progressive. A response that simply negates mainstream masculinity [projects], that remains in the moment of rejection, does not necessarily move towards social transformation. To move further in the face of … gender vertigo … would seem to require a gendered counter-sexist politics for men who reject hegemonic masculinity [projects] (P. 142).

According to her, then, one virtue of a collective project is that it offers possibilities for consciousness-raising and political mobilization that potentially allows men to transcend both guilt and passivity.[68] The other virtue is that it directly attacks the gender order instead of trying to work out an accommodation within it.

As I discuss in the next chapter, I agree with Connell that therapeutically-informed masculinity practices have the *potential* to individualize issues of gender inequality by directing men's energies toward introspection and personal change and away from political engagement with broader issues of inequality. At the same time, both so-called personalized practices and even so-called collective practices are directed toward particular kinds of personal change *within* relationships with women to enable better relationships. Therefore, it is important to recognize that, while certain practices that encourage a particular kind of degendering within relationships do not appeal to very many men, these practices may facilitate the transformation of men's relationships along more mutually satisfying and reciprocal lines.[69] Even if this kind of change poses little challenge to inequalities in gender relations, it still represents substantial changes in the lives of men and women. In the long term, egalitarian relationships do present visible

[68] I find Connell's reasoning to be very plausible on this point, as adopting collective practices of contestation and engaging with other men and women in a process of struggle likely provides men with a different tool kit to solve the changing set of problems that comes with a collective anti-sexist political project (Swidler 1986, 2001b).

[69] It's less clear to me that even more mutually satisfying relationships translate directly into equity without more direct attempts to produce actual equity (Knudson-Martin and Mahoney 1998).

alternatives that could inspire others, and children raised in these relationships may be more likely to practice egalitarianism themselves, though this is by no means a guarantee (Risman and Myers 1997).

As prior studies of egalitarian and feminist relationships suggest, men's anti-sexist practices are typically influenced by women in the first place. When these women are feminists themselves, there is at least a potential that women's own engagement with feminist and political discourses will pull men toward increased engagement with these politics as well, which could entail broadening the moral horizons of their masculinity projects. It likely depends on how men and women approach issues of distributive justice (Major 1987, 1993; Thompson 1991) and define the purpose of change in the first place. I take up this issue in Chapter Six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality?'

Though Connell (1995) argues that it is not possible to conceive of substantial change in gender relations without it, she views anti-sexist masculinity politics as not very stable. She bases this on the fact that this form is markedly delegitimized,[70] that it is difficult to convince large masses of men that anti-sexist change is in their interests given that it is also counter to their interests in collecting on the patriarchal dividend, and that this form of politics is often very stressful for men, given that it involves openly facing male guilt[71] and acknowledging and repudiating male privilege and power. Based on

[70] Anti-sexist exit politics is delegitimized by those who are hostile to feminist change *and* by many feminists who do not trust the claims of feminist or anti-sexist men and who have been disappointed in most men's lack of progress.

[71] Many people (often therapeutically-inclined) argue that men should be discouraged from feeling guilt, because guilt is a negative emotion that either encourages men to abase themselves to feminists or to reject feminism altogether (Connell 1995) and because guilt "diverts emotional energy towards attending to demands imposed by wider society instead of cultivating the self" (Furedi 2004). I'm inclined to view arguments that call for dispensing with guilt with some suspicion, because I wonder if relieving men of their guilt also relieves them of their responsibility to face their (possible) complicity in social injustice. It

these limitations, Connell argues that this form of masculinity politics will remain marginalized, particularly if it continues to take the form of a men's movement as it so often has.

Perhaps what is most important for our understanding of exit politics is that it "is a politics that arises in relation to the overall structure of the gender order" (Connell 1995:223). The implication of this is that it potentially encompasses both anti-sexist dissidence directed toward the hegemony of masculine power (dominance) and dissidence toward the cultural symbolism of gender difference (the dichotomous opposition of masculinity and femininity). As Connell notes, these do not need to go together, but they can. This is what interests and excites me most about studying anti-sexist men's masculinity projects: the possibility of finding that men *may* actually engage in both of these aspects of exit politics in their attempts to produce feminist

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may be that my position marks me as having a preference for an institutional framework for self and identity and as at least somewhat in opposition to an impulsive framework (Turner 1976). In any case, as I discuss in Chapter Six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality,' I see some support for this view in the practices of men who draw on social justice vocabularies of motive, because they appear to be more likely to seek to produce equity/equality as a way of relieving their feelings of guilt. The proactive possibilities of guilt is also supported by the work of June Price Tangney (Tangney 1995; Tangney and Dearing 2002). Based on her research findings, she argues that guilt is the moral emotion of choice, since guilt calls for one to focus on one's problematic behavior (as opposed to a focus on the faults of one's *self*) and for one to cultivate empathy for others. As Tangney (1995) asserts, "guilt clearly emerges as the more moral emotion in the sense that it leads us down a constructive, future-oriented path of responsibility, retribution [*sic*], and repair" (p. 1138). Given the potential for guilt to serve as a motivator for change, as opposed to being an obstacle to change, I wonder if it could be useful to mark a distinction between shame and guilt (Lewis 1971), since shame appears to call for a painful negative self-evaluation and the interruption of other-oriented feelings of empathy (Tangney 1995; Tangney and Dearing 2002). As Tangney points out, "shame may represent the darker side of 'moral affect' in the long run, luring us to hide and evade – to shirk our responsibilities when we transgress, err, or cause harm" (p. 1138). While it is true that the men I interviewed mentioned guilt fairly frequently while hardly mentioning shame at all, this may not necessarily signal that shame is not a factor for them, given that Scheff (2003) has maintained that shame is ever present but rendered invisible in modern societies because of taboo. In the process of examining guilt and shame, future research should take account of Scheff's (2003) concern about the moral potential of guilt: he views guilt as a mask for shame, potentially preventing people from acknowledging their experience of shame and thus threatening the strength of social bonds with others, which, if true, would weaken the propensity to promote empathy attributed to guilt by Tangney.

change[72] in the world. I agree that challenging dominance does not have to go together with degendering difference, but I'm inclined to believe that it should, given that institutionalized gender inequality is predicated on the social construction of gender in terms of a binary of two complementary but unequal categories and predicated on the intersection of this binary division with other major social hierarchies (racial categories, ethnicity, economic class, dis/ability status, age, religion, nationality, and sexual identity categories) (Lorber 1994, 2000, 2005). The kind of degendering that I have in mind is not necessarily directed toward eliminating gender altogether to produce androgyny, though it might for some people. Instead, deliberate degendering could involve undoing gender to make it possible to recompose gender so that gender difference doesn't have to imply dominance.[73] While I believe that Connell is right that this is surely difficult and discomfiting (possibly even promoting an experience of gender vertigo), a belief that is supported by my research and by my personal experience, it seems to me that there aren't any other promising alternatives for those wishing to make feminist change in the lives of men and in their relationships with women.

New Men?

Connell (1995) has a point about the unpopularity of exit politics. A great deal of antipathy is routinely directed toward feminist and anti-sexist men, and it seems that the degendering element of their masculinity politics is central to the hostility directed at them by those who support hegemonic masculinity projects. It also seems that the failure to follow through on this degendering is what accounts for feminist disappointment in

[72] Not all of the men with whom I talked identified as feminist though they did identify as anti-sexist and told me that they respect women and believe they should be treated equally.

[73] Furthermore, I agree with Connell that attempts at degendering/regendering should ultimately take account of the *social organization* of body-reflexive practices and not just focus on individual men.

these men and their masculinity politics. Whether or not anti-sexist men actually buy into these cultural representations of their projects, the disdain and disappointment is something with which they must contend and about which they must surely be very much aware. Given this, it is worthwhile to briefly consider a cultural history of how representations of exit politics have been constructed in the mass media and by popular commentators. At least initially, these representations centered around the notion of 'New Men' who are capable of and interested in changing in response to feminism, and the earliest considerations of these supposed 'New Men' were at least partly hopeful.

Since there has been a 'New Woman' for every new generation since the 19th century (Lee 1989), it should perhaps come as no surprise that hopeful attention would turn to 'New Men.' Anthony McMahon (1999) argues that the 'New Man' of the 1980's was a logical (and possibly inevitable) response to the 'New Woman' of the 1970's, given the imperative of marketers and the mass media to seek novelty and the latest cultural trends. The 'New Man' was said to represent a man who was more willing to share domestic and childcare responsibilities, who was more willing *and able* to express and share his feelings, and who was more expressive in his personal style (e.g., clothing and personal products) (Chapman 1988; Morgan 1992). In targeting the latter characteristic, marketers were active in constructing the 'New Man' in their search for new markets (as opposed to merely responding to cultural change), and their representations of the 'New Man' were often glossed with an optimistic, 'post-feminist' rhetoric to conceal their efforts to transform him into a feminized, narcissistic consumer in which the tensions between nurturance and narcissism were minimized[74] (Chapman 1988; Connell 1995; Edwards 1997; Ehrenreich 1990; Mort 1996; Nixon 1996). Over

[74] As Chapman (1988) pithily pointed out, "The nurturant tadpole had become a narcissistic toad" (p. 232).

time, due to the tensions in culturally constructing masculinity around expressivity, nurturance, domesticity, and narcissistic consumption, popular discourse about 'New Men' shifted toward increasing disparagement, first with 'New Men' and later with the 'Sensitive New Men' and the 'Sensitive New Age Guys' of the 1990's construed as just too wimpy and soft when compared to 'Old Boys' and 'New Lads' (Astrachan 1986; Bly 1990; McMahon 1999; Messner 1993; Mort 1996; Nixon 1996). By contrast, the similar (and possibly more popular) image of the 'New Father' seemed to provoke fewer reservations about feminization in representing men as nurturers, possibly due to the "successful heterosexual performance" implied in becoming a father in the first place (McMahon 1999:133).

While mainstream journalists enthusiastically and mostly uncritically embraced the terms 'New Man' and 'New Father,' feminist social scientists have been less sanguine about the likelihood that the introduction of these terms actually represents much meaningful and broad-scale change among men, because a change in style does not necessarily signify concomitant changes in actual practices (Chapman 1988; Ehrenreich 1990; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1994; McMahon 1999; Messner 1993; Morgan 1990; Segal 1990, 1993; Toynbee 1987). As Messner (1993) points out, expressiveness and a willingness to dominate can quite happily coexist and may represent the fact that men would like to stop paying the "costs of being on top" while still remaining "on top" (p. 730). Critics point out that naiveté about the 'New Man' is based in individualizing, over-psychologizing, and depoliticizing men's power and privileges (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1994; McMahon 1999; Messner 1993; Segal 1993), and that, to the extent that there are actual changes among men, these changes could modernize patriarchy

instead of abolishing it (Connell 1995). Some have also pointed out the ways in which 'New Man' imagery is raced and classed to 'Other' less privileged groups of men. As Ehrenreich (1983) demonstrated in her analysis of films produced not long before the 'New Man' image was being actively promoted, discourse about changes in masculinities is classist, with traditional masculinity symbolized by the physicality and machismo of the 'back-wards' working class. Similarly, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994) demonstrate that the counter-image of the 'New Man' is an atavistic 'traditional' masculinity, commonly presumed to belong to both the past and projected onto groups of relatively powerless and marginalized men: poor men and men of color.

Working Out Dissident Masculinity Politics in Practice

All of the men with whom I talked indicated in a variety of ways that they had appropriated some form of exit politics, which involved actively working to change themselves to make it possible to have better relationships with women.[75] Although some men went further in this regard than others, all of the men challenged assumptions about gender *difference*, which, in many cases, also involved challenging assumptions about men's *dominance* over women (and, at times, other men). These men adopted degendering practices to rework what it means to practice masculinity by challenging the assumption that masculinity is the dichotomous opposite of femininity: that being masculine depends upon devaluing women and denying any indication of femininity in men. By contesting the assumption that certain practices, such as active listening and providing emotional support for one's partner, were essentially feminine, the men were

[75] There is a distinct projective dimension to their attempts to change. Even men, such as Paul Denbigh and Andrew Sutherland, who stressed the role of contingencies in influencing the trajectories of their lives and who acknowledged that they could have become very different men if a few things had happened differently, were clear that they were explicitly intending to live alternative lives, which included resisting conventional pressures to be like other men.

able to work out more satisfactory and, typically, more equitable relationships. As I discuss in the next chapter, they varied in terms of whether or not equity/equality was a goal for their relationships and that they also varied in the extent to which they achieved it when it was.

While these men were engaged in projects to reduce gender differences, none of them had embraced androgyny as a goal. They were not attempting to eliminate gender differences entirely, and all were maintaining a sense of themselves as masculine even as they were reworking what that actually entails in practice. Some were quite explicit about the fact that they were engaged in regendering of their masculinities, and they described body-reflexive practices that were intended to cultivate anti-sexist masculine sensibilities that allowed them to feel good both about being masculine and about being anti-sexist at the same time. Most of the rest of the men described feeling ambivalent about being masculine, because they worried that they weren't doing enough to separate themselves from hegemonic masculinity projects even as certain masculine practices provided a sense of familiarity and comfort to them as men. A couple, such as Charlie Adkins and Andrew Sutherland, were less likely to think explicitly about gender, though they acknowledged how their projects were gendered when asked to do so.

RENUNCIATIONS AND DEGENDERING

All of the men in this study described ways in which they are attempting to renounce culturally ascendant expectations for what it means to be men. Some more than others were aware of the hegemonic nature of these culturally ascendant projects. For instance, although Sam Youngblood's talk about gender equality within relationships

seemed at times to be speculative and a little abstract,[76] he was quite able to articulate why one would wish to resist what he considers to be 'hegemonic standards' and 'prescribed roles.' He said,

> Any sort of performance or attempt to fit in a … prescribed role … bothers me. … I don't want to do certain things just because anybody else says I should. … And it hurts me a LOT when I see other people … trying to fit into something THEY'RE not. … I just say, you know, 'Forget 'em.' So, you know, I can't live separate from them, but I don't have to buy in wholeheartedly or psychologically to … any of that stuff really. And, uh, you know, there's all kinds of ways that they get people to go along with it. It's hegemonic things, you know. They make it sound like common sense. I don't know. I feel like you kind of have to deny some of your own self and your own ability to reason to go along with some of these things. And it hurts me when people do those to themselves, and I kind of refuse to do it to myself in those situations.

As he points out, in order to successfully resist these hegemonic standards, one must problematize them instead of taking them for granted. For him, as for virtually all of the men in this study, this involves attempting to give up the *power* and *privilege* that successfully meeting these expectations confers. As I discuss below, attempts to renounce power and privilege take several forms.

Before I discuss specific examples of their attempts at degendering however, it is important to establish what these men are not attempting to do. While Connell (1995) found a tendency among most of the Australian environmentalist men he studied to work toward the annihilation of their masculinities, extreme renunciations of masculinity in an attempt to produce new, *non-sexist* selves, I did not find much sustained evidence that these men were trying to deny their masculinity to this extent. While I did find a variety of attempts at renunciations of masculine privileges, power, and interactional styles, I found that most of the men I interviewed did not go so far as to attempt to annihilate their

[76] I think this was due both to his youth and to his relative inexperience with long-term relationships when compared to most of the men in this study.

masculinity, though several attempts at passivity and Josh Lewin's attempts to be the "man of women's dreams" by subordinating his masculinity to please feminist women and become 'the good man' (discussed below) perhaps come closest. Instead of widespread attempts to eliminate masculinity, what I found instead were hints that some of the men viewed masculinity so negatively that it pained them to be associated with other men. The prospect of being less unlike most other men than they believed they should be provoked feelings of ambivalence about masculinity and feelings of guilt for not doing more to "exit from the worlds of hegemonic and complicit masculinity" (Connell 1995:220).[77]

For instance, when I talked with Chris Simpson, he talked to me about the difficulties he has experienced as a man who has suffered from clinical depression. Unlike most men who experience depression, he has sought treatment, but he has still had to contend with how this makes him feel about his masculinity. Although he recognizes that men should be able to express their feelings and to be vulnerable, this has, at times, felt wrong to him. In turn, the fact that this represents valuing "qualities that we have 'traditionally' valued with men" provokes guilty feelings, because he wants to disassociate himself from hegemonic masculinity projects as much as possible. He said,

> I DEFINITELY feel guilty for … valuing some of those qualities that we have 'traditionally' valued with men. … Whether it's being strong or being able to, um, [brief pause] handle everything, uh, [and be] emotionally solid. I know that one's been difficult for me, because I have been suffering from clinical depression for the past, oh geez, like two and a half years, so I'm sort of looking at, you know, that whole process of

[77] Ted Evans reported the opposite: feeling guilty at times for not being more like other men. In his case, this is due to becoming disabled and being forced to quit working. For a time, he felt guilty for not supporting the family (or at least contributing equally to the family income), and this challenged his sense of himself as a man. Becoming a father eased these feelings of guilt though, because he's come to recognize the importance of staying home and caring for children. I discuss this more fully in Chapter Seven, 'New Fathers.'

> going in and seeking help from a counselor, starting medication, all that sort of thing. Um. Definitely challenges at times what I feel like I should be able to do as, uh, a confident person or as a strong masculine person. … You know, and on those days where I'm just, you know, doubting my abilities or … just having a bad day, … I'll have the one half of my brain that's saying like, 'You should just pick yourself up and do it.' And like, 'What's all this caring about?' … It's a struggle, 'cause, you know, on the one hand, it's like that side of the brain is very HELPful in getting you up and going, but how do you … balance it out with, 'It's OK to have a bad day, but … you know, is it OK to have a bad week? Is it OK [laughs] to have a bad year?' You know? What's that look like?

In response, I asked him if we should necessarily define masculinity as 'toxic' or if it could be possible for men to redefine what it means to do masculinity by degendering themselves in their everyday lives without wiping out gender differences completely. He picked up on the idea that masculinity is 'toxic' and ran with the idea.[78] Although he agrees that masculinity should be reworked, even the prospect of feeling good about being a man feels risky, especially given that the available models for doing this are not acceptable to him. He drew a parallel with the issue of 'white pride' to bring home the point. He said,

> For me, it's one of THE questions. … Because … I DO feel like masculinity is toxic, and it's really difficult to talk about. I mean, we [almost] HAVE to … completely disavow all forms of masculinity in order to again start talking about it, because, if we don't, the slide is so easy into someplace where we don't want to be. … And I think … feeling good about masculinity is like, 'Well? [voice rises and then he laughs slightly] Is that the Promise Keepers?' … 'Cause I'm pretty sure that, if I [laughs] were to go to a Promise Keepers meeting, eh, we would have significant differences. … Race is the other one. … It's almost even worse, because there's NO WAY we can talk about, you know, what it means to be white. … I mean, the words white pride are synonymous with Clan activity.

[78] Afterward, I asked him if he would have used a term such as 'toxic' if I hadn't introduced it into our conversation. He said that he wouldn't have used that particular word but that he really likes it. When I asked him how he would have talked about masculinity if I hadn't used the word 'toxic,' he responded, "I don't know, but I'm getting this, this infectious imagery. Sort of like eating from the inside type –. [short pause] Gangrenous. I don't know [chuckles]. So, something like that."

In response, I said,

> I really want to push on that though. … Because I think that, if we can't find ways of feeling like positive about ourselves as men or if whites can't feel positive about themselves as white, then that's gonna pose a severe problem both for us as individuals who want to change and also for any hope that we can form movements … to push for change. You know? It's like, how do we appeal to men to give up their privilege and their power and their advantages and to find healthier ways of relating to each other and to other women if we only think of what it means to be a man as totally bad or negative and toxic? You know? It's like, what are they giving up, and what are they gaining?

After a great deal of thought, he agreed with me, but he told me that his solution has been to "opt out" by avoiding "masculine settings" and not engaging with other men about what it means to be masculine. As he said,

> Right. Oh yeah. … [long pause] I, yeah. I agree. [very long pause] … I think that's PRObably one of the reasons why [brief pause] my development went the way it did. … And I remember some of those processes in grad school completely to opt out of the system. I mean, that's a really big step and not necessarily one that's productive for a lot of people. So then we have to do something with it or you have to look at how you can qualitatively change it. … So, I guess I've started to just measure different things in terms of masculinity.

He feels that, as a student affairs professional who works in a setting where most of his colleagues are feminist women as opposed to one in which most of his colleagues would be men who would expect him to valorize masculinity, he "can have that ambivalence" and not be "forced to answer it or to take a stand."[79]

Jon Webb provides another example. When I talked with him, he articulated a critique of masculinity that appears to leave him feeling as if there are few options for men who want to produce a world of peace and equality. As he said,

[79] At the same time, the future prospect of being a father to boys is worrisome to Chris, because he believes that he would have to contend with issues of masculinity more directly if he has sons given that they would bring him into contact with all-male settings such as organized sports and that they might even opt to embrace aggressive and competitive masculinity projects wholeheartedly. This is one of the reasons he would prefer to have daughters.

> I feel like … masculinity has to do with death and like pushing people out of the way and ending things or whatever so that you can be on top, whereas, you know, like femininity has much more to do with, you know, the birth. … All this life. … Why can't, you know, we just all exist together that way, you know? … It just seems like masculinity kind of constantly stomps on men. … Like, … for us to ever live in peace or in … any ideal world or whatever, I feel like masculinity has to be stamped out. And then I'm thinking, well then, if I want to stamp it out, how masculine am I being?

As a male-embodied man, the desire to renounce masculinity is challenging for Jon. He's very uncertain about what sort of possibilities are open for him, and he's ambivalent about how to value his own masculinity. As he said,

> For me, [masculinity] has so many negative connotations. … And it's really hard for me to just grasp onto that part of my own identity. … I mean, like I see the parts in me, but the parts I see are the parts I'm not necessarily as happy about. … I guess the positive parts are … like taking [care of responsibilities like my father], but like I don't know. … Like why is that not feminine? … You know? … I have a real hard time with masculinity.

I talked to him about the idea of troubling masculinity through degendering, and I told him that I was very interested in what that implies for men. He responded very excitedly, saying that this could represent what he is trying to do, but he wasn't sure that he knew the answer. As he said, "Even as I'm talking about [masculinity], like I'm struggling with like, 'Well? But what does the word really mean? You know, am I really just trying to create something new?'"

Much like Chris, Jon's main strategy for dealing with his ambivalence is to avoid men (outside of pick-up basketball games on the weekend) and mostly male settings[80] and to cultivate friendships with women, most of whom have been lesbians. This is not his only strategy though, because he also adopted passivity for a time before deciding that this was an impracticable strategy.

[80] He is an elementary school teacher after all.

I discuss passivity shortly, but, before I do, it is important to acknowledge that not all of the men with whom I talked are as willing to avoid acknowledging their masculinity. For instance, even though Josh Lewin admitted to me that he too feels very ambivalent about gender and also avoids male-dominated settings, he still struggles to make sense of how his life is gendered. As he said,

> I guess I don't want to give the impression that I'm kind of cavalier about [gender]. You know, just because I don't have rules about how I have to be in the world doesn't mean I'm not always thinking about how I am in the world as a man. Gendered, you know. … I feel like it is really important to me. … I really doubt there are MANY people who have spent as much time thinking about it. … I do have a constant, you know, engagement with the subject in my life. … It's one of the ways in which … I STRUGGLE to make sense of the world. … I'm very ambivalent about gender. It's something that, in me, is very, very unclear, you know, and that comes across all the time, because I feel like I was brought up in many ways as a therapist and female. Um, many parts of me that are big parts of me the rest of the world considers female. I'm very uncomfortable in many male situations.

When Josh speaks of not having rules, he is partly referring to the fact that he no longer censors those aspects that he considers to be masculine by imposing rules about how to be properly feminist in his everyday life.[81] Although Josh engaged in masculinity renunciations for a number of years, these renunciations ultimately became unsatisfying and unworkable, because it meant degendering himself to the extent that he no longer felt sufficiently masculine. It may not be going too far to suggest that he felt that he was annihilating his own masculinity to please others, but it's significant that he gave that up.

When he was in college, he attempted to be what he calls 'the good man' for women. It is clear that what that meant to him at the time was living up to the expectations of feminist women, which the more progressive aspects of the 'New Man' image was at least initially intended to signify. As he said,

[81] Josh's therapeutic refusal to impose 'shoulds' on himself is a subject that I take up in Chapter Six.

> Maybe there was a period in college when I tried to be 'the good man.' You know, … the man who didn't like sleep with you and then disappear. … ALL the stereotypes. The opposite of that. Yeah, I think that … there was that. There was that. Um, [short pause] again the therapist comes out of me. You know, I just really think I've become a therapist. Um, you know, I'm thinking a LOT of that has to do with MY need to have connection with women. And my need to have a connection with women has always been so great that I had ta … make sure that they knew … I was safe. I was OK. You know, that was something I needed, because I needed them. … I think it is a way of being safe to women. … You know, it's a way that you're not threatening any more. You can be trusted. … You're not going to do those things that men do out there in the world, which is, you know, sleep with you and not call you again, um, … you know, sleep behind your back with someone else, um, you know, whatever! There's a whole list of them that women complain about. I've heard a LOT of conversations of women complaining about men. I GREW UP listening to those conversations, so I guess I tried not to be that WAY for a long time. … But then I rebelled against that at the same time, because I felt like I was being … made invisible. My masculinity was being made invisible by my being the man of women's dreams.

As Connell (1995) suggested would be the case, Josh found that renunciations that involve demasculinization can be very discomfiting. When Josh speaks of his masculinity "being made invisible," this seems to evoke the notion of gender vertigo, an unsettling loss of familiar, embodied ways of practicing masculinity.[82]

Josh is no longer willing to accept the premise that being feminist implies that a man should ignore the fact that he also, at times, feels and thinks in ways that are not progressive. I believe that his unwillingness to shun those parts of himself that are less progressive is based partly in his identification as an artist and partly in his engagement with therapeutic culture. As a man who continues (at least ambivalently) to identify as an

[82] Connell (1995) refers to gender vertigo as the loss of personality structure – the annihilation of Oedipal masculinity. While I find relationships with parents to be very significant, I am somewhat agnostic about psychoanalysis in general, and I am skeptical about the claim that adult men's masculinities are *reducible* to the tensions inherent in the Oedipal complex. When I use the term gender vertigo, I refer merely to the dizzying discomfort that potentially accompanies an attempt at degendering relational expectations for masculinities.

artist,[83] he feels that he must express himself fully and avoid censoring himself to produce great art, and this is consistent with his inclination as a therapist to acknowledge his full self in seeking to be a healthy person, even though that means tolerating inconsistencies with his political ideology.

Passivity

As Connell (1995) points out, because hegemonic masculinity projects are defined by dominance and assertiveness, men who wish to challenge these kinds of projects and to practice less sexist masculinities may have difficulties with being assertive[84] and may be likely to adopt passivity. This particular strategy was not terribly common among the men I studied, but it is interesting for what it reveals about how some men approach power in relationships when they feel the need to renounce it. Although Sam Youngblood, Jon Webb, and Doug Silverwood all reported adopting passivity in their relationships,[85][86][87] only Sam Youngblood showed any indication to continue with

[83] As I recount elsewhere, Josh worked full-time as a fiction writer for a number of years. He gave up when he decided that the emotional cost of the high rejection rate for prestigious fiction publications was too high and that his family was more important to him than a career that calls upon him to minimize his commitments to others in the pursuit of artistic greatness. Here, the reason I note that he is ambivalent about continuing to identify as an artist is that he recognizes that other artists would regard his decision to quit his career as a fiction writer as failure – as a sign that he gave up. He was obviously very uncomfortable about that judgment, even though he appears to believe that he made the right decision. He does continue to see himself as an artist, because he approaches his academic studies in therapy as an art more than as a science.

[84] Actually, Connell (1995) is careful to also point out that men may have difficulty in making the choice to be passive instead of assertive based on their experience of engaging with hegemonic masculinity projects in the first place (p. 132).

[85] Joel Sewald mentioned passivity as well, but it was passivity of a different sort, because he told me that he didn't particularly want children while his first wife did. I discuss this in Chapter Seven, 'New Fathers.'

[86] Alexander Turner said that he would not characterize himself as passive, and he contrasted his behavior with that of his father-in-law, whom he feels is very passive-aggressive. At the same time, he told me that he and Sharon never fight. When talking about this issue, he gave me the sense that, if not passivity exactly, there was a reluctance on his part to fight with Sharon and that this requires avoiding certain behaviors. As he said, "I don't think I've ever said the word compromise in front of my wife in reference to anything because I think saying compromise would suggest that we are actually fighting. And so maybe I'm non-confrontational enough that I don't want to admit that we are fighting." When he gave the specific example of planning for their wedding, the sense of passivity was quite strong for me: "She kept asking if this was okay, if this was okay. I was like, if it was worth a fight, I would stop us. I would say something.

his passivity, while Jon and Doug told me that they had already attempted to become more active again after discovering that passivity didn't offer them quite the solution for which they had been searching. It may be significant that Jon and Doug have both experienced difficulties with being passive in long-term relationships, while Sam has not. In any case, the reasons for taking up passivity given by each of them are similar.

It seems clear that passivity can be quite complicated, not only because it can be tricky for men who are accustomed to being more assertive to adopt passivity, but also because passivity is a very indirect means of giving up power in a relationship, which is what they indicated to me that they were trying to accomplish. On its face, passivity largely implies being inactive, an assumption that seems to be borne out by Jon's and Doug's experiences. In turn, inactivity can imply not participating equally with someone in a relationship and expecting the other person to be more active in making decisions and otherwise taking responsibility for making things happen. Indeed, as Doug Silverwood acknowledged, being passive can be a way of "being an asshole" in a relationship, something that has been confirmed by studies of gendered divisions of household labor and parenting that turned up passivity as a favored tactic of men who wish to resist efforts to get them to share more equally (Deutsch 1999; Hochschild 1989).

Given this, it is important to sort out how it was that these men were attempting to renounce power in the context of relationships in which they were also trying to establish

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… Why would I fight about the flowers? We came up with a band on the same idea. There wasn't anything that I thought was at stake enough to fight over. That is kind of how I feel about our relationship. The nitty gritty of our life. Maybe we are fighting, and I'm in denial about it."

[87] Geoff Riley told me that he is very indecisive and that this is commonly viewed as an indication of being less than manly and passive. He disagrees with that view of course, because he is quite comfortable with his masculinity, and he said that indecisiveness doesn't represent passivity to him.

mutual support and, often, equity.[88] I will first consider what they had to say about their practice of passivity. Then I will consider what it means to adopt passivity in the context of an anti-sexist masculinity project.

During the first interview, I remarked to Sam Youngblood that some men adopt a passive stance toward women when they try to change the way they relate with women to promote equality. In response, Sam admitted that he too is passive toward women, because he doesn't presume to be able to tell women how to live or what to do. He gave a couple examples and then ended by saying that he might be *too* passive. He said,

> I would personally say that I … could be characterized as passive in a lot of things. Especially with … women. … In other words, 'If that's what you want to do, that's cool. Who am I to, you know, stop you, or tell you how to live or anything like that?' … Sort of just going back to 'I don't want control or responsibility over, you know, what's going on there.' Like I think it'd be really presumptuous for me to think, as a man or otherwise, that I've got my stuff so, uh, in control and put together that I could tell you or anybody else how to live. … You know? And so I … have been described as passive sometimes. In relationships. Or otherwise. … For instance, passive in letting the other person do what they want. Whatever. To the point like it might've come off like I didn't care in a … romantic relationship.

I explicitly asked Sam if his passivity was about power and control or if it was about something else, because it seems possible that choosing not to be actively engaged (passive) would not necessarily have to be about giving up power. He said,

> I'd think it would be about power and control. [Brad: Why?] That I don't need it, and I don't want it. … And I don't think I have any right to it. … I don't need any [power]. I see [the attempt to gain power] as the problem. … In a lot of ways. As far as colonization, patriarchy, and racism. … Hegemony. So … I deny myself power in situations where I could probably have more. Or the same thing with control. And maybe more in relation to women than other places. … [Brad: Mm hmm. But the way that works out, as you described it, was … inaction … in some situations to a point that people wonder if you even care? That's what you

[88] As I explain in Chapter Six, it is important to be aware that these do not always go together even for anti-sexist men.

> said?] Yeah. … Where that's a problem of some sort. … You know, it's not that I don't have an opinion, but, you know, they can do what they want. … I'm typically like, 'Alright. That's your decision.' … Or when I make the decision, I don't like pursue really hard. And like, 'I gotta just convince them and show them how this is supposed to be.' … They're gonna make the decision I think. Unfortunately, everybody learns from movies it's not supposed to be that way. … Like, you'd get arrested for all the things that Adam Sandler does to get the girl in those silly movies. And I don't pursue like that, 'cause I respect their opinion. Their will.

I remarked to Sam that what he was saying sounded dichotomous, that one is either passive or one is controlling, exerting power over someone, and not respecting their autonomy and independence. His response was to say "Sure," so I asked him if those were the only two alternatives. He said that, in order for him to feel good about the decisions he's making and the way he's acting, those may be the only two alternatives. He compared himself to other men, noting that he thinks he is probably more passive than most other men, even among "good guys" who aren't "jerks." He said, "For me to feel good about the decisions I'm making and the way I'm behaving, … I'd say … it might be [dichotomous]. Just to be comfortable, because I'll feel guilty easy, you know? And question the decisions I make." I asked Sam to make it more concrete by contemplating what career decisions he would make if he is in a long-term relationship with another academic by the time they both graduate. He said that he would relocate for a partner's career and take a position even if it wasn't a position he would seek under other circumstances, as long as they could balance it out later. He said that he would feel very uncomfortable asking a partner to do the same thing for him though, because he doesn't want to be someone who imposes on others and who makes them accommodate or change to fit his life. He would feel like an oppressor if he did that. He said,

> That'd be tough. I don't know if I could do that. … If I had an opportunity [to take a job at the best school], I don't know how I could not

> take it. … I'd worry about resentment too. … Tricky. Obviously, I'm uncomfortable with the idea. … I don't see myself turning down that position, but I don't expect anybody to move with me. … I don't think I'd have much ill-will toward them if they … didn't want to move to wherever. [Brad: Mm hmm. So … does the emotional reaction to the two scenarios feel similar or different? Like, would you feel as uncomfortable about following someone else?] I'd feel more comfortable with that probably. … By which I wouldn't feel like a person who is imposing or intruding or … making anybody else rearrange their lives. … I don't want to make anybody accommodate to me. … It's great if I find somebody that honestly wants to. … That's fantastic, but, you know, where you start to feel like, um, the … oppressor or whatever, because this person's trying to accommodate to you and change to fit your life.[89] That I would have more trouble with. … I'm more comfortable with sacrifice than I am with the opposite.

It seems that Sam's passivity and desire to sacrifice comes from his feminist commitment not to make women accommodate to him in the way many women have historically had to do for men's careers and also from his desire to have a lasting emotionally commitment to a woman.

As I mentioned, Jon Webb had also experimented with passivity. After reading bell hooks and Paulo Freire, he began to "question [his] place in education [as a teacher]" and stopped being assertive with his students. This was particularly true when he taught in an inner city school, because he became self-conscious about the fact that he was a white man. As he said, "I talked a lot about like my political stances, … and not wanting to be just another white man telling [the students] what to do. Or to scare them. Or, or whatever. Whatever persona that white men tend to take in our culture. … I've struggled with that for a long time." What started as a political project of challenging institutionalized racism and sedimented inequality by adopting a somewhat passive interpersonal style (avoiding a 'persona') carried over into his relationship with Gayle.

[89] While Sam's strategy of passivity may not have been common among the men I interviewed, his concern about women accommodating to his desires *was* troubling for others.

As he said, "I think very much in the beginning I was much more hands off. … Before [now], I just kind of, you know, went along with what she wanted. … I would tend to back down, because she makes more money or she's … putting more money into the pot."

Jon Webb's talk about his renunciation of assertiveness suggests gender vertigo, much like Josh Lewin's experience of his attempt to be "the man of women's dreams." Jon told me that, through therapy, he eventually came to identify his practice of passivity as causing a loss in his life. As he said,

> I was really losing sight of my actual place. … We found that, like, through all those political stances and all, like, me trying to practice that in my … job and my life, I was losing parts of what I needed to hang on to to be a good, effective teacher. … I think that was really important to discover. … But then we also looked at like ways in my life that I wasn't being assertive. And like, what was my part in the house. Or assertive in like trying to take charge and actually taking care of something. As opposed to just waiting for Gayle to complain.

As a result of talking about assertiveness issues with his therapist however, he has been trying to become more active, though this definitely does not mean that he is trying to become dominating within the relationship. He says that, "I'm just more assertive about my part. … I'm much more hands on, um, about making decisions and … whatever. And like I'll just say no to something nowadays, whereas I think before I just kind of, you know, went along with what she wanted." He told me that he tends to shut down during disagreements and fights and that this hasn't changed as much as his participation in decision-making but that Gayle holds him accountable for talking with her so they "eventually talk it out."

Doug Silverwood said that it is difficult to establish a relationship based on equality due to a "natural tendency toward male dominance," "internalized drives," and

"growing up in this society," not to mention a woman's "internalized expectations" and "internalized oppression." His approach with his ex-wife, Mariana, was to adopt passivity by "wanting her to call the shots." In the process of trying to "avoid these basic problems of male dominance" though, he found that this strategy does not allow one to "move into a problem-free world," because it really involves "a different set of problems." His strategy of passivity became a burden, and then, when he tried to reassert himself through decision-making, they both discovered that she wasn't interested in doing the things that he wanted to do.

I had asked Doug Silverwood if passivity had ever been an issue in any other relationship prior to the one with Mariana. In answering my question, passivity came to be defined as a negative way of relating with a woman.[90] He pointed out that, in the beginning with Mariana, he was "able to match that strength of will of hers" but that life circumstances had "knocked the wind out of" his sails by the end.[91] He then told me a story about his relationship with Trudy, which made it clear that he is not interested in being in a relationship that is boring – one that doesn't rouse passion from him, even if that passion is expressed through conflict, shouting, and throwing things. He had been more assertive with Trudy than he was later (at a certain point anyway) with Mariana, but he regards their relationship as egalitarian. He said,

> I've been on both sides of it. … Um, it's was biggest with Mariana, because I think … she's definitely the strongest, most dynamic personality that I've been with. … And because of the life circumstances that happened to me when we were together. Because it wasn't as big of … a problem early on. You know. I was able to match that strength of will of hers. … Until, you know, I had the wind knocked out of my sails. [Before that], I was with … Trudy. … She was pretty passive and laidback and easy going even as much so as I was, … and so I was

[90] Being 'active' can also be bad as Doug knows all too well from his work with batterers.
[91] The biggest issue was the death of his mother during this time.

> probably more assertive … in laying out what we were going to do. … So, I know it's not that I'm not always that way. … Also, we were pretty egalitarian. … We … never lived together, so that made it … easier.

He recognizes that it's easier to be egalitarian when you don't live with someone, because he thinks you have to be more active in that situation to be an "asshole" whereas you can be an "asshole" "by not doing anything" when you live with someone. He contrasts the relationship with Trudy with his relationship with Mariana, because he felt that Mariana was able to rouse his passion through conflict (the wow factor as he calls it) despite his passivity.

In "Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency," Ortner (2006d) devotes one section of her chapter to an interpretation of several of the fairy tales collected and edited by the brothers Grimm in order to demonstrate "the cultural work involved in constructing and distributing agency as part of the process of creating appropriately gendered, and thus among other things differentially empowered, persons" (p. 139). Ortner argues that, "agency or its absence in the tales is expressed largely through an idiom of activity and passivity. Activity involves pursuing 'projects;' passivity involves not simply refraining from pursuing projects, but refraining in a sense from even desiring to do so" (Ortner 2006d:140). She demonstrates that the only female characters in the fairy tales to have full-blown (evil) projects are the wicked villains (stepmothers and witches) and that appropriately terrible things befall them as a consequence of their being active women. She adds that the women characters who are protagonists of their own stories are heroines in the mode of "victim heroes," because the action is moved along by virtue of the bad things that happen to them rather than by their initiating actions themselves (with some exceptions).

If, in fact, Ortner is correct that it is useful to think of agency as having two fields of meaning: agency-in-the-sense-of-(the pursuit of cultural)-projects (life socially organized in terms of culturally constituted projects that infuse life with meaning and purpose OR agency involved in pursuing significant cultural ends) and agency-in-the-sense-of-power (acting within relations of social inequality, asymmetry, and force), then this may shed some light on why some of the men conceive of passivity as about renouncing power. Ortner argues that, when we pull apart agency into these two distinct usages of the term (distinct fields of meaning), we can examine their articulations with one another. As she argues,

> In the context of what I have been calling serious games, the pursuit of projects for some often entails, necessarily, the subordination of others. Yet those others, never fully drained of agency, have both powers and projects of their own, and resistance (from the most subtle to the most overt) is always a possibility. *Both domination and resistance then are, it seems to me, always in the service of projects*, of being allowed or empowered to pursue culturally meaningful goals and ends, whether for good or for ill [emphasis added] (Ortner 2006d:153).

To round this out, she argues that power isn't typically an end in itself but is instead often exercised over subordinates in the pursuit of some project (and directed toward preventing subordinates from having projects of their own), while resistance (though reactive to power) is "an agency of power-as-resistance" and may move toward something more active: a project with a vision of an alternative world.

It may feel odd for some to contemplate men adopting a stance of passivity and defining that as about power (as opposed to merely being inactive), but it could make sense for some of the men with whom I talked to have done this as a renunciation of masculinity if they conceive of masculinity as agentic in the sense of exerting power over women. This renunciation may be an attempt to empower women through

disempowering themselves, and this is experienced as passivity in the sense that they can't conceive of themselves as being masculine without also imposing their desires and goals on women.

To renounce masculinity to the extent that one becomes passive and refrains from desiring to have projects in the first place is tricky, as Doug and Jon point out. Josh Lewin agrees as well. At one point, I remarked to Josh Lewin that it seems that some men who want to adopt passivity with women assume that masculinity "HAS to be a bad thing." He agreed with me, indicating that he has felt that way in the past and that he feels bad when he notices other men feeling this way. He said,

> Yeah. I felt that at a certain point. And I think that's very common. … And I feel bad for that, because [chuffs out a breath] what? Are you going to hate yourself!? I mean, you ARE WHO YOU ARE! You know!? You can recognize your privilege, but are you going to hate yourself for your privilege!? I mean, … it's a different thing! So, yeah. I mean, you've got some privilege. OK. Yeah. Acknowledge it. See how it works in the world. Alright? And then use it for good, you know [chuckles], if you can! … Also acknowledge who you are, because you ARE a man. You know, you can't be a woman if you're a man unless you really RADically change yourself. You know? And not too many of us are going to do that. So, you know, that shame of being a man, I've definitely felt that. And that would be something I really would explore in a men's group. That's [what] the kind of men's group I talk about is good for. … You can really get to that level and start to explore, feel it, and hopefully work through it and come to accept the fact that you are male. That's OK.

He points out that a 'radical' degendering to avoid feeling guilty about male privilege may not be a very workable solution. He suggests that men should work through how they feel about being male, though it's important to note that he argues that this should involve finding ways of being anti-sexist by using privilege to make change. While he prefers not to politicize his masculinity, he does not adopt a *completely* depoliticizing masculinity therapy approach to the issue.

Sensitivity

A number of the men with whom I talked indicated to me that sensitivity is tricky for men. What the men made clear to me was that, while most of them recognize that they *are* 'sensitive,' being sensitive is not a straightforward and easy thing to pull off or even to acknowledge, even though a number of them are explicitly feminist and the rest at least characterize themselves as egalitarian men who respect women. I begin with Jon Webb, because I believe he illustrates that it is possible to buy into the heavily mediated caricature of 'sensitive men' even while striving to engage in the kind of masculinity practices that are explicitly critiqued in that image. Jon is aware of the existence of 'sensitive men,' but he's no more excited about joining their ranks than he is about being an aggressive, sexist, and competitive man.

In a story about how he met his wife, Gayle, through an online dating service, Jon made it clear that he was not to be confused with a 'SNAG,' whom he considers to be effeminate, boring, and not "edgy" enough. Before she met him, Gayle worried that Jon might be a 'SNAG,' because he had used the tag "feminist, fourth grade teacher" in the online singles ad to which she responded and because she learned that he lived with a dog, a cat, and a guinea pig in the lesbian part of the city. When he reassured Gayle that he wasn't a 'SNAG,' she agreed to date him.

It was very apparent that Jon accepted the popular claim that 'SNAGs' are feminized men, because he placed 'SNAGs' in the same category with gay men when he critiqued the dominance of men in the gender hierarchy between men and women and among men. As he said,

> It almost seems like there's a ranking in this world. Like, you know, there's women at the bottom. Then, there's effeminate men [chuckles],

> you know, and then there's men.[92] You know. [chuckles] And then the effeminate men, that like covers all the, you know, like SNAGs. That covers gay men.

He also briefly explained to me why one would not want to be a 'SNAG.' He told me that 'SNAGs' are committed to feminist ideals:

> in like a really passive way and tend to be … like overly nice. … Like, there's not really any edge to them, I think. … So I think they can tend to be boring. … Like if I were to hang out with a sensitive new age guy [chuckles], I think I'd be fine with his politics. … Or like have a fine conversation, but I would also find them incredibly boring or, um, just not edgy I think.

Apparently, Jon doesn't know any SNAGs, but he presumes to know what they are like. As McMahon (1999) points out, 'Sensitive New Age Guys' represent a mediated image for which the emphasis on 'sensitivity' and 'narcissistic consumption' had been maximized by the late 1990s in contradistinction to the themes of 'domestic sharing' and 'involved fatherhood,' so it is understandable that Jon has no difficulty in calling himself a feminist man (and attempting to put his beliefs into practice) even while disparaging 'SNAGs' and effeminate men. Still, there *is* a contradiction here, because, as I discussed earlier, Jon has actually adopted passivity (both at work and in his personal relationship with Gayle) as a way of rejecting white male power and privilege, something that he's now trying to partially undo after recognizing through therapy the downsides of giving up assertiveness.[93] While Jon may not define his passivity as being like the passivity of

[92] His use of just 'men' as the category for which 'effeminate men' serves as the male 'Other' may or may not have been intentional, but it seems worth noting for the consistency with the common dichotomy between 'real men' and gay men that many heterosexual men take for granted. The opposition between 'real men' and varieties of 'New Men' is certainly part of the mainstream critique of 'sensitivity' in men.

[93] The contradiction that Jon *does* openly recognize is the fact that he is an enthusiastic football fan. He told me that he is very critical of professional football for promoting sexism along with violent and competitive masculinity, but he also admitted that he enjoys football because it is comfortable for its familiarity and because it reminds him of the close relationship that he established with his father through the sport. I discuss this in the section on body-reflexive practices and regendering, because Jon points out that too many putatively feminist men do not recognize the ways they are masculine and that, while he may

'SNAGs,' from the standpoint of the mainstream 'Old Boy' critique of 'New Men,' the distinction is possibly less apparent, because it represents a man who has given up the prerogative to exert control (and authority) in relationships.

Ryan Ostrin also illustrated the challenge faced by men who wish to become sensitive given how culturally devalued that has become in the wake of criticism of 'New Men' and other images. He acknowledges that he is sensitive and that this is a good thing. It was not always the case for him however. When he was younger, he and his father joined in mocking Ryan's brother, because his brother was experimenting with alternatives to the conservatism that Ryan and his father shared. He said,

> I used to identify myself as conservative, but conservatism and maintaining the status quo is inherently contradictory to evolution and things that are constantly changing, and so conservatism became no longer valid. So my sensitivity to gender issues came as a part of that. [Brad: Uh huh. What sorts of experiences did you have that sparked that?] My brother was always very progressive in politics. He's 5 years older than I am. I used to kind of make fun of him. I think a lot of my conservatism had to do with my masculine identity like, 'Oh you're being too sensitive. You're being politically correct,' you know. I remember my dad, 'What kind of woman do you think Carson is going to marry?' It was kind of like, 'a militant, black lesbian.' He was just kind of out there in left field, you know. … It was behavior and ideas that veered outside my definition of what a 'real man' is [which involves] not being sensitive. … These are the way things are. Men act this way. Women act this way. Um, and he was just kind of going outside these norms.

He later came to recognize that his experiences were too limited and that he needed to be open to other perspectives. When his brother came out as gay to him, Ryan began to fundamentally rethink certain fundamental ideas about gender and sexuality. This was during college, and he also began to reject conservatism at this time too. He became quite radicalized, took up progressive activism, and also started a gay-straight alliance on

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be uncomfortable with masculinity, he does acknowledge ways in which he holds onto a feeling of being masculine.

campus, something the college tried hard to squelch. As he moved away from conservatism, Ryan came to see other conservative students on campus as lacking empathy for others. Since then, he has explicitly tried to cultivate empathy, though, as I have discussed, his commitment to a project based on empathy lapsed during the time when he was working as a professional musician. He said,

> I went to a small private college in Memphis, and everyone there was very conservative and very sheltered but largely very indifferent about the suffering and plight of others. … And I saw that it could be obtained through conservative projects. This is how we do it. We encourage people to pull themselves up by their boot straps, you know, do all of those things. … [The people with whom I went to college] are people that just didn't care. From my perspective, it was kind of a college where upper middle upper class [people attended], and they just wanted to go and get a degree so they could go back and become a professional and make lots of money. There was just no empathy. There was no sense of justice. My reaction to that combined with kind of my brother's mentoring in my political and social transformation. That was kind of a model for that. … The passion for social justice and empathy has always been there.

Whereas he once bashed men he perceived as sensitive, he told me that sensitivity is "something now that I adopt wholeheartedly," recognizing that "I'm sensitive. And I've ALWAYS been sensitive. … You know, I mean, … I had a lot of ideas that weren't necessarily consistent. [chuckles]" Still, he won't openly identify that way with most people. As he said,

> It has a whole lot of negative connotations … from both [the Right and the Left]. … I … would identify as a sensitive man to you, 'cause we both know what that means, you know. … On one hand, you have women [who talk about] the 'sensitive ponytail man.' … I hear women say, 'You know, I don't want a man who's going to cry more than I do.' You know. … And there's … a reluctance to accept, you know, extreme forms of sensitivity from that side. And then there's the 'real man.' Uh, you know, 'You're sensitive. You're more like a woman.' You lose status and power, because you become feminized. … I would identify as being sensitive, but sensitive man has … more connotations … to it.

The examples I discussed in this section affirm the observations made by Connell (1995) and others that it is very challenging to bring most men into an exit politics that fundamentally pushes on some of the most culturally valued masculinity practices. Even men, such as Jon Webb, who are distinctly uncomfortable with being men and being around other men, find it unsettling to undo some aspects of hegemonic (and complicit) masculinity projects, especially given that prevalent cultural discourse about men's expressivity, such as that about 'New Men', is often so negative. As Steinberg (1999a, 1999b) usefully points out, even when people contest power-laden definitions and meanings in hegemonic discourse by producing alternatives, the discourses (and practices) that they construct are relationally bound to hegemonic discursive fields, which potentially limits the extent to which they can conceive of and produce alternatives. While men who wish to embrace emotional expressivity may wish to reject hegemonic masculinity projects, they are not generally free to do so without paying some costs.

Sexual Initiation

As it turns out, while most of the men did not describe passivity as very central to their masculinity projects, a few of them did describe a somewhat related practice: intentionally holding back and waiting for their partners to initiate sex. As will become clear, they adopt this as a way of rejecting expectations that men will be sexually aggressive toward women.

For instance, Benjamin Moraga told me that Lila initiates sex more often than he does and that the ratio is probably 70:30. The biggest reason for this is that, in the time before we did our interviews, Benjamin had been actively working on his Master's thesis, which required long hours at his office, making him too tired to want to have sex most

evenings. Still, he indicated that he was also consciously making a decision to scale back his initiation based on his concern to avoid pressuring Lila into having sex when she wasn't interested in doing so. When he does initiate, he is careful to secure her consent first. He said,

> I think part of it … goes back to … masculinity and how … society assumes men should perceive sex. … And how men are supposed to just assume that women want to have sex when [men] want to have sex. That they can just initiate. You know, and so, when I initiate it, I often will be verbal. … You know what I'm saying? Like, because I want to be clear. And then it goes back to like the work that we do in [the anti-rape men's group], like, you know, rape. … Like, it's very salient. … I mean of course, I mean I wouldn't physically, you know, force myself on her, but, if it's unwanted, I want to know.

Benjamin is engaging in practices of change that are explicitly degendering, and he is doing so in response to what he perceives as a hurtful sexist double standard for sexuality. He sees not initiating sex as often and securing consent as a direct refutation of male domination of women, and he sees encouraging Lila to initiate to be a way of undoing the harm of the double standard. He said,

> I think masculinity and male dominance go hand in hand in terms of the way the larger culture perceives masculinity to be. … I think by not initiating sex first, … in some ways, I'm exercising a different form of masculinity in terms of how I think about sex. In terms of how I approach it with my partner. Where I try to make … sure that she wants to participate in it. First. I don't know. … Because, like I said, … physical dominance in sex, um, male dominance in general, right? Generally, like socially, it's tied to sex, and I don't know! And I just feel like … the larger culture tells you that women can be more promiscuous than men and that's always bad for them, right? Like when they're in that position. And so to make that OK, to normalize that within our relationship, to make it so Lila wants to initiate sex more often, to make her feel comfortable with that. Right. To make her feel that initiating sex is great! You know, and that I LIKE it, and that I want her to continue doing it. And that it doesn't make her, you know, something bad or something negative.

While Geoff Riley said that his recollection of his relationship with Jane was that responsibility for initiating sex was mutually shared, he consciously moderated how often he initiated sex for reasons very similar to those given by Benjamin. He said,

> I'm not one to like coerce someone. … You know, that's a strong word, but I mean literally just like initiate even. … I certainly have never been someone who would like encourage that if the other person didn't want to. … You know. Which I know is, unfortunately, pretty common. … You know. Um. … So I probably … didn't initiate to a fault.

Jon Webb's experience is similar. For much of his relationship with Gayle, she initiated more often than he did, and he identified this as about passivity. As he pointed out, as he has worked to become more assertive in the relationship, he has increased his attempts to initiate sex, though she still initiates more often than he does. Talking about this prompted Jon to reveal to me that he went through a "feminist transformation" when he realized that he had pressured women into having sex in the past. In response, he has tended not to initiate sex as often with Gayle. He says they negotiate as they go to make sure that they both get what they want. He said,

> I think [that's] the one thing that's always been very healthy about our relationship. … I think I was always like going through that whole like feminist transformation of like realizing how many times I had pressured a girlfriend. … You know, and then they just kind of complied. … And then I think that's always held me back. … I tend to not initiate. Um, I think that that's changing, but, outside of THAT, I always felt like we were very, um, equal passionately. … Yeah, I don't really see one of us as being way more aggressive. … Then, as we go, like it's much more negotiating what each of us needs or wants. … Um. … I don't think it like halts anything. It doesn't like squelch the passion either. … It's like everything else. We just tend to negotiate it as we go.

Not all men with whom I talked 'held back.' For a number of them, the responsibility for initiating sex is taken-for-granted in their relationships. Ryan Ostrin, Chris Simpson, and Tucker Kinsey all indicated to me that the reason for this is that their

partners do not feel secure in initiating themselves and that they are sensitive to the possibility of being rebuffed, because it makes them feel rejected. It's entirely possible that this reflects a gendered interpretation of what it means to initiate sex – that they both understand initiating sex as being active. For instance, Ryan Ostrin pointed out that, when Tracy wants to have sex with him, she presents herself to him and then waits for him to actually initiate, something that is his responsibility even though he suspects that she wants to have sex more often than he does. Chris Simpson reported a similar situation in his relationship. He said that he knows that Kelli wants to have sex more often than he does but that she resists initiating, because she doesn't want to be rejected. On top of that, she doesn't want him to initiate just because he thinks she wants him to do it. Unlike Ryan though, Chris eventually made an explicit issue of this with Kelli. He said,

> That was one of our bigger conversations and misunderstandings. … In areas of hurt feelings. … She wasn't wanting to force me to have sex if I didn't want to. … If I didn't want to have sex with her, you know, she wasn't wanting to have sex with me. Sort of thing. She wanted me to want to. … I felt like I was being judged or, you know, hurting her feelings, because I wasn't initiating. … I pointed out how that was really unfair to me and set me up in a no-win situation. … It set it up as a binary. It was yes or no. And I said, 'That's not realistic.' … There are different reasons as well for why you want to do things. But, because you love to do it, you need to do it, or you want to do it, because the other person wants to do it. And that was really frustrating for me. … It was invalidating MY ability to … do something for her because she wanted to. And that was an invalid reason for wanting to have sex [according to her]. Um. And once we talked through that, I mean, she really understood it, and she saw exactly how that was making me feel. So then, we tried to modify. … But still, it's still one of the bigger issues in our relationship.

This is a specific example of a general pattern of open communication that Chris reported that he attempts to promote to create a healthy relationship with Kelli.

Overall, it should be clear that the men's strategy of initiating less than their partners was a degendering practice that involved renouncing what they perceived as a masculine privilege, the ability to take for granted that their partners owed them sex whenever they themselves desired it. It is similar to the strategy of passivity previously described, in the sense that the men were opting for inactivity as a way of giving up power that they feared was central to how men are expected to behave in relationships by empowering their partners with the ability to opt for sex on their terms.

Degendering Interpersonal Styles

Even more commonly, the men I interviewed heavily stressed their degendering of interpersonal styles. By this, I mean that they consciously avoided interrupting others when they were speaking, practiced active listening, and cultivated empathy for others. They also took on a significant amount of the responsibility for ensuring that emotional needs were met in the relationship by routinely checking in with their partners about how they were feeling and to ensure that the relationship was mutually satisfying for both partners. Given that women are generally expected to be more responsible for performing practices such as conversation work and emotion talk in relationships with men (Cancian and Gordon 1988; Fishman 1978; Goldschmidt and Weller 2000), the move toward degendering seems significant.

Doug Silverwood is a prime advocate of this type of degendering practice, because he repeatedly stressed that listening and empathy are central tasks for men who wish to change themselves. He learned about gender inequality around the time he was active with SEAC, Student Environmental Action Coalition. SEAC encouraged members to try to "live in the world that we were trying to create," so Doug started paying

attention to male dominance in meetings and learned not to speak more than his fair share of the time. He said,

> I was close to twenty-five before I really became an active like student activist … and started working with women. And that's when things really started to shift on me. Because I was studying it in school. I was seeing it in practice. And we had this idea of the environment being the world around us and wanting to live in the world that we were trying to create. And trying to create OUR alternative space where those things didn't matter. And so then I started to think about what does it mean on a practical basis to challenge [gender inequality]? … We had a lot of [SEAC conferences]. [chuckling] … So I was … on a conference circuit pretty heavy, and I started to do workshops at 'em on meeting facilitations, … trying to strike at the gender [issue]. So I really started to address the issue and … really apply those things that … were just intellectual concepts before … to my own personal life. … And, because I was in a leadership role, I really was trying to set a good example, and so I started to pay attention to male domination. I started to look at like, 'Well, if there's ten people in a sixty minute meeting, that means each person should be talking for about six minutes.' So I started to time myself and see how long I was talking. … You've gotta create this space to allow people who are a little quieter or who are not men, you know, to get them to talk. So, I … started doing things like, 'I'm only going to make three comments in this meeting, even though I know the most about it.' … And I would literally sit on my hands, um, after I made my three comments. And I found that my point of view would eventually get raised by someone else. … So that's when I started to see. … When I really got into it at a practical level. And then it just became glaringly obvious to me.

While Doug most definitely believes that men can (and should) learn to be empathetic, he also firmly believes that women are just better at it than men. He attributes his lack of empathy when he was young to the fact that he had Asperger's Syndrome. He claims that what enabled him to learn how to do active listening and feel empathy for others was taking a class on personality and justice in college and then practicing the active listening skill in his service work at a group home. Based on that and subsequent experience, he argues quite explicitly that we should be teaching young boys to listen, and he has a conviction that they could learn from that to be empathetic,

since empathy isn't innately feminine. He characterizes the issue as one of changing bedrock, but he does believe that change is possible if not easy. He said,

> NONE of us guys are that good at it. You know? I like to say the best of us are like average women. [snorts] I know it's a struggle, you know. When I was married, my wife would ask me, you know, 'How you feeling?' 'I don't know.' … I can't always put that into words, you know. I mean, I've grown some since then. You know, I'm better at it now. … I want to talk a LITTLE bit about empathy. … You know, where does that come from? You know, because that's something that … we lack as men. … I don't think it's innate, you know. I wasn't an empathetic kid. Um. But I'm, you know, pretty good at it now. And I think it comes from listening, you know. I think that's what empathy is, you know. So, if we're talking about how to change men as a whole,[94] you know, teaching boys to listen, um, would be a very good place to start too. Um. You know, some pretty fundamental bedrock stuff needs to get shifted before we are gonna really have change.

While Ryan agrees that men need to develop empathy for others, he actually asserts that we need to encourage men to develop empathy for themselves first. As he said, "I say … men first have to have empathy for themselves before they can have empathy with someone else. … I think it starts with that kind of introspection. … [Then] I think you would appeal to, um, their relationships that they have with women? … You know, mothers, daughters, sisters." As he implies here, one of the reasons he gives for encouraging empathy in men is the need to appeal to their self-interests in order to convince them of the need for change. He believes that appeals to social justice just won't work. This view is based on a combination of lifetime experience, experience with therapy, and training for his work with young boys in the juvenile justice system.

As for himself, Ryan had to relearn how to be empathetic and respectful of women fairly recently, because he had indulged in an extended period of womanizing

[94] The context for this quote is a discussion about the tendency of men in men's groups to point fingers at other men and demand that they change without looking at their own privilege and making changes for themselves.

when he was a professional musician, trying to live out his fantasy about a rock and roll lifestyle in which a man could have lots of women "at his disposal." He said,

> It's weird. I've evaluated, uh, in retrospect, a lot of my behavior and my relationships with women? … In light of kind of my awakening that has taken place in the last couple years. Um. … My first … media hero was The Fonz. … And The Fonz had hundreds of women. Um. You know, just at his disposal. … That coincided nicely with, uh, my fantasy to be a musician. A rock and roll musician. … And I had a lot of random sex with different women. … And I really kind of thrived on the attention of women. I was never, um, abusive or coercive, but I was never very conscious or empathetic of their feelings. … It was like, 'I'm an adult. They're an adult. If they assume that there's something going on more than sex, that's really their problem.' … There's a degree of euphoria of an audience member, um, and I took full liberty with that.

As he explained to me, he came to recognize after the fact that, during that period of his life, he lacked the empathy to recognize how he was abusing his power and privilege. Interestingly though, he still managed to convince himself that he was still feminist during this time, because he respected women's rights. He said,

> That was my abuse of male power and privilege. … All the while, I still … esteemed myself as a sensitive male. Or, you know, a feminist that believed in equal rights. And, you know, anti-abuse and all these things. And I really hadn't identified that particular behavior as an element of sexism or, you know, I never saw a connection. … And I still think I'm still processing that.

Eventually, he began to feel the need for intimacy, affection, and stability that he associates with relationships with women, so he sought out more long-term relationships. This helped him to reflect on what he had been doing and to consider how women must have felt as a result of his behavior. He worked on this issue in therapy, and he also developed some perspective on it through his social justice coursework in the school of social work. He now realizes that, not only was he oblivious to other people's needs, he was oblivious to his own. He was trying to live out a "rock and roll mystique," and he

considers himself lucky to have recognized that he wouldn't find happiness and fulfillment on that path. Now, he's respecting himself and others, which he says enables him to actually follow through on being feminist.

Ryan may be correct in speaking to how persuasive it can be to convince men of the need to change by appealing to their love and respect for the women in their lives. This certainly seems to have been the case for Jon Webb. In the last chapter, I explained that Jon Webb identifies the respect he feels for other women as based in the respect he learned to hold for his mother. However, he also explained to me that he learned an important lesson about empathy from his father, who convinced him to be more considerate of his younger sister's feelings while growing up. While he admits that he was not consistently reflective enough about that lesson as a youth, he eventually learned to apply his experience with his sister to other women. As he said,

> That REALLY affected me. Like, … to realize that I had that much power and … to hurt someone I cared so much about or wanted to protect so much. … I didn't have like a lot of like relationships, um, in high school or whatever. … I was running with the crowd kind of thing, you know. Like, you know, not treating other girls too well. … Pretty typical like middle school, high school stuff, um. … On the one hand, I'd have that great respect [for my mother and sister], but then, on the other hand, I was joining in with what the other boys were doing. And I didn't really see that. And then, you know, I went to college. … In college, you know, a lot of the women … were just as strong as my mom. I mean, they were educated. … They were doing it. They were living on their own. And so to see that and then to start to piece together. … These [are the] same girls I was going to high school or middle school with. … The stories that they would share [about] being treated basically the same way by boys where they were from. To realize that this … terrorizing goes on. And not thinking it's OK, 'cause, you know, then I was friends with them or I was dating them or whatever.

The led him to a deep reevaluation of how he relates to women, including the concern about coercing women into sex that I discussed earlier. As he said,

> I would look at, you know, the places … maybe like where I'd pressured for certain things, you know, sexual or, um, whatever. … I'm not like admitting rape here [chuckles], but you know what I mean? … There's such a fine line there, and to realize that I'm just as guilty as so many other men. … And not even realizing it. … I don't know how I was able to do it. I mean, I guess part of it comes back to that respect or that protecting [short pause] relationship I had growing up with women in my life, but then I don't know. Like, it obviously wasn't there, present in those moments [when I was running with the crowd]. … When I look back, [I] vow to not make that same mistake. To not pressure another person like that. … And to not make them feel like that. You know.

While the emphasis on protection may sound paternalistic, I do not believe that that would be a fair or complete characterization of how he now approaches relationships with women, because he conveyed to me that he wants women to have the right to define what is best for them. He adopted his father's somewhat paternalistic stance and redefined it by developing close relationships with women and adopting their standpoints. This comes through vividly when he talks about the pain he felt in college when women he knew developed unhealthy body images and disorderly eating patterns. As he said, "It just tore me apart."

As I have mentioned, the men I interviewed also prioritized meeting the emotional needs of their partners. As I discuss in Chapter Six, this is more central for some masculinity projects than it is for others, but it was a common concern overall nonetheless. One good example comes from Chris Simpson, who has translated his father's provision of financial and physical security to his mother into providing emotional security and stability for Kelli.[95] As he said,

> My dad would always go out of his way to take care of my mom and make sure that my mom felt safe. … Because that was something that she really NEEDED and was important to her and security. And instability. And the current relationship I'm in, that's one of the big things that I bring

[95] This redefinition of a conventionally masculine practice is similar to Doug Silverwood's redefinition of a work ethic (recounted later in this chapter).

> to the relationship as well. So, I think there's definitely a modeling impatterned thing there, um. ANND, you know, which CAN be very gendered. … Like I am the man, and I am the rock, and I am all of those things. … But it's interesting, 'cause it's a little bit of a different take, because it's not so much in terms of finances or … physical security, or going out and killing things, or anything like that. But a little more, um, just kind of being a little bit of a touchstone for Kelli to hold on to.

Overall, most of the men consistently demonstrated that they are working to challenge assumptions that men are less capable of doing nurturance and caretaking within relationships. They devoted significant amounts of energy to making sure that their relationships were well-maintained and that they were providing for the emotional needs of their partners.

Notably, some of the men even did so when their partners did not. For instance, Benjamin Moraga told me that he believes that he thinks about how their relationship is doing more than Lila does. He has talked with her about the need to communicate about the relationship. In fact, as I recounted in Chapter Four, he's even initiated conversations with Lila about their careers, attempting to encourage her to make sure that her interests in the relationship are met instead of deferring to him. Apparently, these conversations have left him doubting how much she thinks about the relationship herself, but he has seen changes as she has engaged with feminism. He said,

> I feel like I do it more often. Maybe just because it's just ME, right? Because I'm the one who's saying it, right. Um. [pause] … We're not like, 'OK, let's talk generally about the relationship.' We don't update it, right. … You know, we don't have like diagrams and charts, you know. … But … I think about it often. I think about, 'Well, you know, lately it's been kind of stressful for the both of us. You know, I've been writing my thesis or whatever, and so we haven't had as much, you know, time together. We haven't been, you know, as intimate and often enough.' And so I think about that. … I mean, she HAS to think about it. I mean, I don't think one could be in a relationship and NOT think about –. I don't know. … I don't know how to describe it, but it's because I can't really get in her mind, right? … So, I only know what I [think and feel], … and

> I only have some examples of her doing it, right? … I'm almost positive she thinks about it often though. Because … I feel like our level of communication is pretty high. I mean, it could always be worked on here and there, and, you know, it's never going to be perfect, but I think it's pretty high, and we try, you know. … I TOLD her that … I feel like these certain types of communication are important, and I don't know if she fully understood what I meant by that. Like, I think we were talking about two different things. And I think [coughs] particularly the more she's become involved with … feminist like praxis, … the more she understands where I'm coming from, and I think we've become on the same page in terms of all of those things.

Tucker Kinsey provides another example of a man who claims to provide more emotional support for his partner than he receives in turn, though his approach to emotional expression appears to be somewhat more conventionally masculine, since he hides his own feelings from her by putting up a stoic front so that she can feel free to be supported by him without worrying about his issues. He told me that his stoicism is something that he learned from his dad. He said,

> I am more the emotional support than she is. OK? … Um, she is very supportive and everything and is great on all that. I don't have any, uh, issue, … but I think that as far as energy … that I do more of that. And, in SOME respects, it's very male, because there is a stoicism on my part that I have to have. … Not that women don't do that either, OK. … [Not that] they don't suck up their own issue to support some man. … OK. But I do feel like I have to be more stoic. You know, and that's very male. Or masculine. Excuse me. [Brad: Yeah. Um. Stoic so that she feels free to be supported?] Uh huh. [Brad: She doesn't have to worry about the fact that you are upset about something?] Right. … And that sometimes is an issue. Sometimes, I have had difficulty and didn't share it with her … until WELL after and she could have supported me … more and helped me. … But I didn't want to affect her in that way.

This isn't completely conventional however, since their relationship represents more of a reversal of a 'traditional' relationship. Tucker defines Becky as the main financial provider in the relationship while he draws her out by talking with her and listening to her concerns routinely. Despite his persisting stoicism, it's clear that empathy for others is a

central issue for him and that, like Doug, it's an ability that he had to work to cultivate. He credits therapy and medication for helping him to adopt a different set of practices and to become one who is capable of being emotionally available for others. As he said, "I like to, uh, listen more than I talk. I used to like to talk more than I listened. … I was a very, very, very, very typical, uh, outspoken male. … [Now], I both can and want to listen more. Because my mind is calmer."

Overall, degendering of interpersonal styles of interaction is fairly individualized, though consider the fact that Doug applied it to his social movement work to try to make a broader impact beyond just his personal relationships. Judging by how commonly I heard comments from them about this particular type of practice, the men I interviewed obviously viewed this as fairly central to their projects for anti-sexism, both as a way of marking themselves as different from most men and as a way of implementing the kinds of changes in relationships that they saw anti-sexism calling upon them to make. Making these kinds of changes required considerable work (and, in some cases, training and therapeutic intervention), highlighting the very real effort they devoted to changing routine gender practices in which they had previously been engaged.

Degendering Work and Careers

The men in this study engaged in a diverse array of attempts to degender their work and careers. Not surprisingly, this issue was central for the men I interviewed, as indicated by the fact that it came up in every interview. While there were a couple exceptions among the oldest men, there was general agreement that reworking the balance between the amount of time spent at work and the amount of time spent with friends and family was essential.

Perhaps the one who has gone the furthest is Charlie Adkins. He and his wife, Frances, have worked out a strategy that allows them both to be equally involved parents. Charlie, who works for a state bureaucracy, has been job-sharing with a colleague for the past three and a half years, which allows him to work only twenty hours per week. Frances, who works for a federal agency, has worked a reduced work week for the past three and a half years, which allows her to work only twenty-seven to thirty hours per week. Charlie and his colleague are the only employees at his work who job-share. When Charlie decided that he wanted to reduce his hours, he drafted a proposal and gave it to his supervisor. His supervisor was close to retirement at the time, and he viewed this as an arrangement that would require extra work for himself. As a result, he rejected Charlie's proposal since he wasn't compelled to support job-share. In response, Charlie sought out a supervisor who would support him, and he transferred to this person's section. The supervisor who supported Charlie's proposal for job-share was also close to retirement, but this person viewed that as a reason for supporting the proposal. This person figured s/he wouldn't be around much longer, so what difference did it make? In the process, Charlie found a colleague who was interested in reducing her work hours as well.

Charlie told me that he has cherished the ability to be at home with his children. Now that his children are attending public school, he says he has come to really appreciate having time for himself and plans to continue the job-share. He explicitly said that, because they are both scientists, they approached the problem of working out how to parent intellectually by researching the early childhood development literature. They were persuaded by their reading that it is better for children to be raised by their parents.

They felt uncomfortable with sending their children to paid child care. Charlie said that Frances originally offered to leave her job to be a stay at home mother. She told him that she had always somewhat wanted to stay home with her children full-time. He told me that he thought her offer was partly made in jest and that he is convinced that she would go crazy if she did try to stay home all the time. He admitted that they both need the intellectual stimulation of talking with adults and having jobs. He said that their reduced work weeks suit them well, because they are ready to go back to work when it is time to do so and because they are ready to come home to be with their children and away from work when it is time for that.

As an illustration of the fact that degendering difference does not always 'feel' right, consider what Charlie had to say about this arrangement when his children were old enough to go to school full-time and Frances had an opportunity to get a different position that would require returning to work full-time and traveling more. With the prospect of Frances going back to work, Charlie admits to ambivalence about remaining a stay at home dad. The mutuality of their arrangement, with both of them scaling back at work at the same time, was apparently very important for his sense of fairness in the arrangement. He said,

> Well? You know, it would be just more of the day to day, you know, since she would be working full-time, and I … wouldn't yet be working full-time. Um. And may choose not to, because of her working full-time. Um. Just doing things like getting the groceries, and doing the laundry, and dropping the kids off at school, and picking them up from school. … Uh. Whereas now, that's pretty much evenly split. Those kind of duties would fall more to me just because they would have to. … I don't mind doing some of those things, but too, you know, … I could see where there would be times where … I would feel it'd be unfair. … [pause] Yeah. Eh, you know not working full-time. There would be an issue there for me [in terms of] masculinity too. For her to work full-time and me work part-time and be doing most of … what is normally perceived as not

> masculine work. … I mean, I think I could work with that, but it would definitely come up, you know, as a thing I would have to deal with. Because I would have those feelings. [Brad: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Would it be more about how YOU were feeling about it? Would it be about how other people perceive you? Is there a distinction?] Well, it would be both? Yeah, … I don't know how others would perceive me, but how I would perceive them perceiving me.

Not all men scale back at work in order to make it easier to balance work and family. For instance, consider the case of Andrew Sutherland, who engaged with the counter-culture during the formative years of his life. He began to question mainstream assumptions about success and happiness, and this led him to reject the idea that he should devote most of his time and effort to working.[96] Clearly, this implicates his masculinity, but he has engaged in a class project of resistance. Part of what makes it possible for him to maintain this project is that he and Mary have surrounded themselves with likeminded friends, though it's important to acknowledge that most of their friends are her friends. Among the things that makes his project also about masculinity is that, like others in the study, he has intentionally sought out settings in which he could interact mostly with women: a psychology major in college, working in a residential group home, and, later, working as a social worker. He has also encountered women in various music scenes with which he's been associated, and he has been impressed by women's skill at playing instruments and making music. All of his experiences with women in these settings have convinced him that women are very competent and capable at a variety of tasks and skills, leading him to abandon silly ideas about patriarchy. While his early experiences weren't all that progressive, he learned through experience to respect

[96] As I recount in Chapter Seven, 'New Fathers,' in certain respects, this is similar to the kinds of choices that Paul Denbigh made.

women. For instance, he described his developing consciousness that women were deserving of respect when he was in college:

> If you are sitting there paying attention to this woman because you really want to jump her bones, and she happens to be an artist and she is doing artwork, say a drawing. You feel obligated to at least notice the drawing in your efforts to get on her bones. You suddenly notice that is really good. I can't [draw like] that. The idea that somehow you are more entitled kind of like, 'oh, not really.' [laughs] I've never really thought about this before. That is how it came about for me. It was just exposure to a reality that denied the social attitude.

His later experiences really bring this home. As he said,

> If you hang out with artsy types, you hang out with women who can do things. And a lot of times they can do things really well. If you hang out in social fields, you see this woman running a treatment meeting better than that guy. And so it's just a concrete thing, not an intellectual thing. If you are sitting listening to someone playing a guitar and the person happens to be a woman and they are playing the living shit out of the guitar. You really can't support the idea that somehow or another they are less than some dude playing a guitar. The more you experience these things, the more you expose yourself to that for whatever reason, you have to get with the idea that gender dominance is kind of stupid. And I think that is partially what happened with me. A lot of the things I'm interested in had a lot of women in it. If I had gone into a job that had mostly guys, maybe I wouldn't have had an opportunity to learn anything. Whatever the dominant thing is, I might have taken that on. Every day in school in psychology and English classes, there would be a lot of women. They got A's and did all these things. They were as good as me and everything. You can't support, there is nothing for that concept to sit on. Your everyday experiences are completely denying it. I think with me, I shifted from real sexist to lukewarm feminist, because of the stuff that happened in my life.

Andrew took up an entry-level position as a social worker in a state office, and he's resisted efforts to get him to move up in the bureaucracy. While he is a little ambivalent about staying in that position and expresses irritation (to me) at his male boss's condescension about his choice to remain in that position, he has little interest in upward

mobility or increased supervisory responsibility (and liability) that would come with a change.

While none of the rest of the men were opting to scale back at work, work/family balance issues were very common. For instance, Josh Lewin is also very serious about maintaining a work/family balance, though he admitted that this involves a lot of struggle and intentionality. He said,

> Well, that's tough! That's the … struggle! That's it right there. I mean, that's where we're at. And, you know, that's where I'm at every day. … And, um, yeah, it's a … constant struggle to kind of keep your priorities straight. And what are the priorities? What matters? Uh, it shifts all the time, but, you know, the thing that I need to do is constantly remind myself of what matters to me. And it involves creating a lot of boundaries.

He once had difficulty in maintaining balance between work and family when he was a writer, because he felt that his writing had to come first and everything and everyone else had to come second in order for his writing to be great. He said,

> The relative importance of our careers is also something that we struggle over a lot. Especially when I was a writer. Um, it happened more then. … When I was a writer, it was bad, because part of the mythos of being a writer, an artist really, any artist, is that … nothing is as important as your work. Because, if it is, your work isn't going to be great. … So there's an underlying thing. So your work has to be the most important thing. Well, you know, that creates rifts in relationships very easily, and, you know, Diane felt like sometimes … she didn't matter as much. And we revisit that place sometimes. … Where she feels like I'm not giving her, um, you know, equal value really. That I'm not valuing HER stuff as much as I'm valuing mine. Uh, and, you know, I think that happens.

Josh was still working on his writing career when they relocated to Columbia for Diane's position at the university. Despite not particularly wanting to come here, he agreed to do so on the condition that Diane would support them financially while he continued to work on his writing career. After relocating though, Josh quit writing when he realized that his

relationships are much more important to him than his desire to be successful as a writer. As he said, "One of the … reasons I quit writing is that I've come to realize how important our relationships are and how that's more important to me than any sense of success. Uh, you know, in terms of how society sees it anyway." He made the decision to become a therapist. Now, he makes career sacrifices on behalf of his family. He feels that he could be more successful, but he's not willing to pay the price with his family. He said,

> But it happens now too, and, you know, these opportunities arise. And sometimes I just have to say no to stuff, because, while it would be really good for my career [and] I could go really far in terms of success, … there would be a price to pay. … That's what I have to try to keep in mind and balance out and all that. … Those are the kinds of issues that we're constantly dealing with.

What clearly marks this as a renunciation of a masculine way of approaching professional training[97] is that he compares his struggle with that of women. He said,

> It's the same battle working women have, you know, and professional women. It's not, you know, it's not different. Diane has the same thing. You know, how does she draw lines between her professional career and her family? How does she balance them out? It's what happens to anybody who's working and has a family. Um, so you struggle with it, and you make a lot of mistakes. And, you know, you go forward, and you try to constantly reassess. 'OK, am I working too hard right now in my job?' 'Cause usually that's what happens. I don't know too many of us who get concerned about putting too much energy into their family and not enough into their own individual stuff. I think it's usually the other way around.

Maintaining this balance requires careful negotiation and vigilance, particularly since it's so easy for many people to privilege work. He said,

> That's actually what Diane and I are constantly negotiating. And I think we negotiate it pretty well actually. I think it's one of the strengths of our relationship. But … the tension is always there. You know, like whose

[97] And presumably career after his training ends, though it's always possible (though probably very unlikely) that Josh could privilege his work as a professional therapist over time spent with his family.

> profession is more important? You know, you don't want either of us to be more important, but there's crunch time for each one, and so how do you decide whose crunch time is more crunch time? Or how do you decide how many crunch times are real? I mean, you can always have a crunch time, um, if you want. [chuckles] So how do you balance all that out?

This has been made somewhat easier by the fact that Josh has been conceiving of his career as secondary to Diane's career, which has provided the "financial anchor" for their family. Becoming a therapist grants him a certain amount of flexibility to accommodate his career to Diane's, because he can relocate fairly easily, but he can also stay as well.

Like Andrew Sutherland, Jon Webb has worked in a female-dominated occupation his entire adult life. He was convinced by his mother to become a teacher, but he told me that he prefers working with women, because they are more likely than men to support his masculinity project, even those women who are less progressive. He said,

> I like working with women. … I preFER … the company of women. Um. I find even like the most conservative woman, like I can have a much more real and open conversation with. … Than I can with a lot of men. Even like somewhat progressive men. Um. I don't know. … Something about the way women are raised in this world or whatever. … I just get along with women better. Um. … I mean, I get a little tired sometimes … when some of the … overall like sexist ideas in society … are expressed from the women I work with. That frustrates me. Um. But then, I also … feel like the women I work with are also much more open to like, 'Oh! Maybe that doesn't apply to him.' You know, like I was vegetarian fer most of my career, but like, I felt like the women I worked with were much more open to that. And like talked to me about that. … I like working with women. Um. I feel like there's much more of a team effort. You know, we work together collaboratively. As opposed to, I think men are always constantly one-upping each other. … I just don't like that.

While Jon appreciates the work and the working environment, he intensely dislikes the fact that teaching is devalued based on being regarded as 'women's work.' While he

doesn't care that he makes less money as a teacher than he could in another line of work, he hates what that represents. He said,

> It's just those limitations that we all put on masculinity and femininity. Um. That only women can care for children. Or, if you're a man, there must be something, uh, wrong with you, … and then that implies there's something wrong with women. … We consider it women's work, even if there are men doing it. And those men must be defective on top of it, but then like it just lowers the value to the work we do. … And that just BLOWS my mind.

Of course, Jon did note that one thing that balances the pay is the fact that he is only contractually obligated to work nine months out of the year, which will give him the ability to be home with his kids in the summers in the future. This is very appealing to him.

While the actual work and how much of it one does is clearly very important, so too is the meaning of being a worker for one's sense of being a man. For many men, even if breadwinning in and of itself is not central, the idea of being successful at work and working hard is important. For Doug however, work is important for allowing him to perform service for others, and relationships are paramount. In this respect, he resembles most of the men in this study. What is interesting is how Doug responded to the lessons of his workaholic father. Doug said that his father instilled a work ethic in him and also a sense that one should take care of one's family. Doug respects these lessons, but he redefined the idea of taking care of the family to mean practicing egalitarianism. He said,

> He always told us, you know, … that it's a man's responsibility to work hard to take care of his family. … And, uh, so I've tried, you know, to work hard. Um, and tried to take care of my family, but I've tried to have a different view of what that is. You know, to me, that's that hard work of egalitarianism. That's [chuckles] much more important than, um, how much money you make or being a provider.

In fact, in practice, Doug is not likely to be a consistent provider, because he periodically takes a break from work to decompress. Because he throws so much of himself into work, particularly when he's not in a long-term relationship and feels free to devote his energy to helping others instead of rationing his energy to be able to be available emotionally and physically to a partner, he needs to periodically quit his jobs and spend time travelling around. This marks his father's influence as well, because Doug has a powerful wanderlust. He typically goes backpacking or hitchhiking across the country for a time to clear his head before taking up another social work position and throwing himself back into serving the needs of others.

Several of the men indicated that work is not central to how they think of themselves. For instance, Benjamin Moraga and Geoff Riley both said that, while they feel the need to work to make money, they don't feel the need to make a lot of money, and they certainly do not want to be defined by their work. Chris Simpson went further. He told me that he doesn't feel the need to work. Like Doug and others through, if he does work, it has to make a contribution. He is committed to working on social justice. He said,

> It's not important to me to work. It's important for me to feel like I'm making a contribution to my community, to society, to whatever scale we're looking on. Um, I really want to feel like I'm making a contribution. … I don't feel like I privilege how I'm doing that. So, if I were to be not working for whatever reason, um, I could see myself being happy being involved in a lot of different ways. It's not so much for me about the paycheck or the sense of, um, pride and dignity. I feel like, if I were to be doing something, you know, I'd be fine just telling people, 'Oh, I'm involved in this. I'm involved in that.' So work to me is much more about a commitment to much larger issues. A commitment to things I'm interested in. And researching work [with a Ph.D.] is much more about continued learning. Um, so I would always want a job where I was able to

> do that. In a really active way. I mean, you're always learning things, but, uh, a job where that was an emphasis.

James Nagel feels much the same way. Service is so important to him that he is likely to go into the Peace Corps immediately after college. He also defines his choice of nursing as an occupation (another female-dominated one) as about taking care of others. He feels that nursing and the Peace Corps will naturally go together to allow him to practice his principles.

As I mentioned, Geoff feels that having a career is not very important to him. He wants to have a stable income, so he will work, but he does not like to think of work as a reflection of who he is. He wants to have work that is meaningful to him, something that is very much influenced by the fact that his parents engaged in work that did not allow them to realize their potential or to derive much enjoyment from working. As he said,

> The idea of career … seems uninviting to me. … I need some kind of stable money I guess. … I don't think of it as like … reflecting who I am. … I don't … view other jobs or careers as negatively either, you know, to a flaw. To the extent that I forget that they are very important to people. … I just mean that the status of it. I don't care if you're a janitor. … I know it's very important to plenty of people. … I think it's probably because … what my dad did for a living or what my mom did for a living wasn't reflective of who they were and what they were … capable of. And so that's how I kind of think about careers. … Career is not very important, AS LONG AS I'm doing things that I think are valuable and contributing.

Likewise, despite the fact that it stresses out his family, Mark Holland doesn't want to buy into ideas about upward mobility and success, though, in his case, this is because he is committed to anarchist principles. He said,

> Both my parents are, you know, like, 'Do good.' … It's almost like that mentality that you'd see amongst like minorities or poor people. … Their families are counting on them. Like, 'You need to like do good. You know, like don't make the same mistakes we did. Like get out of this.' … And I'm kind of like in a lot of ways not really interested in that!

> [chuckles] You know? [chuckles] And I DO stress. … I definitely want to make more than $8.50 an hour, but I don't care about like money as far as like being rich or anything like that. … They all think like, if I get a high paying job, like that will make me happy. Because they never had that, you know, and they just don't want to see me struggle. You know? … But I'd rather struggle and have free time than have money and just be a slave.

Like the others, Benjamin Moraga is not ambitious for a well-paying job and lots of material possessions. He uses his siblings to identify what he does not want. He said,

> I always view my brother and sister as being completely different from me in terms of what they want out of life and what I want. Um. They both wanted what they have as far as I can tell. They wanted the house, the kids, the cars, the jobs. I never really wanted that. I still don't. I still don't want to own a house. I don't like owning a car. You know? I hate it. [chuckles] I don't want to have like a 9 to 5 job. I don't care. I don't want a job that pays a lot of money. … It wouldn't hurt, but I don't want to work in the way they work to get that, right, so. I don't want to do things I'm so detached from that it's just a job.

Furthermore, even though he loves sociology and teaching, he looks forward to retiring and has no plans of working for his entire life. Perhaps the ambivalence that others feel is manifested for Benjamin in the notion of work. He knows he must work, but he doesn't want to need a job. As he said, "I think to some extent I will be ambivalent about almost everything I do in terms of a job. [chuckles] … You know, like I don't think there is anything that I truly like would enjoy."

In contrast, two of the older men, Joel Sewald and Brian Mason, both professors, showed little inclination toward scaling back at work. I talk about them at greater length later in this chapter and in Chapter Seven. For now, I want to note that both of these men worked as much as they could, because they were very focused on their writing and their ideas. They both indicated that this generated some conflicts with their partners, but they were firmly fixed on defining themselves through their work even though they

acknowledged that their practices violated feminist principles that they held. Other men, such as Gary Estes and Ray Morrow, who are at an earlier point in their careers, showed some signs of having difficulty making balances, though, for them, this seemed to be more about the inflexibility of the tenure process (Estes) or the demands of a job that required working into the evening (Morrow) than it was an actual choice that they were making to privilege work over time spent with their families. Both of these men expressed numerous regrets about this, citing lost time with children and guilt about the increased workload for their partners. It is unclear how their projects will develop over time as their careers become more established. It's also unknown how men such as Geoff Riley and Benjamin Moraga, who have yet to complete graduate school, will negotiate the demands of the academic workplace.

It appears that men who were most successful in actually doing the most to balance work and family by scaling back, rejecting ambition, and/or seeking work that was more flexible (such as the traditionally women's occupations selected by some of the men) paid a financial cost to be able to do so. At the same time, they appear to have found the tradeoff to be worth that cost, because it accorded with their political principles (especially for Mark Holland, Andrew Sutherland, Doug Silverwood, and Paul Denbigh) and/or allowed for greater time to be spent with their families (especially for Charlie Adkins, Josh Lewin, Paul Denbigh, and others). The fact that they had to make sacrifices and seek out traditionally women's occupations (which is not very surprising really) indicates that social conditions place limits on what is possible for those who wish to make change. It may be the case that men who opt out in these ways find themselves with greater latitude to engage in a broader range of intentional change, while men who

pursue more conventional careers find themselves reproducing more conventional patterns of masculinity practices.

Degendering as Part of a Collective Exit Politics

What distinguishes other degendering practices from the collective exit politics that I am about to describe is the scope of the change envisioned by the men who take them up. While I see potential for collective change in renunciations of everyday masculine privileges and attempts to scale back at work to prioritize family and relationships (to name just two examples), the examples I have discussed so far have been (mostly) directed by the men themselves toward their personal relationships with women, while the exit politics that Mark Holland describes is explicitly directed toward broader change. He explicitly conceives of degendering as part of a radical gender politics.

Mark Holland is engaged in a major project of reconstruction – a full-time engagement with anti-sexism (as part of his project of anarchism[98]) in an effort to "de-socialize" himself. He said,

> As far as like gender stuff, like that's been like a huge struggle. … I guess me and Susanne are basically broke up, but even though sometimes it seems like we aren't. … We still hook up sometimes or whatever, but I'm still pretty upset about it. And I'm trying to like NOT act the way other men would act. … Not act the way society would tell me to act, you know? … I struggle with that a lot. And that's part of the reason like, you know, I'm trying so hard with always like looking inward and reading and stuff. Like, I feel like I struggle pretty bad with like jealousy issues and stuff like that. And I'm trying really hard. … It's just like this

[98] He told me that he's somewhat ambivalent about using the term anarchism, because it is so widely misunderstood. He said that, for him, anarchism implies being an egalitarianist, an autonomist, against all war, against all government, anti-capitalist, and (most specifically) a primitivist. He's deeply troubled by civilization, and he told me that he hopes the world's oil supply is depleted before practical alternatives to oil are developed, because he feels that this is the only current hope for a liberating downfall of civilization. While he recognizes that many people would suffer and die as a result, the small communities that would survive would be more likely to be more egalitarian and sustainable than Western civilization.

> really like active process. And it'd be way, way, WAY easier and less time consuming if it WASN'T. You know what I mean! [chuckles] If I just was like any other man. Just be like, 'Fuck you!' You know? Or become some crazy stalker or whatever else other men do when they get dumped. … But like it's a lot harder to like NOT be that way. … It's just a lot of stuff. … I'm trying to like break cycles and thought patterns and stuff like that and change and be, you know, the man I want to be and the man she wants me to be and the man that like I would be if I was … successful in being like completely anti-oppressive, you know? But it's just like SO much WORK. … And it takes up SO much time. Like, it's unbelievable. … I know like de-socializing myself and getting to where I want to be is going to be a lifelong process.

What is key for our understanding of Mark's project of becoming a 'completely anti-oppressive man' is that he assumes that it is possible to become a different kind of man – one for whom feminism is central to what it means to masculine. For Mark, to be feminist requires political resistance against a hierarchical system and not just a focus on himself. As he said,

> It's just like been kind of an interesting time for me like. I mean, I've always considered myself to be like, you know, a good guy or whatever, but to be like now like taking actual steps toward like trying to … actively be against like patriarchy and everything else. … I've always critiqued everything from like an anarchist standpoint, but now it's like critiquing from like kind of a feminist standpoint too.

At times, this can be wearying, especially given the fact that there isn't a tremendous amount of support for men to practice radical forms of egalitarianism. In fact, he words it fairly strongly, asserting that mainstream culture "attacks" us. He said,

> I think we're all born radical. And then we're socialized and over-schooled … into being just like drones. … I'm trying really hard to be like, I mean, I guess like you don't have to TRY to be a feminist male. Like, you can claim to be whatever. Like, I CLAIM I'm a feminist male, but I'm trying to like lead that life, you know? … And I'm against oppression. And so therefore I try not to oppress other people, you know? … So I always feel like we're always like fighting upstream. You know? … It's like, alright, I'm twenty-seven. So, I've had twenty-seven years of socialization, and every minute it's still going on. You know? … Every minute. Every waking moment. I mean, like I don't even have a TV in

> my house, but as soon as I step outside the door, you know, I'm attacked by like mainstream culture. It's like, every minute of every day like something is happening. … I struggle a lot with like trying to like live the way I want to be and be the man I want to be. … I constantly catch myself like messing up in little ways here and there. … And it's all socialization, and even when you're aware of it and even when you're trying to like be against it, … like it's still there. You know?

He conceives of masculinity as a cultural product that is fundamentally changeable through practices of change. Although he is actively engaged in a project of reforming himself, this is just one part of a broader politically active project of contesting white supremacist, patriarchal capitalism through his participation in a local anarchist community and through his involvement with a men's anti-rape group.

The collective nature of Mark's project is also apparent in his work to establish a deeper relationship with his best friend and roommate. Mark values this relationship, because he sees himself as not like other men, and this relationship sustains him in being that way. He said,

> It's just gotten like deeper and deeper lately. … I mean, I've always kind of NOT necessarily been like most men. People always say men stereotypically don't have like close and deep friendships, you know? And like, I don't feel like I'm that way.

Deepening that relationship involves challenging patriarchal conventions for manhood. He and Malcolm, his roommate, have created a sort of consciousness-raising group between the two of them, which at times includes the anarchist women with whom they are friends and roommates but which mostly involves the two of them working out how to be 'better men.' He said,

> He's going on the same path I'm on of like trying to be better men, I guess. So like me and him have like really deep talks all the time. It's almost like a spontaneous men's group just with the two of us. … Which is PRETTY cool. Like, we'll talk about serious issues and stuff.

Their purpose is not to make themselves feel better for being men, though that would certainly be an outcome of their attempts to make change, but rather to scrutinize how they are implicated in oppressive gender relations, even when this provokes personal discomfort for them. As he said,

> We're also like together going beyond that and trying to like work out our own shit too. So, you know, it's cool to have someone else to turn to, and that's also cool that we are also both then actively like trying to go beyond … the point most men get to in our culture. … So, yeah. … And two men getting together and talking deeply about stuff is like pretty rad in itself. You know. … And then it also helps both of us like process things and like give each other ideas and try and move beyond, I don't know. [short pause] … I know like everything I've said is kind of like abstract, you know? … It's just good to have that and something that's not very common among men. … We were good friends before we lived together, so it's not like … contrived. … Like, we aren't like FORCing ourselves. We're both aware that each of us is like taking steps to try and like better themselves as men. … We both like separately like went out on this journey, you know? And now it's like we're together like trying to like help each other along. So, it's pretty cool.

What made it even more apparent to me that he and Malcolm are engaged in a political project together is the fact that the two of them confronted a friend who had sexually assaulted two of the women in their 'radical community of friends' at two different times. Mark told me that, had he become aware of these incidents a couple years before and if it hadn't been a woman with whom he was friends, he is sure that he would have tried to ignore the issue or to defend his friend. Alternatively, if it had been a woman he knew (as in this real situation), he said he probably would have gone to beat up his friend.

Based on their mistrust of the state, they wanted to work out a community-based response to this offense instead of turning to the police, so he and Malcolm spent a great deal of time talking with the women survivor-victims, trying to provide non-judgmental support for them. Collectively, they agreed that they didn't want to just exile their friend

from their community. At the same time, they wanted to hold him accountable for his actions. Mark and Malcolm told him that they expected him to acknowledge that what he had done was wrong and to demonstrate that he was seeking to make change to ensure that something of this nature would never occur again. Mark felt that this was reasonable, especially since he himself was engaged in such a process of feminist change. He said,

> Everyone was pretty much in agreement that like, if he was like seeking therapy and maybe like going to like a perpetrator's group or whatever and like just taking these steps, that people would, you know, kind of like allow him back in the community, but it's like he's not even doing that. And that's ridiculous. … I feel like it's almost like insulting to me, because it's like I'M doing these things. I'M DOING what I ask him to do MYSELF, just because I want to better myself. … I, uh, just got an appointment to see a counselor[99] and stuff, you know, and it's like I'm trying to just do this to be a better person. No one's accused me of anything. And it's like, you know, if I have the time to do this, he definitely does.

Doug Silverwood, Benjamin Moraga, and Geoff Riley all indicated in various ways that they too were attempting to implement collective gender projects, though none were as extensive in this as was Mark. However, as I point out in Chapter Six, it is also very relevant to look at how they connected their masculinity projects to political discourses and social movements for social justice to their relationships with women. More publicly-minded projects do not only effect change through direct action. A hard distinction between individualized projects and collective projects is difficult to make, since that implies that the direction of our interest is only toward change in the gender order as a whole while downplaying the importance of changes in interpersonal relationships. As I have said, I agree with other sociologists that change is likely to be

[99] I discuss Mark's deep ambivalence about going to see a counselor and his reasons for doing so despite his reservations in the next chapter.

most dramatic when it is directed toward institutions, but I feel that we should not be so quick to dismiss the impact of changes in family regimes.

BODY-REFLEXIVE PRACTICES

While most of the men did not, some of the men explicitly spoke to the body-reflexive practices that led them to engage with their bodies in the course of recomposing their masculinity projects. While they spoke to different kinds of such practices, they all thoughtfully and critically challenged assumptions about gender difference through exploring ways of experiencing their bodies in less hegemonic ways without completely giving up a sense of themselves as adequately masculine.

For instance, consider the case of Doug Silverwood, who balances emotional expressivity with masculine physicality. Recall that Doug Silverwood argues that men MUST work to become more expressive and to develop the capacity for empathy, because to do so will make it less likely for men to want to possess women. He said,

> We're emotionally retarded as men. You know, we're half-people.[100] Um. And it'd be better spending our time if we talk about, 'Well, how can we develop to become full-people?' You know, the whole drive to relationships, our drive to possess women, it's because they have something that we don't have. And rather than trying to possess that to have it, it seems like it's much better to try to cultivate it in our own selves.

While critics of 'feminized' and 'domesticated' men scoff at the idea that it could be a good thing for men to be expressive and claim that such men would be less than 'real men,' Doug Silverwood claims that being expressive actually makes him a whole person.

[100] Although his talk here sounds essentialist, Doug very much believes that the capacity to feel and express feelings is something that is learned.

Rather than seeing this as about being feminized, Doug is inclined to talk about it in terms of regendering.[101] He said,

> It's a good thing to be a whole person. It's a good thing to be able to be direct and straightforward and confident and walk safely through the streets. Um. To feel like you can defend yourself if you needed to. Um. To feel like, if you want something, you have that right to go out and get it. Um. To be able to take initiative. To think linearly and rationally. It's a good thing to be able to feel and be able to talk about feelings and admit to weakness and not have to have all the answers. And, uh, it's nice to be able to shift back and forth, um, between those roles as necessary. Or to find some kind of balance. Trickier, um, because it's … not what people are doing. It makes you different. I mean, society's not set up for that. … Um, but it's pretty rewarding too.

This regendering is still recognizably masculine as opposed to the ambiguity implied by androgyny as Doug made clear. He said,

> To be a feminist man, there are some, well, paradox[es] that are going to exist. And if we think about our personality as being an emergent thing that arises within a bunch of small units, you know. … I'm a multitude, and some of 'em, you know, are feminist, and some of it's still that sexist part. Um, you know, that stuff [that I was raised in] didn't go away. … I root it out and get rid of it and prune it as I can. Um, but then I also hold on to those aspects of it that are OK. You know, like it's cool to be strong and kind of confident. And even tough sometimes. It helps to walk down the streets. You know. Feel safe and don't get messed with if you carry yourself like you can defend yourself. When you tell people to stop doing nonsense, if you look like you're going to kick their ass if they don't, it stops a lot of nonsense.

He stresses that he didn't feel masculine when he was younger and that becoming feminist has actually allowed him to feel more masculine, which involves a blossoming of self-esteem and becoming more self-assured. To work this out, he makes a distinction between different aspects of masculinity, those that should be retained and those that should be discarded. He said,

[101] I had introduced the notion of degendering and regendering into our conversation. Doug found these ideas useful and relevant, and he talked about them explicitly.

> I see it in guys who get into feminist movements and talk the talk, but they still have this core principle of [what I call] the bath water part of masculinity. If you want to talk about not throwing out the baby with the bath water, you know, maybe we can talk about baby masculinity and bath water masculinity. You know, where I would say that the bath water masculinity is … power, control, and dominating and that stoic idea that I can't … be in touch, you know, with my feelings and devaluing that. Um, not being able to ask for help. Um, those kind of hurtful things, you know. The BABY part of masculinity I think gets into control, but that's self-control. Um, and it's a masculine idea. Puts up this strength. But … we don't really feel deep inside that we have that, so we put on this appearance of strength, which is that macho image in guys. That is really driven by fear and insecurity. Um, so that being able to overcome fear and being able to face that and deal with that, then that might just be the regendering aspect of it. You know, that maybe … it's the pose in that false guise. You know, that is not real manliness. You know, that's the part that needs to go.

In a conversation about sensitivity inspired by my conversation with Jon Webb, I mentioned the image of the 'Sensitive New Age Guy' to Doug. I told him that another participant had criticized 'SNAGs' for not being edgy enough and for being boring, and that resonated for Doug. Despite the fact that he *is* a 'sensitive guy,' he doesn't consider himself a 'SNAG,' because that term refers to middle-class feminist men with whom he doesn't identify, since he feels that they are too negative toward men not like themselves. He said,

> THAT might be part of it. You know. That … maybe there's, you know, some of those pieces that you can still … hold on to with that masculinity where … you not become totally degendered. … Because, you know, I think that … there's a move towards androgyny. There. … And, you know, maybe looking at all strength as questionable where, you know, it's really … [that] personal power is, you know, kind of the nature of … who we are as people. … Thinking about the dog, you know. Like, I'm not afraid to use a harsh tone with the dog. I'm not going to beat the dog. … You heard. I will tell her to … go lay down. And she responds to that. Um. Or maybe … the men's groups have gotten [pause] so sensitive about these gender issues that they really have a negative view towards men. And that's … kind of self-defeating. Because they are men, [chuckles] um, nonetheless, you know, and that … leads into just … further aspects of not feeling good about yourself and not being able to

> hold on to, you know, what's true and right, … uh, about being a man and being able to capture that.

Doug feels strongly that men should not feel guilty for being men. As he said,

> In regards to [sighs], you know, male bodies, … I don't think we need to apologize for … that. You know, that we're … born with this. … And being comfortable in it, you know, is … part of it. Uh, you know? What Andre the Giant said in *The Princess Bride*? … 'It's not my fault I'm the biggest and the strongest. I don't even exercise.'

Doug argues that men should adopt an affirmative stance toward their own masculinity, since negativity about masculinity is self-defeating for male-embodied men.[102]

Despite the fact that he's a big guy, Doug prides himself on carrying himself in a non-threatening way among the survivors in the local women's domestic violence shelter where he works. He believes that this was only possible because he developed empathy, something he stressed that he had to learn and work to achieve. Empathy proves to be an important theme among most of the men in this study, and it represents to me evidence that these men have developed the capability of being expressive (one of the hallmarks of 'New Men'). Most important for my present purposes though is the fact that Doug feels that "being a little softer," non-violent, approachable, and empathetic doesn't make him feel less masculine. He said,

> I heard a definition of a gentleman, and it's someone that can make people feel comfortable. You know? … I'm a big guy. And I'm in … the shelter … amongst a lot of victims of violence and sexual assault, but I carry myself in a demeanor that makes people feel comfortable. … You know, consciously not threatening. … And I … maintain an open and friendly posture. … And I'm not being fake. I mean, there's a sincerity aspect of it. It's not anything I could've done as ably fifteen or maybe twenty years ago when I first got started on this. I couldn't have done it. You know? I mean, some of it just comes with experience, you know, that they know. … And learnin', you know, empathy. … People can see

[102] James Nagle and Josh Lewin feel similarly, though I argue in Chapter Six that Josh Lewin approaches this as an issue of a therapeutic principle, which has consequences for the kind of masculinity project that he adopts.

> that. … And I don't think that that cuts into any aspect of my masculinity, you know. Um. Of being a little softer. … Maintaining an open body posture … and consciously being non-threatening.

It's likely that Doug Silverwood is more tuned in to embodiment than many of the men in this study due to his work with batterers and because he has to be conscious of having a male body when working at the local domestic violence shelter, where he also worked with survivors/victims at the time of the interviews. At the shelter, men are a statistical minority and embodiment is explicitly thematized by the clients and by the feminist women with whom he worked, so body-reflexive practices are necessary. Likewise, Tucker Kinsey, who also worked at the shelter before moving back to St. Louis so that his partner could go take a job with a law firm, took great pride in the fact that he was able to relate to the women survivors/victims at the shelter so that they felt comfortable talking with him even though he was a man. In one story in particular, Tucker recounted how he was able to reassure a woman who is afraid of men in the middle of the night by using a combination of sarcastic wit and empathy to relate to her.

Also like Doug, Tucker Kinsey is very conscious of being perceived as masculine by others based on his physical appearance. He shaves his head and grows a beard and sideburns both to stand out from most other men (ensuring that his perception that he is different will be shared by others) and to encourage other men to take him seriously as a potential physical threat. Without his facial hair, he loses the sense of himself as masculine that he prizes. As he said,

> I shaved my beard [and sideburns] off … about three months ago? [pause] And, uh, I felt much less masculine. I also felt that, uh, a lot of power and presence that I had was gone. … I think that people look at me, and they think there is a little bit more to be reckoned with [when I have a beard]. … With the beard, I feel like [short pause] [people] give me more credence. And that they expect different things from me. … I'm

> probably expected to be … tougher. OK. With the beard, um, I'm older, perhaps more mature. Uh. Without it, I felt just like anyone else too. … And that was weird, because I've never ever, ever, ever felt like anyone else, and I never really wanted to.

When Doug and Tucker talk about being intimidating, they are implicitly referring to occupying space – having a physical presence in the world. Conventionally, this represents a body-reflexive practice of equating bodily gender difference with dominance (difference/dominance). In hegemonic masculinity projects, masculine bodies are typically constructed as embodying power and a capacity for violence. However, when Doug Silverwood talks about being able to defend himself and *appearing* to others as if he can defend himself, he's doing something somewhat different. He relates to me the pleasure of feeling masculine through being manly with others,[103] but that pleasure involves being autonomous and able to navigate public spaces that women wouldn't be able to enter and not being able to control and violate others. He explicitly discussed the fact that he wrestled with his own inclinations toward using power and control over women by processing that with his first batterers intervention group to build solidarity with the batterers in the group, to model for them how to produce change in their own lives, and to draw upon their support and empathy (which he says they are quite capable of giving). He feels that his masculinity is not based primarily on power, because he feels confident about himself and is willing to be vulnerable and to express sensitivity, softness, and other qualities typically coded as feminine including empathy (one of the most important to him). He sees the difference in his comfortable expression of

[103] One example that he recounted was the thrill of being in danger while hitchhiking, a practice that he periodically engages in to clear his head while traveling on the cheap and meeting interesting people. The particular thrill in this story involved managing to convince a man who was trying to overpower and sexually victimize him to let him go instead. I'm more than willing to take Doug's word for the fact that this is thrilling.

masculinity through his body as a contrast with the masculine posturing of so many other men that is based in insecurity and fear of being thought of as less than manly.

Tucker also provided another example of his body-reflexive practices. While he enhances his masculine appearance in public, he also experiments with femininity in private. I had seen Tucker in the audience at a drag show we had both attended, so we talked a bit about drag. He said that he finds the idea of doing drag to be appealing, but he won't actually do it. As he said,

> There are times [when I think that] doing drag might be fun, but I'm not going to shave for it. … [Brad: Do you do … drag?] No. No. No, it's too campy. I like to go to shows, and I have some friends, but, yeah, no. A little too campy. And, oh my God, the work! [laughs] I don't want to shave my legs. You know.

But he then proceeded to tell me that he cross-dresses in his partner's clothes in private. In the process, he helps to complicate our understanding of his body-reflexive practices of masculinity. While he shaves his head and grows a beard to appear masculine and potentially intimidating in public spaces, he enjoys the bodily pleasures of transgressing against the very image of masculine physicality that he cultivates in his presentations to others. He said,

> I do … what they sometimes call 'under dress.' OK. … I like the way that it makes me feel feminine. … So there is this duality in contradiction in there, you know. [Brad: Uh huh.] That some clothing that I share with Becky makes me feel feminine, and I enjoy that, you know. But then I really enjoy this masculinity. You know? [Brad: Yeah.] And frankly, I don't feel I could pull off femininity in public. That's too grandiose. You know. I couldn't. I couldn't dress up as a woman and pull that off. … I'm not a frilly guy. … [Brad: Yeah, but you do want me to understand though that you are very conscious of the way in which people deploy gender and that you play with those elements?] Yes. [Brad: And so, when you style your hair this way, you're manipulating gender. … You're wanting people to respond to you in a particular ways, even though … it isn't the same in all settings.] Right. [Brad: Like how you are with Becky is different from how you are with people in public.] Mm hmm.

> [Brad: Because you play around with different elements with her?] Uh huh. … … We don't care about … whether it's a male or female role.

We have to understand this in terms of a project of recomposing gender. His masculine display is not just a reproduction of hegemonic patterns of masculinity.

Jon Webb represents a different approach. As much as Jon Webb does want to distance himself from masculinity and to degender himself, he does not want to completely give up a sense of himself as masculine. The point that he expressed to me is that it is important for men to be reflective about the way they do masculinity and also that it's possible to be both critical of that masculinity while one also appreciates how it makes one feel about oneself. He said,

> Sports [makes me feel comfortable]. … Something that I kind of pride myself on a little bit is that I can also be then very critical of it, and I can see that … part of it … contradicts the way I feel about other things. Um, I'm sometimes bothered by, um, like so-called feminist [and] progressive men that don't recognize the parts of them that are masculine. … I know of several men that are really much more into like, uh, music. Like, they were musical in high school, and so, instead of sports, they played music. … And that's generally not thought of as being masculine I think by the societies or mainstream, but they kind of went at it in a masculine way. … More aggressive or … very gung ho or whatever. … There's a TON in academia. … They can yell out louder than everybody else, … because they've read a bunch of books. And … there's something very masculine about that. … More masculine than like some of the football players I've known about. … But yet, they really … think that there's no part of them that is super-masculine. … And so sports [is] that one masculine side that makes me feel comfortable, but I also feel like I'm critical of it. And so that makes me OK with it. … There's something about competition that can be fun and interesting, you know.

Given that exit politics can be so discomfiting and also culturally and politically unpopular, Jon's strategy of selectively engaging with organized sports may represent a viable way to draw in men who would otherwise be unwilling to give up a more

complicit masculinity project.[104] In any case, he probably has a point in challenging the preconceptions of some people that men engaged with sport are not likely to be feminist and that professional class men such as academics are not likely to be sexist and even anti-feminist.[105]

Charlie Adkins provides the last example. He critiques the notion that there is a natural bond between mothers and children that cannot be transcended by degendered practices of childrearing. He says that his two children are not equal in their preference for their two parents (one child is "much closer" him, while the other is "much closer" to Frances), but he does not attribute this to biology. He does credit biology with a limited role in influencing early emotional connections between infants and mothers, such as when mothers breastfeed their children.[106] At the same time, he asserts that there are other ways for fathers to establish a connection with their very young children, such as spending time with them and holding them, enjoying the skin-to-skin contact. This is a significant departure from the practice of many men who rationalize differential involvement with children in their assumptions that mothers are naturally more nurturant than fathers and that the bond between children and mothers is biological and therefore unchangeable.[107] Furthermore, he has always parented[108] his children in the same way

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[104] Both Geoff Riley and Sam Youngblood told stories about playfully mocking sports even as they engaged in them. Their stories revealed an early propensity to raise critical questions about hegemonic masculinity projects. This strategy seemingly made it easier for them to embrace feminism at a later point in their lives.

[105] Doug Silverwood would definitely agree with these points. In fact, he proposed a similar strategy: that progressives and feminists would do well to co-opt rhetoric about personal responsibility as a way of bringing in men who otherwise reject those positions. Revealing his fundamentalist roots, he added that some fire and brimstone wouldn't hurt either.

[106] Also, he attributes to Frances an "innate ability" to tolerate their child Catherine's screaming when she was colicky and contrasts her patience with his need to leave the house periodically to take walks and get away from the non-stop crying.

[107] See the "Babies, Breastfeeding, Bonding, and Biology" chapter in Deutsch's (1999) *Halving it All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works* for more information about how assumptions about a biological basis for parenting serves to rationalize and legitimate gender inequality in parenting. As Deutsch points

Frances has. They made explicit decisions to share parenting equally based on reading that they both did when Frances became pregnant, and that led to the job-sharing arrangement that I detailed earlier. Shared parenting of this sort involves significant re-embodiment for men, but this re-embodiment does not have to compromise their sense of themselves as masculine. Charlie makes this point very clearly when he says,

> I've never felt less masculine or less important at work … because of this arrangement. … I kind of feel like, 'Man, I've got this incredibly great deal.' … I feel like … a lot of other people envy me this ability to work twenty hours a week and still do a job that, you know, is in line with my education … and my interests. … And have it work financially and all that stuff. I feel like I'm fortunate.

As I discussed earlier, Connell (1995) argues that men who wish to engage in exit politics would do well to engage in body-reflexive practices instead of assuming that the body is natural and unchangeable. It does appear to me that those who engaged in these kinds of practices found it easier to adopt other practices, particularly those associated with emotional expressivity, that many other men would hesitate to take up. Undoubtedly, it is significant that they were also men who opted for gender-unconventional occupations and work arrangements.

CRITIQUE OF AND SKEPTICISM ABOUT PROFEMINIST MEN

The fact that Ryan Ostrin engaged in womanizing even while construing himself as a 'sensitive' man is a reminder that there may be good reason to be skeptical of claims about sensitive men without evidence of a fundamental change in practices (Chapman 1988; Messner 1993). The masculine gender displays of educated, privileged men are

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out, parents who assume that biology sustains a gendered division of parenting responsibilities and emotional connections between parents and children are producing a self-fulfilling prophecy. The evidence provided by the practices of equally sharing parents reveals this very clearly.

[108] As opposed to 'fathered.'

too often uncritically accepted as an indication of substantive change. Most of the men with whom I talked had little to say about this issue, but there was one exception. Doug Silverwood actually had quite a bit to say about the shortcomings of feminist men, particularly middle-class feminist men, of whom he is suspicious, because he suspects that many of them take advantage of a feminist pose to continue to enjoy their male privileges. Doug feels that expectations of feminist men are lower than they should be. As he said, "A lot of … allegedly feminist men or a lot of progressive guys – not a lot is expected of us, you know. If … we're not as bad a motherfucker as the average guy, which is just deplorable, then we get a free ride. … Most progressive guys aren't that much different from just guys."

Doug admitted to me that he himself had to work through the implications of feminism to be able to recognize his own privilege. He said,

> When I got into the whole idea of peace and then justice, then there's an 'of courseness.' 'Of course, of course.' But, you know, I was still pretty locked into privilege at that point to where I didn't see my own role in that. Where I could see, like, 'Yeah, women should have equal opportunity to work. Yeah.' … And it does make sense … that women should get to decide … what's to be done with their own bodies.' You know, there was an 'of courseness' about … things that I could understand intellectually. But I never saw like, 'Yeah [reluctantly], … my mom shouldn't be doing my laundry.' You know, that was different [chuckles slightly], 'cause that just was how things were. You know? And I didn't really see it.

His suspicion is that most men who claim to be feminist don't actually get to the point at which they recognize their privilege and take steps to give it up. He said,

> In some ways, they're not going far enough. In other ways, they're kind of going too far. Um, because I just really suspect they're not that cool. … You know, how they treat their partner. … How much are they skating by on privilege with regards to the house? … A risk is [that] this pro-feminist ideology can be used to woo and manipulate. It can become just another tool of manipulation and oppression. And that's … where we

> need that higher level of accountability and to be able to call each other out. AND we need a forum where we can really talk about what … we REALLY feel and not what we think people should think that we're feeling. … How much of this is just a pose? … And again talking about *those* people – those poor sad people who don't know as much as we do?

Here, Doug references a critique he levels specifically against middle-class feminist men whom he believes point fingers and accuse other men of needing to change without taking seriously ways in which they themselves "skate by."

One of the other men, Joel Sewald, actually openly admitted to adopting a pose of profeminism in order to avoid giving up at least some of his male privileges. To his credit, Joel was quite upfront about and critical of his own behavior. Like Doug, Joel pointed out that progressive men are not necessarily progressive on gender issues just because they take left positions on other issues such as class inequality. Joel made it clear that, in contrast to many men on the left in the 1970s, he actually engaged with feminism in principle. He said,

> My first wife always used to complain that men on the left were frequently the worst and the most patriarchal. … She didn't include me in that category, [but] there were times when … she was absolutely right about that. I mean, I wouldn't dispute that. I think that's absolutely true that the male left … became one of the last bastions of extreme patriarchy. You know, there was that expression. I don't know if you've heard it. I never knew of anyone who actually used it, but it was not completely inaccurate at representing the male left of the '70s. 'What is the position of the women in the movement? Prone.' [Brad: I've heard it.] Yeah. So it took me a while. And then, you know, … once I started to get close to left women, I did begin to gradually grasp the meaning of feminism and the whole notion that the personal is political. And I was forced to really think about that. … And it really … had a pretty major effect … on my life, on my thinking, and even my conception of being on the left. … I would say that … I was initially inclined to go along with it and be completely supportive of it and, verbally at least, to kind of bend over backwards to agree with it and to participate in it. Um. But if my actual behavior, you know, warranted that was I think less clear. [In any case], I didn't have any trouble with it as a position.

At my prompting, Joel spoke to the principle/practice disconnect at which he was hinting. He told me that he thinks most men understandably value their privileges and have difficulty giving them up and that it is possible for men to trade on the cachet of profeminism to avoid having to make changes they aren't willing to make. He said,

> I could give you the really cynical answer. [chuckles] Which wouldn't be entirely accurate, but it wouldn't be entirely inaccurate. … I WAS affected intellectually by feminism, and I believe that one of the fundamental structuring principles of our social order is male privilege. And I've never met a man who does not, on some level, value male privilege. I mean, it's privilege. [chuckles] Why would you want to disvalue it? … And so I think that what feminism did is it created a somewhat different balance of relationship, and it … changed the balance of negotiation [between men and women] a little bit. Um, maybe even more than a little bit in some cases. … I welcomed that initially. … But it was primarily in principle. … You know, I'm a believer in equality, and how can you defend the system of gender privilege? Uh, it goes against all the basic principles of equality. So, if you're talking about equality for the working class or equality for anyone else, I mean, equality for women is a no-brainer. But, on the other hand, I think that any male – and perhaps I would say myself even more than other males – values the privilege that we have. And I think that … I traded on my political profeminism as a way of getting out of … making practical concessions that I might have been under more pressure to make. … Because I had this cachet of being PROfeminist, um, I could get away with a lot! [chuckles] And I did. And I still do. Although the cachet of being a feminist isn't what it used to be.

What Joel was most interested in avoiding was housework.

Brian Mason also admitted to me that, while he has embraced feminism in principle, his actual practices have lagged. He told me that he actually started calling himself a feminist in order to get laid, but he was very young at the time. He came to accept feminism over time, and he worked for the National Organization for Women for a time. Still, he told me that he privileges his work over time spent with his family, and he contributes relatively less around the house when compared to his wife Ada. I discuss

his intention to increase the amount of time he will spend with his children in Chapter Seven, 'New Fathers.'

As I demonstrate in the next two chapters, other men I interviewed also admitted to falling short of anti-sexist changes that they valued in principle, though I do not believe that they fall into the category of men disdained by Doug Silverwood. They spoke of somewhat fluid arrangements in which the line between inequality and equality shifted back and forth over time depending on life circumstances, such as periodic work deadlines. These same men also generally expressed feelings of guilt and regret over the times when they succeeded less well at attaining their goal of sharing housework and childcare. Others actually conceived of (and practiced) somewhat different masculinity practices. Even though they share the characteristic of being dissident as men who reject hegemonic masculinity projects, these men are engaged in what I characterize as therapeutic projects in which the meaning of 'fairness' is defined differently. This is the main subject of the next chapter.

Discussion

The men in this study are demonstrating that degendering projects offer possibilities for a diverse range of anti-sexist masculinity practices. While they are all degendering in one way or another, each of these practices mobilizes some aspects of masculinity, as a configuration of practice, and not others. While degendering practices have in common the fact that they generally involve renunciations of hegemonic expectations for masculinity, they don't all push against the same element of masculinity. Also, not every man engages in the same set of practices, so their projects produce different kinds of change. Some contest the subordination of women (and certain groups

of men), some push for restructuring production relations for equality, and others move toward reform in how men experience desire and act on it and also redefine the basis on which they form relationships with other men and with women.

Therefore, it is useful to think about these practices and projects in terms of the elements of gender that Connell (1987, 1995) proposes for analyzing the gender order: relations of power, relations of production, and relations of cathexis. Strategies such as adopting passivity and degendering personal styles of interaction address relations of power within relationships (and outside of relationships as well in certain cases). Not surprisingly, strategies of degendering paid work and career target relations of production. Last, strategies of degendering sexual initiation and taking on increased (or even primary) responsibility for caretaking work in relationships work on relations of cathexis.[109]

Despite the differences, few of these sets of *practices* are inherently more or less collective in potential. Passivity stands out as one that is potentially less promising in this regard. As Jon and Doug indicated, passivity didn't actually solve the problems with which they were wrestling. Given that inactivity within a relationship is not the same thing as actively negotiating equality and may even be interpreted as lack of engagement in the relationship, this doesn't surprise me. It seems unlikely that this kind of strategy would pose much potential for broader changes either, given that it is a very individualistic strategy. In any case, it is possible for the moral horizons of masculinity *projects* to expand (or contract) regardless of the type of practices of change men adopt, even practices that target relations of cathexis that many probably assume are inherently

[109] For now, I'm intentionally extending the concept of cathexis to refer to both sexuality AND relationship work. This is a departure from the usage of Connell and Freud.

personal and private. I do suspect that those who adopt more explicitly politicized projects engage in a broader array of practices that depart from the culturally ascendant model for masculinities.

None of these men were engaged in radical forms of degendering that involved developing senses of themselves as either androgynous or not masculine. However, only some of them were reflective about their masculinity by adopting explicitly body-reflexive practices as part of their regendering. In fact, Charlie Adkins, who engaged in the most extensive degendering of his career[110] to make equally shared parenting a reality, confided to me that he hadn't really thought about masculinity before our interviews. For him, equally shared parenting was motivated by reading scientific literature on early childhood development.

As men who value 'fairness,' it probably doesn't come as a surprise that these men would treat 'traditional' men (and parents' 'traditional' relationships) as negative exemplars for their own masculinity projects and relationships. However, Doug Silverwood's concern about men who point fingers at other men without also holding themselves accountable for making change is well taken. Projecting controlling images onto marginalized groups (Collins 1990; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1994) reinforces the hierarchical gender order that supports inequality among men and between men and women, especially when it simultaneously involves lauding men for changes they aren't actually making.

It seems telling that even some of the men who want to be feminist men who value expressivity are critical of *other* feminist men for being too sensitive and not edgy. I view this as evidence that the cultural assault on feminist men (and on feminist women)

[110] Except for perhaps Paul Denbigh.

has, in important ways, set the terms of the debate about equality within relationships. The mainstream media may have largely left 'New Men' behind (not altogether a bad thing given the contradictory construction of the 'New Man' image through marketing), but the tensions inherent in attempts to change remain.

The lack of clear exemplars and the reluctance to engage in more 'traditional' gender projects indicates that a heavily recursive conception of agency is unlikely to be well-suited for accounting for their everyday/evernight masculinity practices. While much of gender is habitual and repetitive, these men are engaged in projects of intentional change. While they do often find themselves engaged in practices that encourage social reproduction of inequality and hierarchy, they consistently strive to work out ways of being men that make change more likely, even when those attempts make them feel very unsure of themselves and struggle to feel secure about the fact that they are masculine.

Connell argues that individualized projects of reforming masculinity at the level of personality are ineffective, because they do not provide stable solutions to the dilemmas that lead men to work toward change in the first place. Such an individualized practice often evokes guilt and encourages passivity. It may make some men feel better about being men, but Connell sees this as about modernizing patriarchy without contesting it. It may represent containment, not revolution, in relation to the patriarchal gender order. I'm inclined to agree with Connell that we need collective projects of transformation that address the institutional order of society in addition to the social organization of personality. But is it fair to dismiss men who engage in individualized projects of remaking masculinity as providing little to no basis for social change?

In a way, Connell's skepticism of the project of remaking masculine selves is inconsistent with his emphasis of the onto-formativity of practice – the capacity to create social reality. Perhaps men engaged in such projects are only creating degendered family regimes (Connell 1987, 1995), but that makes a difference. It presents others with visible alternatives. For those who become parents, it brings children into social worlds that provide partial glimpses of a post-gender reality. In fact, this is a major theme in Chapter Seven, 'New Fathers.'

Furthermore, it somewhat misses the point that their practices are directed toward social relationships. The change is motivated by relationships with women, and they are directed toward enhancing their ability to have healthy and/or equal/equitable[111] relationships with them. I considered the influence of women in Chapter Four, 'Experiences and Relationships That Support Anti-Sexist Masculinity Projects.'

While only a few appeared to be practicing what Connell (1995) would consider collective dissident masculinity politics, all indicated that they were in the process of changing themselves or had done so in the past. Some were quite explicit about the fact that they were engaged in active degendering of their masculinities. Although it was clear that the others had also undertaken degendering to one extent or another, those who were less explicit about degendering talked about their practices in terms of actively trying to avoid being like 'traditional' men. Talk of negative exemplars was common, with 'traditional' and conservative men the most commonly mentioned, though critical talk about 'sensitive men' also came up in some interviews. Many of the men indicated that they lacked positive models or exemplars for how to make change, and it seems

[111] I see the distinction between equity and equality to be less relevant than the distinction between a conception of 'fairness' as defined by needs and one defined by equity and equality (see Chapter Six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality?').

apparent that this absence was very consequential for how they enacted their masculinity projects, because there was a lot of talk about the difficulty of making change and because a fair amount of their talk was somewhat abstract when discussing specific daily practices.[112]

[112] I do wonder if devoting significant time and energy to focusing on who they do not want to be is somewhat limiting. Connell (1995) seems to agree when she says: "Though the men were clear about the personal qualities they wished to develop, they had no comparable clarity about the future to which their reconstruction led. Renouncing straight careers had rubbed out conventional images of the life course, and nothing yet seemed to have taken their place" (p. 134).

CHAPTER SIX – MASCULINITY POLITICS II: PROMOTING PERSONAL GROWTH OR PRODUCING EQUITY/EQUALITY?

INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, I introduced the concept of masculinity politics and discussed a variety of attempts to practice anti-sexist exit politics through strategies of degendering and regendering. In this chapter, I focus on the way the men's masculinity projects are directed toward producing 'fairness' in relationships with women. To do this, I examine how issues of distributive justice (Baxter 2000; Deutsch 1985; Dixon and Wetherell 2004; Major 1987, 1993; Thompson 1991) are discursively constructed by the men to legitimate the moral orders of their relationships with their partners. As I show, the men draw on two different vocabularies of motives (Mills [1940] 1990) to account for the distribution outcomes in their relationships either in terms of 'needs' or in terms of equity. I argue that the influence of therapeutic culture[113] (Bellah et al. 1985; Furedi 2004; Nolan, Jr. 1998; Rieff [1966] 1987) is apparent in the vocabulary that stresses 'needs': that the purpose of anti-sexist change within relationships is to meet emotional 'needs' and to enhance the personal growth of both partners in the relationship. I also argue that the vocabulary that stresses equity draws on a more politicized conception of justice that is influenced by feminism (among other sources[114]). I end the chapter by considering the implications of these two rhetorical conceptions of fairness for the prospects of reducing inequality in relationships between men and women.

[113] The terms therapeutic culture, therapeutic ethos, and therapeutics are commonly interchanged.
[114] In addition to feminism, it is also possible to identify the influence of environmentalism, anarchism, and even Christianity as resources upon which particular men draw in the construction of their masculinity projects.

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF 'FAIRNESS'

Research on the distribution of household labor in intimate relationships has revealed a supposed paradox: despite growing acceptance for egalitarianism (Coltrane 2000), many men and women continue to develop differing senses of entitlement and to regard unequal distributions of household labor in their own relationships as fair even when the inequality is recognized (Baxter 2000; Baxter and Western 1998; Coltrane 1989; Deutsch 1999; Dixon and Wetherell 2004; Lennon and Rosenfield 1994; Major 1987, 1993; Thompson and Walker 1989; Thompson 1991; VanYperen and Buunk 1991). However, research using the distributive justice framework developed by Linda Thompson (1991) has demonstrated that women are not just 'cultural dopes' and that this finding is only paradoxical if one assumes that people always use justice rules based on *equality* or *equity* to assess their relative contributions within relationships. Research on the distribution of household labor[115] demonstrates that: 1). the justice rule operable in many close relationships is actually one based on '*need*' as opposed to exchange (Clark, Mills, and Corcoran 1989; Major 1993), 2). that the outcomes desired by many women are to demonstrate caring and to feel loved and appreciated in return (even if that means that actual relative contributions are unequal) (DeVault 1991; Hochschild 1989; Thompson 1991), 3). that the comparisons used to evaluate distributive justice outcomes are gendered based on a 'double standard of virtue' (Hochschild 1989) that encourages within-gender comparisons while discouraging between-gender comparisons and are also gendered based on double standards of praise and criticism (Deutsch 1999; Robinson and Spitze 1992) that influence an economy of gratitude in which women are less likely to

[115] The distributive justice framework focuses on outcome values, comparison referents, and justifications (Thompson 1991). In my review of findings, I include some authors who are not explicitly contributing to this literature but who present notable findings that are consistent with the results of this line of inquiry.

feel entitled to completely equitable sharing arrangements, and 4). that the justifications offered for men's and women's contributions are gendered in such a way as to legitimate inequality between men and women, a process that is particularly effective if apparently fair procedures are used to produce the distribution (e.g., when both partners agree to the decision) (Haavind 1984; Major 1993).

The importance of this discussion for my present purposes is that it reminds us that people mean different things when they refer to 'fairness' in the context of intimate relationships. Not incidentally, it also reminds us that the construction of distributive justice as an issue of 'need' *may* actually coincide with inequality, because equality is somewhat less important than other goals that one may have for a relationship (though this may not necessarily mean that inequality is completely irrelevant). With these points in mind, I consider how the men's dissident masculinity projects differ and how this difference influences the kind of change to which their projects are directed. However, I find that the distributive justice framework itself is limited in its utility for this kind of analysis, because it is based on psychological assumptions that it is best to problematize.

As Dixon and Wetherell (2004) point out, while the distributive justice framework is to be commended for supporting a form of 'difference feminism' by "celebrating women's choices while remaining focused on the material disadvantages they might sustain" (p. 173), the approach has been limited by its conventional social psychological focus on the cognitive and emotional states of the solitary individual perceiver. They suggest that discursive and social constructionist perspectives can demonstrate that the "forms of pattern and order that interest social psychologists, including emotional expressions, statements of belief and intent, attitudes, identities and presentations of self,

are themselves organized by discursive practices" (p. 174). They recommend that researchers pay greater attention to the ways moral evaluations of justice distributions are brought to meaning within day-to-day discursive practices instead of assuming that justice principles are "already formed interior cognitions that are merely 'expressed' in language" (p. 175).[116]

I agree completely. For this reason, I use the concept of vocabularies of motives (Mills [1940] 1990) to translate the question of 'why' into a question of 'how' people impose meaning onto situations to provide justifications for their actions (both to others *and* to themselves). These justifications are "not used as an index of something in the individual but as a basis of inference *for a typical vocabulary of motives of a situated action* [emphasis in original]" (Mills [1940] 1990:212). In addition to signaling that motives are social and situated, as opposed to individual, interior, and fixed elements, what this also implies is that particular vocabularies are likely to be associated with particular historical and cultural contexts beyond immediate situations. When people account for their actions, they often do so in an interpretive process of endowing situations with order through the imputation and avowal of an already existing and stable vocabulary of motives,[117] which implies that other motives and other outcomes are often possible.[118] As Mills ([1940] 1990) points out, this is to be expected given that

[116] Based on this, Dixon and Wetherell (2004) argue that men's and women's representations of fairness of their situations will vary markedly within and across discursive contexts, suggesting greater variation than even the distributive justice framework would suggest.
[117] We might also refer to this as a discourse genre of course.
[118] This should not be read as implying that motives are 'made up' *ex post facto* however. See Hopper's (1993) analysis of the vocabularies of motives adopted by divorce initiators and non-initiators for an illustration of the fact that situations are often more complex than people's accounts would lead us to believe. As Hopper demonstrates, the vocabularies of motives adopted by those who are divorced are remarkably consistent with each other depending on whether or not they initiated the divorce, despite the fact that there was evidence that both groups had similar experiences of their marriages prior to divorce. As Hopper points out, the motives they articulated imposed "a sense of order onto situations that were

vocabularies that are consistent with a particular ethos are familiar and are less likely to be challenged than are alternative expressions of motives.

Therefore, my task in this chapter is to identify the vocabularies of motive referenced by the men to account for their masculinity projects. On the basis of the findings of the distributive justice literature, I pay particular attention to moral evaluations of their everyday practices in terms of equality, equity, and 'needs.' I also locate these vocabularies in relationship to particular cultural systems of meaning: therapeutic culture and various social movements for social justice and progressive change. I begin by considering various critiques and assessments of therapeutic culture. Much of the sociological treatment of therapeutics has been quite negative. While I share some of the reservations expressed by others, I believe that a wholesale rejection of therapeutic culture would lead us to misunderstand how some anti-sexist men are drawing upon this system of meaning as a resource for constructing dissident masculinity projects of change.

THERAPEUTIC CULTURE

Although the rise of therapeutics is related to entrepreneurialism on the part of practitioners in the 'psy' disciplines (Rose 1996), authors referring to a therapeutic culture or ethos intend for us to understand this to mean more than just the widespread use of psychological and counseling services. Instead, they wish us to recognize the broad influence of a taken-for-granted "set of symbols and codes that determine the boundaries of moral life" (Nolan, Jr. 1998:2) and that are selectively appropriated and

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otherwise fraught with ambiguous and contradictory events, emotions, and *inclinations toward behavior* [emphasis added]" (p. 801). The vocabularies articulated by initiators and those articulated by non-initiators were somewhat arbitrary, but selective interpretation of their experiences could support the accounts they provided.

adapted by people (Swidler 2001a) to "develop a distinct understanding of their selves and of their relationship with others" (Furedi 2004:23). Therefore, to speak of a therapeutic culture is to refer to both discourse about the nature of the self and to associated practices for cultivating (and also limiting) the self (Bellah et al. 1985; Furedi 2004; Nolan, Jr. 1998; Rieff [1966] 1987).

Critics of the rise of therapeutics have charged therapeutic culture with faults as various as: promoting a culture of narcissism and self-involvement and a loss of moral controls (Bell 1976; Collier 1991; Lasch 1978; Rieff [1966] 1987); promoting the decay of 'American' character (Sykes 1992); facilitating the 'governing' of the self and legitimating the expansion of state power into personal realms once untouched by the state (Nolan, Jr. 1998; Rose 1990); calling on people to curb 'negative' emotions and to otherwise instrumentally manage their emotions, which, in turn, may provoke a search for 'real' or 'authentic' selves (Furedi 2004; Hochschild 2003); narrowing the scope of moral concern through promoting personal growth and individualizing introspection as well as by encouraging depoliticization of social issues (Bellah et al. 1985; Nolan, Jr. 1998; Rieff [1966] 1987; Schwalbe 1996); and even constructing a diminished and pathologized sense of self characterized by emotional deficit and vulnerability (Furedi 2004; Gergen 1990; Moskowitz 2001).

What I take from this (admittedly non-exhaustive and somewhat contradictory) list of conservative and progressive complaints is the need to be cognizant of how a therapeutic sensibility may encourage what Schwalbe (1996) calls therapeutic individualism, in which social issues (perhaps especially social problems) are understood as matters of individual concern that are best addressed through introspection to identify

how to cultivate an appropriate emotional experience of life and how to fulfill emotional 'needs'.[119] These critiques also suggest that the individualizing influence of a therapeutic ethos may discourage people from developing political critiques of a system of social relations and may encourage them to avoid practices that produce feelings of stress, guilt, and other 'negative' emotions in the process of redressing inequalities.

I believe that these assumptions are supported by the example set by the masculinity politics of masculinity therapy. In the rightward shift from Men's Liberation to Masculinity Therapy, a large section of what is commonly called the men's movement moved away from profeminist solidarity with women. In the process, some authors, such as Warren Farrell (1993) and Herb Goldberg (1988), encouraged a sort of anti-feminist backlash (Connell 1995). In general though, the masculinity politics of masculinity therapy, particularly that of the mythopoetic men's movement associated with Robert Bly (1990) and others, represents more of a turning inward through introspection and exploration of 'true inner selves' to better understand how to heal men's 'wounds' and to resolve men's sense of powerlessness (Schwalbe 1996). In the process, this psychologized focus on feelings and 'needs' actually legitimates existing inequalities by obscuring the context of gender relations that grants male privilege to men as a group even as it 'wounds' them by imposing limitations on how they can express and experience themselves. This allows men to actively resist calls to engage in an explicit gender politics that would involve changing to meet the 'demands' of women (Kimmel 1995; Messner 1997; Schwalbe 1996).

[119] Though a therapeutic culture may encourage individualism, this does not necessarily mean a focus only on individuals, because a therapeutic sensibility may be deployed to cultivate selves "in concert with our involvements with others" (Simonds 1992:6). In fact, the men in this study demonstrated an impressive capacity for relationality. I discuss this directly when I consider Cancian's (1987) distinction between independent and interdependent images of love and self-development below.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that critiques of therapeutic culture that express concern over how emphasizing self-development undermines social commitment are often based on taken for granted assumptions about gender difference in moral orientations toward self and other (Cancian 1987; Gerson 2002). Not only is self-development often opposed to moral commitment to community in the work of authors such as Bellah (1985), Lasch (1978), and Rieff ([1966] 1987),[120] but this striving for independence at the expense of social relationships is often implicitly gendered as masculine while love is often implicitly gendered as feminine. A major problem with this is that it represents a failure to recognize the historicity of gender – that masculinities and femininities can and do change over time (Connell 1987, 1995; Segal 1990) – even in analyses that describe historical change. This makes it less likely for analysts to recognize that self-development could be explicitly degendered to promote mutually supportive relationships in which men and women are encouraged to both meet their own 'needs' *and* those of their partners.

For instance, in *Love in America: Gender and Self-Development,* Cancian (1987) argues that Bellah et al. (1985) and Lasch (1978) have failed to distinguish between two

[120] In "Love and Adulthood in American Culture," Swidler makes a similar argument about the tensions between individualism and social connectedness in romantic relationships. She argues that, in 'America,' "a more passionately developed sense of individuality and selfhood" (1980:126) has produced shifts in the tensions between four oppositions within our culture's "love mythology": choice versus commitment, rebellion versus attachment, self-realization versus self-sacrifice, and libidinal expression versus restraint. She argues that these should be understood not as irreconcilable alternatives but, rather, as contradictions "in the sense that they permeate the cultural meaning of love with contradictory expectations" (1980:142). She claims that love is so appealing, because it promises to resolve these contradictions by fulfilling both sides of each duality at the same time. However, she feels that "the balance of these tensions has been unequal, and hence their power diminished, because of the central importance Americans give to individuality and the low value they place on social connectedness" (1980:142). As she sees it, the consequence is that "our culture now seeks moral significance in acts of choice, in attempts to discover, clarify, or deepen the self, whether or not these choices lead to or remain within a commitment" (1980:143). While I find the notion that love has been constructed in terms of dualism interesting, I'm less convinced that love has to be experienced only in terms of such oppositions. I refer the reader to Cancian's (1987) work referenced in this section for an argument that (some) men and women can (and are) approaching individuation and commitment as a both/and proposition instead of as an either/or one.

different images of love and self-development in popular culture (independence and interdependence) and that this prevents them from seeing that it is possible for self-development and enduring love to be mutually reinforcing. While an independent image of love may encourage the self-expression of individual 'needs' and feelings, an interdependent image of love should encourage self-development and committed love to occur together by emphasizing mutual support within relationships and by promoting emotional connection rather than undermining it. Cancian (1987) believes that what makes such an interdependent image of love possible in the first place is the fact that cultural conceptions of the 'ideal' self have become more androgynous:[121] that both men and women are increasingly concerned with combining feminine qualities such as intimacy and emotional expression with masculine qualities such as independence and competence.

Likewise, Gerson (2002) argues that changing social conditions have undermined the connection between gender and moral obligation and have provided younger generations with "an unprecedented opportunity to forge new, more egalitarian ways to balance self-development with commitment to others" (p. 9). While she acknowledges the institutional and cultural obstacles to creating degendered strategies for working out divisions of moral labor within relationships, she argues that it is no longer possible for men and women to "rely on inflexible gender categories to resolve the conflict between autonomy and care" (p. 9). Socioeconomic shifts not only present women with opportunities to engage in full-time paid work but also the need for the income generated

[121] Perhaps the representation of an 'ideal' self is a person without gender as Cancian (1987) claims, though it seems unlikely to me that most people will actually attempt to practice androgynous gender projects. Yet, the fact that these men have engaged in a variety of attempts to recompose their masculinity through degendering suggests that they have attempted to embrace practices and characteristics that have been gendered as feminine even while maintaining a sense of themselves as distinctly masculine.

from such work. Many women have found it necessary (and often desirable) to become more self-sufficient. These same socioeconomic shifts have reduced men's ability to compel women to stay in relationships with them and to compel them to specialize in care-taking work within those relationships. Although many more men than women have resisted these changes, producing what Hochschild (1989) called the 'stalled revolution,' a number of men have been pushed and pulled (by pressures *and* pleasures) into becoming more involved in caring for others. Obviously, others have fled from their commitments within these relationships. In light of both the new opportunities and the structural and cultural contradictions that place limits on those opportunities, Gerson (2002) argues that we would be well served to shift away from conceiving in terms of (gendered) moral differences, that we should shift instead toward the notion of moral dilemmas, and that we should conceive of these moral dilemmas as fundamentally social in nature (though they may be experienced in personal ways).

What I take from Cancian (1987) and Gerson (2002) is the need to consider the possibility that, while therapeutic culture may encourage people to withdraw from political engagement with public life, the influence of therapeutic culture should not be construed as completely negative. For instance, the cultivation of the self in the context of committed relationships may strengthen commitment to the relationship instead of undermining it.[122] Given that the men in this study are engaged in anti-sexist masculinity projects directed toward change, I'm inclined to take seriously that the focus of some of them on 'needs' and feelings is intended to promote better relationships. Since social change has undermined 'traditional' resolutions to the moral dilemmas facing men and

[122] Of course, it's always important to remember that it is possible that a focus on self-development could undermine the relationship if men choose to pursue independence at the expense of relationality.

women without providing well-defined solutions to the question of how to balance autonomy and connection within committed relationships (Gerson 2002), it is important to acknowledge the importance of the fact that these men are drawing on therapeutic resources to enable them to do more caring as opposed to less.

THE THERAPEUTIC VOCABULARY OF MOTIVES

Several of the men with whom I talked articulated a vocabulary of motives that was clearly influenced by their engagement with a therapeutic culture in that it emphasized the importance of downplaying political ideology and focusing instead on meeting the emotional 'needs' of partners. In this, it proves to be somewhat complicated. On the one hand, it potentially reduces the scope of moral concern to the self-development of individual partners in a relationship. As Josh Lewin said,

> We've been hearing a lot of talk about people putting family first and all this. You know, we don't really look at it that way. We don't. For things to work, every individual has to be happy. You know, we're basically individualists within a family structure, and so every individual 'needs' what they 'need' taken care of. AND the family needs its 'needs.' So there's both, and you're juggling both. … I'd say that's the struggle of our lives right now. How to do that. You know, you never get it right. … You go from day to day and reassess and go, 'OK, what do we 'need' to do now?'

On the other hand, as Josh makes clear, this is not completely individualized self-development (though that element is present), since this represents a concern with promoting *mutual* support and emotional connection to make the relationship better for *both* partners. This is an interdependent image of self-development (Cancian 1987), because it involves degendering the meaning of self-development by linking it to the promotion of intimacy and emotional expression (especially empathy) for both men and women. Overall, those articulating the therapeutic vocabulary appear to be less

concerned with equity and equality and more concerned with emotional 'needs' in their relationships.

Josh Lewin was the most articulate advocate of a therapeutic ethic for relationships.[123] He told me that monitoring relative contributions within relationships produces too much guilt and leads people into focusing more on what they think they '*should*' be doing in relationships as opposed to what people *actually* '*need*' from them. He feels that ideology somewhat gets in the way. It's good for relationships to be consistent with one's ideology, but actual everyday/everynight practices should be based more on what is called for by the relationship than by politicized ideas of what men should do. As he said,

> People can get really wrapped up in the ideology. … I've seen it so many times. It can end up … restricting their lives. Rather than allowing them to develop and explore. And sometimes they come in to therapy for that. … Because, when you are in this politicized ideological world of activism, … you tend to grasp for what's the right thing. … So anything that deviates from that is wrong. … And that's not the world I want. … It's more about, you know, allowing for all the differences. … OK, there are THINGS I'm definitely on the side of [against] what's wrong. … You sometimes have to make that stand. But the ideology can get to the point where [it gets in the way]. … It happens to most graduate students who are Left Wing at an early age where, you know, you're thinking, … 'I can't have a bank account, because I'm, you know, supporting the capitalist system. You know, I have to make sure all my garbage gets recycled, or I'm bad. Um, I have to make sure that I do fifty percent of the work in the house as a man.' You know, just this number of things you should, should, should, should, should! And you're not paying attention to, you know, who you are and what you 'need.' Who the people around you are and what they 'need.' You know, and that's a much more healthy … approach. … 'Am I doing what I SHOULD be DOING? Or am I doing what I 'need' to be doing?' 'Cause they're not necessarily the same thing. You know, the 'should.' … I mean, that's the first thing we do in therapy. When people come in saying 'should,' we're like, 'OK. Let's examine that.' Because we want to get rid of those 'shoulds.' Because they can't change as long as they have that 'should' out there. … They can't accept themselves!

[123] Admittedly, this shouldn't be too surprising given that Josh is training to be a therapist.

Themes consistent with masculinity therapy are quite evident in his statement. As he points out, a central concern is ensuring that men accept themselves in order to be capable of changing and becoming healthier, apparently even if that means identifying 'needs' that are inconsistent with one's commitments to particular political practices. Admittedly, Josh does not appear to be arguing that political commitments should be abandoned altogether but rather that, in his view, the issue is that some people take them too far. Still, this kind of account about how change happens is very different from that articulated by other men who claim that change must from one's commitment to political ideology. I discuss this later in this chapter when I consider an alternative vocabulary.

Josh was not the only one to explicitly oppose 'shoulds.' As Ryan Ostrin said,

> The idea of the 'should' is, … from the perspective of … cognitive behavioral therapy or mindfulness, a distortion or a thinking error. The 'should' is something that creates unnecessary stress and anxiety. … Whenever you apply a 'should' to something, it becomes a moral obligation. Uh, judgment is a 'should' and, uh, I think I always kind of sensed that growing up [with a devout Christian mother whom he perceives as judging others based on her moral standards]. … But yeah, it didn't necessarily seem to make my mom a whole lot happier. I never got a sense of great joy. … Well, uh, I think it provides her a great deal of comfort, but I never saw how I could share that with her.

Ryan had told me more than once that he adheres to a social justice ethic for social work practice, and, given that, I was confused when Ryan denounced 'shoulds,' since I assumed at the time that a moral commitment to promote social justice would necessarily entail 'shoulds.' In his response to my query about this issue, he translated social justice in terms of therapeutics in order to make a distinction between the two. He said,

> You know that is a really … good question. Uh. [long pause] … I see it as part of a recipe … for health and … peace on a … grand scale. … It's less about 'shoulds' and more about 'needs' and facilitating the fulfillment of those 'needs' in individuals and communities.

What I eventually discerned is that he medicalizes issues of social justice. The clearest indication of this is the fact that Ryan identifies psychoeducation[124] as the preferred tool for empowering women by revealing to them how "socializing forces" are "working against them" and "putting them at risk" by "compromising their health."

This therapeutic and medical perspective is somewhat recent for Ryan. As I mentioned previously, he was actively involved in political action on a number of issues as an undergraduate. Ryan's adoption of a therapeutic vocabulary of motives in graduate school shifted his conception of what it means to be political. He now interprets political issues in terms of deficits. He told me that, when he was younger and newly radicalized, he felt a sense of righteousness for his cause and believed that those who opposed his views deserved to be punished. Now, however, because he has been influenced by principles of non-violence, he stresses empathy and recognizes that, when people make decisions that hurt others, they do so in order to "meet some sort of 'need' themselves. Or perhaps they in some ways were victims of their own thoughts, behaviors, concepts, ideals, you know." He used the example of Dick Cheney to illustrate how dramatically his views have changed. Whereas he once would have advocated overthrowing the government and stringing up Cheney in Times Square, now he believes Cheney has to be understood as "lacking a sense of empathy … and introspection" and as a victim of his own ideology. He then shifted to talking about his work with juvenile offenders, pointing out that many are quite "damaged" and are victims themselves and that they therefore deserve our empathy instead of being demonized.

[124] Psychoeducation is part of a treatment plan to help provide individuals with mental illness and their families with relapse prevention plans and strategies.

As Josh and Ryan made clear, a main emphasis in a therapeutic vocabulary of motives is to encourage introspection to allow men to identify their true, inner selves and to accept those selves as they *are* instead of focusing on how a system of morality or political ideology dictates that they should behave. Once men do this, they should be able to develop themselves and change to ensure that their 'needs' can be consistently met. This seems very consistent with the notion of therapeutic individualism (Schwalbe 1996) discussed earlier. While these men make it clear that this is not a narcissistic focus only on men's 'needs' alone, given that both partners in the relationship are to identify their 'needs' and work to make sure that the satisfaction of those 'needs' is mutual, it is not entirely clear to me what makes this process serve anti-sexism as a project if anti-sexism is defined to include reducing inequality between men and women. Certainly, the commitment to relationality marks therapeutically-informed masculinity projects as distinct from hegemonic masculinity projects based on difference/dominance that call upon men to conceive of masculinity in terms of a cultural opposition with femininity, which encourages the kind of emotional distance in relationships that these men found so profoundly dissatisfying. To this extent, men drawing on a therapeutic vocabulary of motives come to more closely resemble women by cultivating empathy and emotional expressivity (reducing difference) and by establishing relationships with women where the standard was mutuality as opposed to control (reducing dominance). Yet, if the goal is emotional literacy (Furedi 2004) to allow men to better know themselves and to feel good about and accept themselves, what guarantees that the 'needs' of their women partners will be met *if* those 'needs' are defined in opposition to those of the men themselves?

For those who wish to avoid focusing on moral imperatives as represented by political and ideological 'shoulds,' a therapeutic vocabulary of 'needs' is very useful for resolving the moral dilemma of how to 'fairly' distribute household labor while also avoiding 'negative' emotions such as guilt, anxiety, and stress. This is possible, because distributions become less about producing equity or equality and more about empathy and the cultivation of selves in the context of committed relationships.

Josh admitted that there were times when he didn't do enough to maintain equity between himself and Diane. As I discussed in Chapter Five, this was particularly difficult for him when he was a writer, because he identified as an artist at that time and believed that artists had to place everything secondary to their work. It seems clear from his story that, while he defined self-development in very individual terms during that time, his commitment to the relationship pulled him back toward conceptualizing of his 'needs' in terms of his family. As he said,

> This is going back to gender socialization and, and perhaps the way I was brought up and all kinds of things, but it's a little easier when things get really busy for me not to think about it and for her … to take on extra load. The natural reaction, sort of gut instinct reaction, is, … if I really feel I 'need' to get something done, I just feel I 'need' to get it done. And if she feels like stuff isn't getting done that's family stuff, she's going to pick up the slack. And so we need to monitor that so it doesn't get out of balance, because it can't get out of balance. And it does get out of balance. You know, and the relative importance of our careers is also something that we struggle over a lot. Especially when I was a writer. ... And we revisit that place sometimes. … Where she feels like I'm not giving her, um, you know, equal value really. That I'm not valuing HER stuff as much as I'm valuing mine. … I think that happens. It does happen. … Going back to that issue and … keeping it balanced.

Josh feels strongly that "keeping it balanced" shouldn't really be about monitoring how much each person contributes and imposing a strict 50/50 rule, because equality can't be

quantified given that it's an ideal. As he had mentioned before (and since), he believes it is much better to work out what each person 'needs' from the relationship. He said,

> We operate on the basis of, you know, 'What do you 'need?' What do I 'need?' And how can we make sure that we get our 'needs' met?' … That's really it. … For me, … it is more important to do this than to worry about the equality of the load. … Um, because, you know, that's sort of outside the frame. … That's measuring yourself against something outside that's an ideal. What 'needs' to be done is you 'need' to make sure that both people in the relationship are content with the way the relationship is working and the amount of attention they are getting and their 'needs' are getting met. If that happens, it doesn't really matter what the … breakdown is. And, you know, it'd be GREAT if you could ever get to 50/50, but it'll never happen. You know, it just doesn't happen … in relationships. I don't think. … You know, [people] put in equal something somewhere, but, you know, … it's not something you can just quantify. So, we don't worry about that so much. We worry more about, 'Do you feel like you're getting what [you 'need?'] … You're cleaning a little more than he is. … Are you feeling a little resentful about that? … Is it just that, you know, right now you feel the 'need' that this house has to be clean, and that's not my priority and that's OK.' Um. So, sometimes, you know, you kind of have to check all that. … You just develop traditions about how to handle that. … I don't think we worry about equality. I think we worry about each other. And that's what works. [Brad: And the assumption is that the equality will come, whatever forms it takes, it will come as a result?] Really what we're talking about when we're talking about equality is an ideal. Is we're talking about making sure that people, you know, have the opportunities to do what they want to do and get their 'needs' met and are taken care of. You know, and that isn't really equality as in let's split everything. … It's like, you know, 'Are you growing? Do you have room to grow here? Are you, you know, getting fed, or is this draining you? And, if it's draining you, that ain't good. You know, let's figure out how to fix that.'

It seems that it is not so much that Josh doesn't value equality as it is that the vocabulary of motives from which he draws individualizes the issue of equality by assigning responsibility for ensuring that inequality doesn't occur to the person who is willing to speak up and define it as problematic rather than assigning that responsibility to both partners. This seems to signify a choice to pursue self-development in favor of pursuing

equality. If one prioritizes individual 'needs' over the moral evaluation of relative contributions, then equality will seem like an ideal that isn't achievable.

When I observed that not everyone approaches divisions of household labor in quite the way Josh does, he admitted that they had used a 50/50 model in the past but had moved past that when they figured out that it didn't work for them. He said,

> To a certain degree, that's been our evolution. I mean, we STARTED there. You know, we started with a list … of … who spent what money on what [and] who … did what job. We tried to break it down, you know, and it didn't really WORK for us. You know, it really didn't. It just created more hassles than anything else. … I would feel guilty if it wasn't equal. … So then I would [be] battling all the time to make sure it was equal. … But then I would be doing stuff … I resented doing in a certain time frame, because, you know, the 'needs' are different. People's 'needs' are different. So it didn't really work. What worked for us was something else that we evolved over time, which was a sort of sense of, you know, 'OK. Forget about, you know, whose money went in where. Forget about like I did the bathroom last time so it's your turn. Or, you know, the housecleaning thing.' 'Cause the way I wanted to do it always was I wanted to have a day where we would SCHEDULE … tasks that were equal and then we would do it. And that way we would be equal. And Diane couldn't operate that way. She's like, 'It's dirty now. It doesn't matter that it's Thursday at 6:00. It's dirty now. I 'need' to clean it.' But I was like, 'You're cleaning, and I'm not cleaning. And … I don't have time to clean now.' … And so eventually what we just worked out was, 'You know, OK. This isn't the way to do it. We'll do it based on more of that sense of feeling of, you know, who's contributing. … And, if the effort doesn't feel, you know, like somebody's contributing, then we'll talk about it.

Josh's preference for the "sense of feeling" of equality as opposed to the guilt provoked by failing to produce equality seems significant. Perhaps it doesn't matter to Diane, but it seems very possible that a "sense of feeling" of equality will not translate into equality (Jamieson 1999), especially if one assumes that equality isn't possible in the first place.

Like Josh, Tucker would prefer for Becky to do weekend blitzes with him, scheduling time when they could do housework together at the same time to encourage

each other to get the work done quickly and to encourage him to contribute to housework on a more equal footing. Becky is very uninterested in scheduling housework in this way though, and, despite the fact that she "gently coaxes" him to do housework, Tucker finds it difficult to focus on the "mundane aspect" of housework for long enough to accomplish as much as she does when she cleans.

While he does feel somewhat guilty about the fact that his contributions are not equitable, given that he has more free time to do housework, he partially mitigates his guilt by drawing on the 'needs' vocabulary by defining emotional support as part of the division of labor in the relationship and justifying his inequitable contribution to housework by pointing to the greater amount of emotional work that he does for Becky. A concern with emotional 'needs' displaces equity as the most relevant justice rule, and it allows him to feel good about himself. [125] As he said, "While she might do more regular … housework, you know, nurturing is a division of labor as well. … I'm the one who does more of that. … We see that."

His attempt at suasion to justify his contribution may not be completely successful, either for him or for Becky. For her part, she still exerts "pressure" on him to contribute more to the cleaning effort. For his part, he acknowledged to me that he is lazy and that he could do more if he really wanted to do so. In fact, he quite explicitly pointed out that, if he were to get more public recognition for being the kind of man who shares, he would do more.[126] As he said,

[125] Still, it is quite striking and unusual that Tucker both recognizes that nurturing is a form of emotion work and takes it up in the service of his relationship given that emotion work that is more commonly relegated to women (Hochschild 1989).

[126] The fact that Becky will make a lot of money as a lawyer is also important, because Tucker pointed out to me that they can buy their way out of a certain amount of domestic work. Although he said they probably won't hire a maid, they can eat out and also spend more money on convenient food that takes less effort to prepare.

> If I really wanted to, uh, reject gender roles, I would knuckle down and do it. … If I really wanted to make statement … about gender roles, then I would do more of it just for the fact of saying, 'Hey.' You know. But nobody is going to see or care that I did it. Do you know what I mean? It's not like you could share that with the rest of the world so much. I'd betcha that, if there were a way for that to be shared with the rest of the world more, that I would do more, because I would want to set an example. And I wouldn't want to be called on it so much either. Getting called on it by Becky all the time is different than gettin' called on it by everyone.

Chris Simpson approaches the issue of working out everyday concerns very similarly. He says that, because he and Kelli feel empathy for each another, they are able to ensure that the person with the greater 'needs' on any given day gets those 'needs' met. As he said,

> Going back to the empathy that we both have as kind of common characteristics, I think we do a really good job of accounting for sort of who the decision is more important to at the time. So, if it's Kelli's day for whatever reason, I'll throw in my input, but then will, you know, yield to – give more credence to what she's feeling or vice versa. … That's something that really impresses me, because I know a lot of relationships where people don't account for that, and … they treat it as fifty-fifty all the time. You know. One vote, one vote. But it's not really, I mean, it doesn't work that way, because, you know, there's different levels of importance to different people. And different people 'need' different things at different times. And, um, I think we do a really good job of paying attention to that subtext of our decision making process.

In response, I asked Chris if his goal is for things to work out equally between the two of them in the long run even if they feel that it is unrealistic to work for equity in each and every situation. His response was somewhat telling. He said,

> I've never thought about, in the long run, making sure things turn out equally. … I think we really work to address kind of the situation at the time. … Because we both value the other person's happiness. … Because … I'm not keeping score. I don't feel like Kelli's keeping score in the long term. … I think if there's an area where we're consistently getting run-over [and] our 'needs' are [not] being attended to, we would bring it up, but I don't think we put that into the balance sheet of everything else. [Brad: OK, so that's more taken for granted?] Yeah.

> [Brad: The assumption is that it would work out equally in the long run based on the fact that you say that you have an egalitarian relationship? … And that you explicitly work to make sure that she expresses her wants and desires and that you … respect that.] Yeah. … And … I like the way you phrased it in terms of faith that things will work out in the long run, because we both trust each other and respect each other, so, you know, I don't feel like I need to keep score. … I don't feel like, at some point in the future, I'm going to have to present documentation in order to get what I want … or 'need.' I have a lot of faith that, when that time comes around, you know, Kelli will make ... the choice that will allow me to get whatever I 'need.'

It seems significant that Chris says that he's never thought about how it might work out in the long run. He clearly feels that he doesn't have to worry about producing equality based on the trust that he has that both he and Kelli will take care of each other. At the same time, I wonder if it is possible that one person will express greater 'needs' or express 'needs' more strongly and, in the long run, produce inequality within a relationship. As he admits, it would be hard to know if this were happening in the absence of some sort of explicit attention to who does what, when, and how often. Part of my concern is also based on the possibility that focusing on 'needs' and feelings could become a sort of second shift fetish (Hochschild 1989), substitute offerings that stand in for other work that someone may prefer not to do (Jamieson 1999).

CRITIQUE OF THERAPY

Not everyone with whom I talked was so positive about therapy and therapeutic approaches. In fact, Doug Silverwood and Mark Holland were quite hostile to therapists and their impact on U.S. culture. I feel that it is probably not a coincidence that these two were among those who were most explicit about politicizing their masculinity projects – seeing the changes that they were working to produce as directed at more than just their personal relationships with women.

Doug has had experience with therapy from both sides. As a social worker, he has done therapy with clients, but he has also undergone therapy in the past, prompted by a "manic breakdown" in Amsterdam after the stress of working for the passage of 'medical marijuana' legislation in California while doing lots of drugs at the same time. His critique of therapy and therapeutics draws on both of those experiences in addition to his sociological training. He's very critical of the tendency of psychologists to promote the medicalization of social problems. As he said,

> A lot of our society has this whole medicalization of problems. Um, and a lot of it's pretty damning. Um, and having been through a mental illness situation, what allowed me to come out from that other side is that I was already schooled in the field, and I knew … that it was all about labeling. And it was that self-identification of the label that doomed you into lifelong mental illness.

While Doug values the empathy that therapists are trained to develop, which he defines as feminine, he feels that therapy often does more harm than good, because it disempowers people. This is the reason he is unwilling to go into therapy again. He said,

> Maybe if I found the right progressive therapist, [I would consider doing therapy again]. Theoretically, I could see where that could be helpful, because, you know, the plus side is, [short pause] … people who do counseling have those therapeutic tools. They … develop that empathy and a lot of that. Um, things that are not a traditional part of male culture. Um. But [the] counselor-counseled relationship, you know, … that's a position of power. That's why … I try to get people out of counseling. It's a lot like being on medications. I consider that like a crutch. Um, because … it's a disempowering position to sit and have somebody that you're paying to talk about your issues. … You should have informal support networks that are more mutual and reciprocal where you get those same kind of things. Um, that you shouldn't have to pay somebody to have somebody to talk to. You know, that shows that there's a lack, um. That you should be able to problem solve. You should get encouragement. You should be able to find someone who can listen and encourage just in your own healthy social network. … Um, that said, … we don't live in that society. Um, so, for all practical purposes, it can be good for a lot of people. Anyone who's into it, I never discourage 'em. … But when I would do counseling, I always kept it short term, because,

> … if someone needed to talk to me once a week in order to function, then I would say that they're still fucked up, which is not [chuckling] the goal of counseling.

Doug's criticism of therapy is similar to critiques that assert that therapeutic culture is producing a culture in which people understand themselves as inherently pathologized. He's also quite hostile to counselors, who he believes are arrogant and cavalier about how they treat the power relations between themselves and their clients. As he said,

> I'm not gonna reach in my pocket and pay somebody to, um, help me with my problems. You know, that's just weird. … I think most counselors just live in that world where they think that's normal. [snorts and chuckles] … And that's part of where they get that arrogance and that disempowerment, and … everybody gets a diagnosis. And their diagnoses are dangerous. You're … almost, you know, better off untreated than to have a diagnosis. … I never give anybody one. If they didn't have one [chuckles] when they came to see me, I would never help them get one. Even if it would get 'em a check. … Being labeled a crazy person, … even six hundred dollars a month [from Social Security] is too little payment for that. 'Cause nobody listens to a crazy person. No matter how right you are or how articulate and what interesting things you have to say, um, if you're crazy, then you're just a lunatic and nobody gives a shit what you say.

Doug's experience of being institutionalized definitely influenced his view of therapists and psychiatrists, but his critique is also based in his anarchist skepticism of institutions. He said,

> Those experts don't know anything. Sit down with a psychiatrist and see [chuckling] how much do they really know about the human condition? … Less than most. And they're really cavalier, um, with what they do to people. With lockin' 'em up. With puttin' 'em on medications with dangerous side effects, um, you know. … Most of the problems … that the planet has were created by experts. My money is on talented amateurs any time. … We need to solve our own problems, … and it's not the things that come from big institutions, but … just a willingness to be kind to each other and to try to figure some things out is a better approach.

Mark Holland shares Doug's anarchist critique of therapy, though his position is based more on a primitivist, anti-civilization position. At the time of the second

interview, Mark Holland told me that he planned to visit a counselor even though he was very skeptical and worried about entering into therapy based on his political convictions. On the one hand, he argues that therapy is a problem, because it serves mainly to support capitalist patriarchy. He said,

> Besides sociology, I was also like a psychology major. And then I got real pissed off at psychology when I realized like, alright norms? Are all based on like this stupid society. Like norms of like [sane] or insane, you know? And the whole point of it is to get people to the point where they can be workers. To be productive members of society. … It's just like trying to get people to where they want people to be so they can go out and contribute to the economy. … And I'm definitely not into that. [chuckles] … I just wish it was all contributing to something better.

At the same time, his attempts to change himself hadn't accomplished the ends to which he had directed them. He said,

> I hate to admit this, but I have like really, really bad jealousy issues that I want to try and get past. Because I feel like that's … obviously … unhealthy. … It's unhealthy for me, because it makes me feel like shit all the time, and it's unhealthy for anyone I'm with. … Like, it's weird, because like I feel like usually jealousy and possessiveness go hand in hand, but like I've never ever, ever been possessive of … anyone I dated, but, instead, I'll just kind of let them do what they want, but then like stew in my anger over it. But then just keep it to myself. You know. … And it's just not good. … It's hard to try and be in healthy relationships and be a good person when you're like angry and pissed off over little shit.

It is possible to interpret the desire to rid oneself of jealousy in terms of a shift toward individualism and an interpretation of love in a relationship in terms defined by therapeutic culture. For instance, Swidler (1980) asserts that

> In the contemporary period the ideal of sexual restraint has weakened, and the possibilities for sexual expression have been broadened. The ideology of individual development has entered the sexual sphere, condemning relationships that limit individual growth or possibilities for exploring new experiences. In this view, jealousy is bad, a possessive attempt to own another person and limit that person's freedom to grow. Sexual restraints are rejected as artificial restrictions on experience, and sexual

> experimentation is valued because it opens the self to new experiences (P. 139).

This certainly seems consistent with Mark's talk about being anti-oppressive and his desire to promote health in his relationships with others. At the same time, it's important to note Mark's claim that his feelings of jealousy don't represent possessiveness in the relationship, which he seems to identify with power and control. Mark confided to me that his feelings of jealousy became very pronounced after Susanne asked him to agree to an open relationship while they were still together. He resisted that for a time, though he now wonders if he should have been more open to the request. He said,

> I'm just like, 'Damn dude. Like, if I could have just like given her a little bit of space here and there -.' Like, it's kind of complicated, because, like I said, I'm not possessive. Like, what I mean by giving her space is like allowing her to like date other guys and stuff. And that's kind of a LOT of space. You know? … And most people wouldn't even attempt that sort of thing, you know, but, because of our politics and stuff [it's possible to imagine that as a possibility]. I seriously just want her to be happy.

He admitted to me that they did experiment with non-monogamy and that the attempt to create an open relationship didn't go very well.[127] In his ongoing reflections on the relationship after the break-up, he has chastised himself for his reluctance to fully embrace non-monogamy, because he wonders if they would still be together as a couple if he had.

Eliminating jealousy is an important step for him, and it potentially represents a partial adoption of therapeutic ideals about relationships, but this has to be understood as part of his project to make more radical change possible. For Mark, presuming that one can be 'non-sexist' is unacceptable. Instead, he feels that one must be active in the fight against oppression. He said,

[127] In fact, she became jealous too.

> I mean, even if I didn't have these jealousy issues, I still would be doing these other things, just because, you know, being a guy who doesn't rape women who doesn't have jealousy issues still isn't enough to make you … like actively fighting against all this stuff.[128]

Therefore, he felt that it was worth it to make use of whatever resources were available to him even though he mistrusted them. He viewed this as using the system to fight the system. As he said, "I have to go into the world of like capitalist patriarchy to get help so I can not be a jealous guy so I can say fuck you to patriarchy. You know?" Rather than narrowing his concern just to his feelings (jealousy for instance) and his responsibility to producing a healthy relationship, Mark defined the use of therapy as a tool in a feminist and anarchist project of dismantling capitalist patriarchy, including the 'psy' professions that support the capitalist patriarchy, and ultimately civilization itself.

POLITICIZING MASCULINITY?

In the last chapter, I discussed Josh Lewin's dissatisfaction with his attempt to be 'the good man' in college. I return to this issue here, because Josh's increasing discomfort with a gender project that involved renunciations of what he defined as masculine and his increasing resistance to the attempts of others to ascribe that project to him reveals that, while he engaged in a regendering of his masculinity, this does not necessarily have to entail politicizing that masculinity – even when one construes oneself as feminist. Instead, it appears to me that Lewin's engagement with therapeutic culture encouraged him to depoliticize his gender project.

[128] This echoes the words of Doug Silverwood, who asserted that "A lot of … allegedly feminist men or a lot of progressive guys, not a whole lot is expected of us, you know. If we we're not as bad a mother fucker as the average guy, which is just deplorable, then we get a free ride," which is a very bad thing indeed, since he believes the "regular guy ethic" is based on "a mild form of control and abuse."

He strongly resisted being regarded as a "good man" for many years partly because of the implications for his own masculinity. As he said,

> Well, I want to just say that, you know, it's taken me a long time to ACCEPT the fact that I'm a good man. I never wanted to be a good man. I fought that my entire life. … That wasn't me. I wasn't trying to BE a good man. … I really didn't like being a good man. 'Cause to me, being a good man … always sort of meant not acknowledging myself. You know, … it came easy to me. People always called me a good man. … And a nice guy … and all those things. … By the time I was twenty-six, I was aiming to be the devil. I really wanted to be evil. … Just to kind of escape that THING that got put on me. And it really took me until recently to be able to go, 'Well, OK. If people see me that way, that's fine. You know, whatever.'

His perceived 'need' to not acknowledge himself in order to accept the label of "good man" seems to be somewhat complicated. I'm hesitant to interpret this simply to mean that he was resisting being feminized (as in the mediated images of 'New' masculinity), because he makes clear that part of his reservation had to do with the fact that he felt that being labeled as a 'nice guy' implied that he was better than other men.[129] As he said,

> When I look at myself realistically, look at all of the pieces of myself, I don't think that I'm any better than anyone else. I really don't. I don't think of myself as a good man. … I struggle like everybody else struggles … to live this life according to my values and, you know, according to my desires at the same time and to be the best person I can be within, you know, that realm. It's the same struggle that everybody else has. … So now I'm used to that, and I don't mind it so much anymore. It's kind of like, 'OK. Thanks.' People say that, so, 'Thanks.' I didn't used to be able to say that. I'd be like, 'Fuck you!' You know. [chuckles] Like, 'OK. I'm a good man!'

Being a "good man" also implies a form of political activism that makes Josh feel uncomfortable. He told me that he engaged in a fair amount of activism when he was in

[129] As will become clear, Doug Silverwood shares Josh's reticence about posing as morally superior to other men. Doug politicizes this in a more obvious way in his critique of middle class feminist men in an analysis very similar to that of Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994). Most of the other men with whom I talked for this study were less likely than either Doug or Josh to name this as a concern, especially since they seemed to construct their masculinities in opposition to that of traditional men.

high school and in the early years of college, and he concluded based on that experience that political activism didn't feed him as much as his writing, the other major activity that competed for his time, and that politics made him feel somewhat dirty. More recently, he's intentionally resisted attempts to draw him into overtly politicizing his masculinity, such as when he was asked to work at the university Women's Center. He said,

> I said no. … I was afraid of suddenly being politicized as 'the man.' And I know you're the man over there now,[130] so you might have some sense of what that's like. … I didn't want to be 'the man' who was 'the good man.' … And I didn't want to have anything to do with like actively promoting any agenda. … It's not that I don't agree. It's that I just don't want to do that work. That kind of work for me is depressing, … because it's all about, you know, getting out there and having to have political arguments and trying to persuade people and try to show them stuff and, you know, that's why I became a therapist. 'Cause I don't want to do that. I want to help people figure out what they want to figure out. You know, not persuade them of anything. … [My earlier activism] never felt good to me. … It always felt kind of dirty … in the sense of … who I became. … I felt like I just became this … argument. But there was a person in front of me. You know, and I don't want to relate to people that way.

The contrast with less therapeutically-inclined men is marked. For instance, Doug Silverwood argues that it is important to never lose sight of how our practices are implicated in broader relations of inequality. Before he was radicalized by his experience with SEAC, Doug Silverwood didn't understand the need to rethink his daily practices. He said,

> I was just a little chauvinistic, because I liked to just get under people's skin. You know, … and be antagonistic. So I remember a lot of like debates in high school over, you know, battle of the sexes, men versus women, arguing male superiority kinds of things. And when I got into the whole idea of peace and then justice, then there's an 'of courseness,' 'Of course, of course.' But, you know, I was still pretty locked into privilege at that point to where I didn't see my own role in that. Where I could see, like, 'Yeah, women should have equal opportunity to work. Yeah. … And it does make sense … that women should get to decide, you know, what's to be done with their own bodies.' You know, there was an 'of

[130] I was working as a co-coordinator in the Rape Education Office at the time of this interview.

> courseness,' … and things that I could understand intellectually. But I never saw like, 'Yeah [reluctantly], but my mom shouldn't be doing my laundry.' You know, that was different, [chuckles slightly] 'cause that just was how things were. You know? And I didn't really see it.

However, Doug's experience with feminists in SEAC coupled with his graduate coursework in sociology convinced him of the need to practice equality and not just espouse it. He said,

> I was probably still insufferable, even as a lefty into my early twenties. … I was close to twenty-five before I really became an active student activist … and started working with women, and that's when things really started to shift on me. Because I was studying it in school. I was seeing it in practice. And we had this idea of the environment being the world around us and wanting to live in the world that we were trying to create. And trying to create OUR alternative space where those things didn't matter. And so then I started to think about 'What does it mean on a practical basis to challenge [male privilege]?'

As I will make clear in the next section, practicing equality in the everyday and challenging male privilege requires Doug to be vigilant against compromising egalitarianism with women with whom he has relationships. He's not always successful, but that doesn't merit abandoning the attempt.

Others were also quite explicit about seeing their masculinity projects as implicated in a politics of justice. For instance, while Benjamin Moraga would not accept the label feminist for himself when we talked at the first interview, he had come to use the label for himself by the second interview. For him, this implies that he's engaged in resistance (even protest) against gender inequality in his everyday life. He said,

> [I've been pondering] how do … you identify as a feminist and an activist at the same time. … Are they connected? … And, for me, I think they are. Particularly … on a micro-level. My interpersonal life. … [I now identify as a feminist], because I AM working toward it … in my daily life. … I'm not out, you know, putting up posters [and] picketing, you know, but, interpersonally, with … all of my friends [and family], I work on it. … And so I think that's a form of protest. … It's something that

> I've had to incorporate into my everyday life. And, you know, it hasn't always been a part of my life. … It was, you know, something that I REALLY picked up since I've been [studying sociology in graduate school]. … But definitely, … those issues are things that I think about all the time. And I've been really struggling with that particular issue of cleaning, right? Of HOW it gets worked out, and who has to worry about it, and why it's always Lila's worry, and why it's not mine. And other things too. … I don't know. I mean it is something I think about. Like … if I'm deciding that I'm going to make this claim … that I want to be understood as a feminist, like I need to make sure that that is how I am and that is who I'm trying to be. You know, so. … Maybe more that's who I'm trying to be, right? Because … it's a process, right?

Geoff Riley would agree with both Doug and Benjamin. He uses reflection to ensure that his practices are consistently feminist. He said,

> When I make it local, … I'm continuously critical [of my own practices]. … It's just because it's a project we're living, so I'm continuously reflecting. … I'm continuously critically looking at what I'm doing.

Not all of the men explicitly talked about their masculinity practices in terms of politics, but there appeared to be a shared sense among those who did not explicitly articulate a therapeutic vocabulary of motives that 'fairness' had to be defined as an issue of justice. For these men, the failure to rise to the standard of 'fairness' in their relationships signaled that they were failing to change sufficiently to be different from the majority of men who were not all that concerned with inequality between men and women. This did provoke guilt, but these men generally responded to this guilt by asserting that they should do more to achieve equity rather than rejecting it.

A SOCIAL JUSTICE VOCABULARY OF MOTIVES

As I have suggested, less therapeutically-inclined men also articulated a vocabulary of motives to account for the distributive justice in their relationships, but this vocabulary linked 'fairness' with equity and/or equality. For a number of the men, feminism quite explicitly served as a discursive source for this vocabulary, though some

of the men also drew on other sources as well in establishing these as the most appropriate justice rules. Overall, these men were much less likely to shy away from expressions of political ideology, which indicates to me that these men find a political focus on social justice as more acceptable than those who draw on a therapeutic vocabulary.

Doug Silverwood articulated a very clear commitment to egalitarianism, and he indicated that he has been working to achieve egalitarianism in his relationships for quite some time. He draws on multiple discursive sources for his commitment to social justice: Christianity, feminist and environmentalist politics, and anarchism. As he said,

> That's been a major part of my ideology. … I've always tried to be fair with people, and, ultimately, it comes down to my Christian roots. You know, I really believe that you should love your neighbor as yourself. … I believe in radical egalitarianism between me and ANYbody, so it's heightened with that, um, personal relationship [with a partner]. But I always try to weigh my own interests with anybody in my dealings. I try not to get over on people, … take unfair advantage with anybody. But if you're gonna make a life with somebody? … That's a major part of our society and has been, um, for thousands and thousands of years with the male dominance in a relationship, and I knew … that that was nothing that I was ever comfortable in. … Um, nothing that I … wanted to be a part of. And never have and then still don't. Um, I don't want to tell anybody what to do. I don't like particularly to be told what to do. Um, I don't want to do it.

Doug feels that, given that men enjoy privilege, they need to "try to lean the other way." As he said," where our consciousness has to come in to it is we have … to try to be more than fair" to avoid reproducing inequality in a relationship. What he appears to mean by this is that, because our social relations favor men's dominance over women and because it's far easier for men to routinely practice inequality with women, men should intentionally do more work in a relationship when they can so that the relationship has a chance of breaking even. This calls for vigilance. As he said,

> That's one of the sad realities as we look to shifting a lot of these things is we think like, uh, by changing this, we're going to get rid of this problem. And a lot of times it just changes it into a different problem. … And it's gonna be harder and more complicated, uh, than we realized, because there are unforeseen circumstances to every kind of change. And we don't have the kind of role models and mapped out path of how these things should work, so we're figuring it out, and it's different and new, and we have this historical inertia of a lot of the bad stuff, you know, we're trying to get rid of that's always trying to reassert itself in other ways.

Some of the men who articulated a social justice vocabulary do seem to hold a faith that they could eventually produce equality with the women in their lives. Consider Mark Holland's project to be a completely anti-oppressive man. He has been identifying as an anarchist for a number of years, but he has come to expand his notion of what that requires for being feminist. For him, to be a feminist man is to try to avoid oppressing women of course, but it is also to try to change as a man. He thinks it is easier to be against the oppression of women than it is to change himself to become free of the negative effects of patriarchy, such as the fact that men aren't supposed to be emotional, aren't supposed to trust anyone, and are supposed to be competitive instead of cooperative. Although he recognizes that privilege brings benefits, he feels that most men should give it up. He said,

> Well, I mean, on a most basic level, it's just saying like … I want equality for men and women. … Like, … across the board in every way. You know? … Just saying like, 'I don't want to be a part of like oppressing women.' … There's just so much negative stuff, and I want to like not be oppressive to anyone, which is PRETTY MUCH impossible in this society. … [But] I'm trying my best to like not oppress anyone. And especially not directly oppress anyone.

This process of change is hard, and it requires constant vigilance, but he believes that it is worth the effort to remain committed to a masculinity project of justice regardless of the personal discomfort that it provokes. As he said,

> I'm happy that I'm making these changes, but, at the same time, it gets you really down sometimes, you know? … And then also like, when you realize like all the mistakes you made in the past too. It's kind of complicated. … And then like trying to make changes and then catching yourself like fucking up all the time. You know. It's just kind of hard, but I'm glad I'm doing it. And, in the long run, it will definitely be a positive thing.

While Mark appears to be exceptionally committed to a major reconstruction of his masculinity project, what he shares with other men who draw on a social justice vocabulary is to interpret guilt and stress associated with failing to live up to his ideals as part of the process, rather than redefining his standards for what is possible and desirable in his relationships with women.

Benjamin Moraga exemplifies this as well. He told me that the thing he likes least about his relationship with Lila is that they differ in how to conceptualize cleanliness. Although he wants to contribute to housework equally, he and Lila differ on how often and when work should be done, a disagreement that echoes the experiences of Josh and Tucker discussed above. Because she prefers to do things immediately, there are times when she cleans up after him, something that he dislikes because he feels that she shouldn't have to do it. He said,

> I don't feel that the house … constantly needs to have things in order, which she does. She feels that, if you take your shoes off, you can't just set 'em next to the couch. You need to go take 'em to the front to put them on the rack. Um. Immediately. … If you eat something, you need to wash all the dishes immediately. Not later on in the afternoon. Right then. Um. You know, that type of thing. And I don't always agree with that. … I think it's important to do that. I just don't think it's as important to have it done immediately. … I CAN do it. I know that. I can always do it. It's just a matter of, which is stressing me out more? … What that … argument centers around is WHEN it gets done. You know, not whether or not. … What often what will happen is that, if I DO leave something, she'll just do it, you know. She won't get angry or upset. She'll just do it. But I don't feel comfortable with that. I don't like that. … It really BOTHERS me. … And she's told me before that she doesn't

> MIND doing it, and it doesn't bother her at all. She'd rather just have it done. But … I don't ever feel comfortable with, you know, with her cleaning up after me.

They often clean the house together, but even then he feels some guilt, because he feels that she has more responsibility for thinking about what tasks need to be done. He said,

> I feel like, even if it is on my mind, you know, like say we decided, 'Hey, let's clean the house today.' Um, so we're working on it. I still feel like Lila is delegating tasks to me. That I'm not just like picking 'em up and doing 'em. You know what I'm saying? [Brad: Yeah.] Like often, you know, … I'll start cleaning the kitchen, and then, you know, I'll be done, and then she'll be like, 'Oh hey, can you do this.' You know. And it's not that I'm upset that she's telling me to do it. I'm upset that I'm not thinking … to just automatically do it.

Clearly, Benjamin Moraga is very concerned with practicing equality with Lila, but he still struggles with the looming specter of male privilege in that he believes that she feels more responsible for cleaning the house than he does and does it more often. He feels that she has a different standard of cleanliness, and he assumes that this is gendered. The fact that it *is* gendered and that she takes more responsibility for cleaning (and planning for cleaning) provokes guilt in him. He said,

> I just feel more guilty about it. … [Cleaning isn't] on my mind. … And I know … that breaks down to gender. … I don't think she should be the one that, um, has to always delegate the tasks. I think that I need to be more conscious of those kinds of things. … I don't know how to describe it other than … we perceive these things differently. … Unfortunately, I feel like they're always connected to gender. You know, male privilege is hard to escape. You know! [chuckles] And it's something that's … very difficult for me ... to get rid of, you know. I have a very hard time with it. … I know I'm at that stage where I'm trying to be conscious and care about what she wants and work with her on that. … And it IS a big deal, and it isn't a big deal, right? It's not a big deal for me to keep the house clean. It's not that hard to help do that, right? That's not a big deal. It's just [that] there's tension over it, you know. … It's a privilege to not have to worry about that shit, right? No one wants to deal with cleaning the house. … It's shitty for everyone. [I don't like that] I'm the one that doesn't have to worry about it.

As much as he claims that he doesn't have to worry about it, he told me that he *does* worry about this all the time and that he works toward equalizing their relative contributions. Instead of avoiding guilt, the guilt motivates him to recognize male privilege in their relationship and to work to make change.

Ray Morrow's relationship with Jenna has been characterized by equal sharing, since they share housework and responsibility for caring for their two young sons. Even though the balance of work has shifted toward Jenna over time after his promotion to assistant principal of a school, he still has a tendency to think and talk about his relationship as equal. As he said, "We share all responsibility with the kids and just with household. I mean, I do most of the cooking, just because I enjoy doing it, um, but I mean we break down all the chores. Um, I think she does laundry more than I do, but it all works out in terms of shared responsibility." Indeed, he is quite capable of documenting in very concrete detail how they divide mundane everyday/everynight tasks, clearly substantiating the fact that he is heavily involved in household work and childcare. He makes it clear that this represents an explicitly worked out system for sharing. He said, "In order for us to get out of the house, I mean, in order for us to function, we have to have our systems, and it's not like *I* make the system. … What is going to make the most sense? So we … DO divvy up. It's … really calculated. Like we have figured this out."

However, the more he talked about the specifics of their daily household practices, the more he started to talk about the fact that it is less equal than it used to be. He told me that he feels guilty about this, though it's also the case that she has been on leave from her academic department most recently, making it possible for her to do

certain things she previously would have found more difficult. He indicated that he would have to find ways to pick up the slack again when she returned to full-time work. He also pointed out that he will somewhat make up for the disparity by doing the bulk of the work in the summers when he is school is out of session. While it's not entirely clear whether and how the balance will shift back, the fact that he remains committed to doing so in his talk seems significant.

The social justice-minded men often treated 'traditional' men and relationships as negative comparison referents for defining how to practice equity and equality with their partners. For instance, it is very important to Gary Estes for his relationship with Kate to be an equitable one, because he doesn't like the idea of having a 'traditional' relationship like that of his parents. He has no interest in being the head of household and making Kate performing all of the domestic work. He said,

> In my mind, I still see a woman doing all the housework with kind of the male dominated household. … While that's not what we have, I have that knee-jerk thing. I don't know if that comes from … my father being domineering with my mom. … It was a pretty traditional household. She worked most of the time when I was a kid, but, even then, she did pretty much all the housework. Cooking, cleaning. He worked too, but it never felt like there was a shared responsibility. So it might come from that? I don't know. … But it's sort of that not wanting that cycle of, you know, just traditional roles or whatever.

Even so, he has had difficulty in actually implementing equity in housework, partly because she feels anxious when he doesn't meet her standards for cleanliness and order. Although it is a common strategy for men who wish to get out of doing housework to claim incompetence (Hochschild 1989), I do not believe that this is what Gary has been doing. He said,

> I feel guilty if I'm not doing my share of housework or cooking or those sort of things. … And actually, that got in our way for a long time. … I

> freely admit she's much better at things like laundry or, um, different things like that. … I'm a little bit sloppy in terms of not doing things right, but she is perfectly happy and wants to do those things for herself. … She's been VERY open about this, but she has this sort of anxiety that, even if I do laundry or dishes or something, they're not going to be done right. … And so she'd be very happy to just do all that herself, but I'M NOT, and so that causes a weird conflict in that I don't want to just say, 'OK, will you do all that?' … It's that sort of thing where you feel like you're getting into this stereotypical 'the woman does the housework, the man kind of sits on his ass.' [chuckles] You know! … I think things would have been much better if I was able to just say, 'Fine, do all the laundry. Do all the dishes. I won't get in the way and cause anxiety.' But that makes me feel weird and guilty and has nothing to do with her. I don't want that kind of relationship.

Once they had their child Serena, though, Kate decided to leave her job and stay home to take care of the baby for four years. This coincided with the time when Gary was applying for tenure in his department, so the balance shifted toward Kate taking on more housework responsibilities in addition to the primary responsibility for child care. Gary tells me that the decision for her to stay home was made years ago. They discussed these issues when she was finished with her Master's degree and was working in a fairly well-paid position and when he was still in graduate school and very much uncertain about his future job prospects. He says that they decided then that the person with the higher income at the time their first child was born would stay home with the child. At the time, they thought it was likely that she would be the one who would out-earn him, though that is not how it worked out in the end. Now, Gary says that he feels a little jealous of Kate's ability to stay home with their child, even though this is the outcome of a prior negotiation between them. In response, Kate gently teases him based on the fact that his schedule as a university professor is actually flexible enough to allow him to come home during the workday quite often.

She hasn't taken over all of the parenting tasks, because he would really oppose that. He said he doesn't regard this shift as a sign that their relationship is becoming more 'traditional,' but he does thinks it has moved away from an egalitarian arrangement. Interestingly, Gary felt less guilty about this arrangement than he originally thought he might. He said,

> I think it really is the housework stuff. I don't feel like we have those sort of dynamics in most other areas. That's the trigger for me I think about feeling that there's an inequality here. 'Traditional' roles. … I don't feel like in terms of communication, um, implicit or explicit roles or power or anything like that we have those issues. It's really pretty, um, focused on the concrete household chores kind of thing. … I don't feel like that in terms of parenting roles as much with Serena or anything? I feel like it's pretty much whatever works for the both of us and more or less equal and all that. … When we finally started talking about children, … she wanted to stay home. At least for the first few years. If we could financially do it. Um, and that's an area where I kind of thought I might have more, I don't know if guilt is even the right word, but more of a reaction in terms of that's the stereotypical role, but it's what she wants, and she knows why she wants it, and so I'm perfectly comfortable with that I guess, because I feel like for me to say, 'No, that's wrong' is the same thing as saying, 'You should stay home.'

So Gary feels that he should respect Kate's preference to stay home with their child, and he feels that he can do that without guilt, but he feels guilty about giving in to Kate's preference to do the majority of cooking and laundry and therefore tries to do more of that work. One of the reasons Gary has gone along with Kate's decision to stay home with Serena was that he preferred that to sending Serena into the care of a stranger. As a way to compensate for not splitting those tasks in a 50/50 ratio, he has started doing all of the vacuuming. He doesn't particularly like vacuuming, and he says that it takes forever to do since they have a lot of carpet, but he's thrilled to be able to do it since it is a task that Kate absolutely hates to do.

The social justice vocabulary of motives provides the men who draw upon it with clear standards for working out egalitarian domestic divisions of labor (and parenting). This vocabulary was based more explicitly on political prescriptions for practicing less hierarchical and oppressive masculinities. Unlike the men who draw on a therapeutically-informed vocabulary, these men do not turn away from feelings of guilt, and they work to ensure that they are not complicit in maintaining and enjoying male privilege and power.

NOT SHARING HOUSEWORK

Two of the men I interviewed articulated commitment to feminism in principle but admitted to me that their practices were inconsistent with that principle. In terms of the vocabularies discussed in this chapter, I would say that they are both more likely to evaluate their masculinity projects in terms of social justice. They have both been involved in progressive politics (and, at least for Joel Sewald, left scholarship) throughout their lives, but they have been somewhat less progressive in their intimate relationships with women.

Joel Sewald finds housework to be distasteful and would prefer not to do it. He said that he doesn't expect others to do it for him. He just would prefer not to have to do it and is willing to reduce his standards for how clean a house should be to allow for the work to not be done. This led to significant disagreements with his first wife, Helen, because she wanted him to share in the work much more than he was willing to do so. Joel fought with his mother over the same sorts of issues, and he wasn't ever quite willing to accede to his first wife's wishes. He said,

> Ironically, [declaring myself a profeminst] got me out of doing a lot of housework. [chuckles] … Um, because I don't like doing housework.

> And my inclination by myself is not to do it. … It's not like I really want someone to do it for me, … but I do have a tendency to be kind of a slob, at least in the eyes of anyone who is fairly orderly. … And there was a lot of conflict in my first marriage over those kinds of issues. And even my second marriage I would have to say that, uh, a certain amount of conflict is emerging, although I would hope that it's being better handled than it was the first time, but we're still fairly early into the game, so … I can't guarantee that it is.

Although his preference not to do housework is important, also relevant is the fact that he spends a lot of time on his academic work. As he pointed out to me, he tends to form relationships with women who also value their academic work, and this poses difficulties as two professionals maintain careers and a shared household. This was certainly an issue in his first marriage. Now that he is remarried, he has vowed not to make the same mistake again. This doesn't necessarily mean doing more housework now than he was willing to do in his first marriage though, because he said that he told himself not to make promises that he would not be willing to keep. Joel told me that his second wife, Teresa, is somewhat more flexible with him than Helen was, even though he thinks Teresa's standards for household cleanliness are actually higher. He said,

> I work too much. I spend too much time, I'm too focused on my work. Obsessively. I always have been. … I tend to be with women who also share those characteristics, um, which is the only thing that probably makes my behavior tolerable to them. But it also does kind of create a competition, you know, 'cause there has to be a certain amount of attention paid to the domestic. … My position always was, 'Well, I don't mind [chuckles] stinging on the domestic more. We just won't keep the house as clean. We won't do this. We won't do that.' And so then it kind of becomes the woman's position to, you know, say, 'No. That's not acceptable. … I'm also not going to do it all.' … And I would agree with that in principle, but, um, in practice, I frequently failed to do what I said I would do. Especially if I thought what I was being asked was unreasonable, which I felt a fair bit of the time. And, you know, that's another can of worms. [chuckles] I don't want to go back there. … I think probably, on the whole, I parlayed a certain amount of, uh, profeminist ideology as a way of preserving male privilege in practice. … With my first partner, and I don't think that I'm completely different now.

> … I think that … our goals are closer to one another. And she's frankly a lot more flexible than my first wife was. Although, in a way, I think her standards are higher. … We've dealt with this a lot more explicitly than I did in my first marriage, and I've vowed not to make promises that I'm not gonna keep.

Joel Sewald grew up in a house that encouraged left politics. Based on that experience and also partly because of the fact that his mother had started a professional career when he was younger, he did not react to the emergence of the women's movement in the 1970's with the same trepidation of his peers. He told me that he regarded feminism as completely consistent with left politics overall and that he would be a hypocrite to be a leftist without also supporting feminism. (He told me that his ex-wife always argued that progressive men represented the last bastion of sexism, and he said that he didn't necessarily disagree with her.) At the same time, he admitted to me that he bought into feminism more in principle than in practice and that, because he acquired the cachet of being profeminist, he was able to use that to buy himself out of actually following through on being profeminist at home by doing an equal share of housework.[131] Joel is interesting to me because of the fact that he has identified as a feminist without actually making a completely consistent feminist masculinity project.

Even though Joel Sewald openly admits that he has traded on "political profeminism" as a way of getting out of doing domestic work around the house, he never once had difficulty accepting feminism in principle. He said,

> I believe that one of the fundamental structuring, uh, principles of our social order is male privilege. And I've never met a man who does not, on some level, value male privilege. I mean, it's privilege. [chuckles] Why would you want to disvalue it? … I'm a believer in equality, and how can you defend the system of gender privilege? Uh, it goes against all the basic principles of equality. … So, if you're talking about equality for the

[131] This is complicated somewhat by the fact that he was heavily involved in routine care-giving for their daughter, just as his father was.

> working class or equality for anyone else, I mean, equality for women is a no-brainer. But, on the other hand, I think that any male – and perhaps I would say myself even more than other male – values the privilege that we have.

All of the stories I collected from the men are complicated, but Brian Mason's story is complicated based on the many contradictions between principle and practice. In itself, this is not necessarily uncommon, because what people say and what they do are often two very different things. While I am going to acknowledge that Brian is less progressive in practice than his ideology would suggest that he should be, I believe that it is important to recognize that is influenced by the circumstances of his life with Ada. The fact that her family has money has given both Brian and Ada the luxury of not having to make hard choices about how to live their lives. Brian has been more free to privilege his work, because Ada has been free not to work so that she could pursue her fiction writing. She picked up a greater share of child care in the process. This may not be entirely to Ada's liking. Brian is sure that he would have been forced to take on a greater share of the work around the house and particularly in parenting if Ada had needed to work. He told me that he would have resented that but it would have worked out.

Brian Mason told me that the household division of labor in his home is somewhat 'traditional.' He acknowledged this by telling me that he feels some guilt about this. What appears to be at the root of this is his engagement with his own work. He loves to work, and he is especially happy that he is privileged enough to do the kind of work that he loves. As a philosopher, he is allowed to spend time thinking and solving puzzles and writing about them. His wife, Ada, sometimes gets irritated with him when he works at home after being at work all day long. He admits to some irritation when

being called upon to do tasks and also when being asked to spend time with their two boys. He says he always enjoys the time he spends with them when he is actually doing it, but he resents having to interrupt his work *before* he actually stops working. This is an issue for him in the summers too, because they travel to the Bay Area for several weeks each summer to visit Ada's relatives. He feels that he can't resist these trips, because, presumably, he can do his work virtually anywhere. In truth however, he is much less productive when they are there. He told me that he anticipates these trips coming to an end soon, because he doesn't think their boys will want to give up time with friends in the summer to go visit relatives. Interestingly, this is also an issue for a decision that *Brian* made for the family. Brian and Ada are members of the core group in Barn Raisers. They were invited to buy into the property in southern Missouri. Brian was enthusiastic about the idea, so they agreed to do it. Brian told me that, almost immediately after making the decision, he started to feel regret, because he realized how he would have to sacrifice time working to be able to spend the kind of time down there that they intend. He told me that he knows he will enjoy it while they are there (and, in fact, they had just returned from a week trip down there), but he will struggle with work regrets.

I regard it as significant that these two men came of age somewhat earlier than most of the men in the study. They encountered feminism as an emerging movement when they were younger, and they had other Left commitments prior to becoming involved with feminism through relationships with feminist women. Without making excuses for them for not practicing all of their feminist principles consistently, I do think it is fair to acknowledge that they are still exceptional when compared to the majority of

men of their generation (and men of subsequent generations) who rejected feminism completely.

DISCUSSION

As I have said, all of the men I interviewed identified as anti-sexist in some way. While there are important distinctions in the masculinity projects that men adopted based on their reliance on a therapeutic vocabulary of motive or a social justice vocabulary of motive, these men still share many commonalities in their rejection of 'traditional' relationships and hegemonic masculinity projects and in their diverse attempts to recompose their masculinity to make some form of change in gender relations and in their individual relationships possible. However, as I have shown in this chapter, there are differences, and the differences are important for our understanding of the kind of change that we can expect from these kinds of projects.

Not all of the eight men who had been in therapy[132] articulated the therapeutically-informed goals of self-development, meeting 'needs,' and engaging in communication about emotional well-being and mutual emotional support, but those who did appear to have adopted different strategies for producing change in their relationships and for making themselves feel better about being men in those relationships (particularly by minimizing feeling stressed or guilty for being men). By adopting therapeutic discourse about feelings and 'needs,' these men appear to have shifted toward the goal of producing healthy relationships on the presumption that healthy relationships are also equal relationships in the long run.

[132] Assuming that Mark Holland followed through on his intention to enter therapy, he would bring the number to nine men.

These do not have to be mutually exclusive, but, at the same time, focusing on 'needs' does not necessarily guarantee equality (Jamieson 1999; Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege, and Hall 1996), particularly if one explicitly avoids comparing relative contributions of housework and parenting. While Chris Simpson may have faith that things will work out in the long-term, how is he to know for sure if he doesn't even ask the question in the first place? After all, as Coltrane (1996) and Knudson-Martin and Mahoney (1998) point out, couples that make the assumption that sharing will happen on its own often find women doing far more. This is particularly likely to happen if women develop a lower sense of entitlement to sharing in housework based on 'needs' reduction (Hochschild 1989; Major 1993).

Furthermore, defining propensity to do housework in terms of 'needs' seems risky to me. Several of the men indicated that they 'preferred' to schedule housework around their other activities and work but that their partners 'needed' to clean the house when it was dirty. Men in unequal relationships frequently legitimate the inequality of their relationships in terms of their partners' 'preferences' to have cleaner houses, arguing that the women are merely acting on their 'preferences' by choosing to clean more than is strictly necessary (Bittman and Lovejoy 1993; Deutsch 1999; Hochschild 1989; Jamieson 1999; Thompson 1991).[133] While the men in this study clearly do not wish to take advantage of their partners, I wonder if approaching housework and parenting as 'needs' issues represents a slippery slope, especially given that these men are articulating an economy of 'needs' in which the person with the stronger 'need' should have priority. Couples can get into arguments about what 'needs' are legitimate. Also, in situations of

[133] Some of the studies on perceptions of 'fairness' include both housework and child care, while other studies restrict the focus only to housework.

scarcity (of time, energy, money, etc.), it can be difficult to ensure that the 'needs' of both partners are met. Does one person have to go into debt in order to fulfill the 'need' of the other person? How does that work toward equality if there isn't a sense of long-term reciprocity beyond the immediate situation?

Once again, Josh Lewin proves to be useful for articulating this perspective. At the end of our second interview, Josh told me a story that he said best illustrated how he and Diane negotiate in their relationship. He told me that he and Diane had recently worked out two serious issues about which they intensely disagreed by distinguishing 'preferences' from 'needs.' The first issue was whether or not to send their daughter to Hebrew school, while the second issue was whether or not to collectively purchase some land with a group of friends. He said that the issues seem to be very different but that they are actually intimately connected to each other, because they both represented cases in which one partner had a 'need' while the other partner merely had a 'preference.' In the first instance, Josh had a 'need' to send their daughter, Bella, to Hebrew school while Diane 'preferred' not to do so, and, in the second instance, Diane had a 'need' to buy the land while he 'preferred' not to do that. They decided to fulfill the 'needs' instead of the 'preferences,' so Bella will go to Hebrew school, and they joined their friends in purchasing the land. They both got something they agreed that they 'needed,' and the issues were resolved to their mutual satisfaction. While I don't really question the veracity of his claim in this instance, I do wonder about this as a long-term strategy. How does one really know when something is a 'preference' instead of a 'need?' How do couples resolve whose 'needs' will be met when people express conflicting 'needs' if there isn't agreement about what is a 'need' and what isn't? The distinction seems

potentially arbitrary.[134] While working toward equality in a relationship may be a moving target and may provoke stress and guilt, it is arguably less arbitrary. Negotiating how much inequality is too much inequality and how much inequality is just enough inequality involves considerably more uncertainty than targeting equality as the standard.

At the same time, therapeutically-informed projects definitely offer pleasures and payoffs that even strident critics of therapy such as Doug Silverwood and Mark Holland acknowledge: cultivating empathy and promoting healthier ways of being men. A focus on communication and emotional support makes it less likely that couples will be 'intimate strangers' (Mansfield and Collard 1988), dramatically differing in emotional goals for the relationship. Even if it leads some men to minimize their material contributions to domestic work, it's also probably the case that men engaging in mutual emotional support and communication represents a tremendous advancement over the more 'traditional' asymmetric division of emotional work in many couples (Duncombe and Marsden 1993). While this may represent a narrowed definition of anti-sexism when compared to that practiced by men drawing on the more politicized social justice vocabulary of motives, the emphasis on emotional connections within relationships and the interdependent notion of self-development fostered by these men allows them to represent to others and to themselves that they are, in fact, anti-sexist based on the mutually emotionally satisfying relationships they are able to construct with their women partners. Beyond that, the level of sharing of housework and parenting is still probably

[134] In recounting his story, I preserved Josh's distinction between 'needs' and 'preferences,' but I argue that it is better to dispense with the distinction altogether and just refer to 'preferences.' I'm aware that the concept of 'needs' is central to a therapeutic vocabulary of motives and that it is therefore less likely to be questioned by those who draw on such a vocabulary, but the notion of a 'need' implies fairly foundational requirements that are not subject to negotiation or *meaning-making* to be recognized as such. To treat the various choices that face people in their everyday lives represents an individualization of social issues that is consistent with the narrowing of the scope of moral concern discussed in this chapter.

generally greater than that practiced by men who insist that their partners shoulder a disproportionate share of this work. After all, they are working with 'fairness' as the benchmark for distributive justice within their relationships.

Several of the men who identify equality in their relationships to be a primary goal toward which they are working (if not always meeting) express the guilt and stress that more therapeutically-inclined men say that they don't have to feel. Prioritizing communication and openness in relationships seems more likely to guarantee that people will, in fact, meet their 'needs' in relationships. For instance, while Benjamin Moraga indicated to me that communication is very important to him and that he does the majority of emotional care-taking work in his relationship with Lila, he wasn't completely able to be sure how she feels about some of the things we discussed in the interview, because Lila doesn't always talk to him about how she feels and what she thinks. Advocates of therapeutic practices would likely argue that Benjamin and Lila would benefit from working on communication, and Benjamin probably would agree with them given that he is trying to work on this with her.

Then again, as the men involved in the mythopoetic men's movement demonstrate, absolving oneself of guilt without working to make change in ruling relations represents a depoliticizing move that could make change less likely. Sure, it is a good thing not to hate yourself even when you find that you are sexist or racist or whatever, but shouldn't we do something else with that besides resting with that acknowledgement?

Men who prioritize fairness in their relationships stress instead practices of vigilance (Blaisure and Allen 1995) that allow them to match their relative contributions

with their partners. It's significant that several of these men talked about how difficult this is and how badly it makes them feel for failing to meet their standards for equity/equality. It's also interesting to note that failure to meet those standards was not uncommon even with an explicit focus on justice and that the most articulate advocate for a therapeutically-informed project had turned away from a project oriented toward equality for this reason. It seems self-evident to Josh that this was the right decision for him and, by implication, it should be the right decision for other men as well. However, other men focused on justice don't seem to agree, stressing that one can't overcome male privilege without explicitly working to produce egalitarianism by working against the tendencies toward inequality.

CHAPTER 7 – 'NEW' FATHERS[135]

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I focus on the fathers in my sample. I begin by considering the optimistic imagery of the 'New Father,' and I discuss how this imagery promotes unrealistic assumptions about the extent to which men have changed as fathers. I then examine what the men told me about their experiences and practices as fathers. As I show, a couple of the men honestly told me that they parent in fairly conventional ways. Others are quite up front about the fact that, while they may be regarded by others as 'New Fathers' who share parenting equally, and while they may do more than 'traditional' fathers, they are not actually doing as much work as their partners and wives. It is clear that these men parent differently than women, suggesting that there have been limitations in the extent to which they have degendered their masculinity projects in the context of childcare. For some though, there is a clear indication of exactly the kind of involved fatherhood that is much touted in discussions of 'New Fathers' and also evidence that the specific parenting practices used by these men are not discernibly different from those of their partners and wives. One of the most significant outcomes of this, beyond the possibility of 'upgraded' relationships for women and more emotional connection for men, is that men's anti-sexist masculinity projects are somewhat open-ended in the sense that their children can be influenced to effect feminist change too.

[135] Of the ten men who were fathers, two were only able to commit to one interview, and two more became unavailable for the follow-up interviews due to circumstances beyond their control.

'NEW' FATHERS

In the early to mid 1980s, optimism about the possibilities of a new, involved fatherhood ran high, as evidenced by the publication at that time of popular accounts of fathering such as Bob Greene's (1984) *Good Morning, Merry Sunshine: A Father's Journal of His Child's First Year* and Martin Greenberg's (1985) *The Birth of a Father*. Unfortunately, these accounts were long on enthusiasm about the experience of being a father and scant on actual evidence of a father's presence in the home with his children. Still, by 1987, Joseph Pleck had identified the emergence of the cultural image of the 'New Father.' As he wrote,

> This new father differs from older images of involved fatherhood in several key respects: he is present at the birth; he is involved with his children as infants, not just when they are older; he participates in the actual day-to-day work of child care, and not just play; he is involved with his daughters as much as his sons (Pleck 1987:93)

Commenting on this shift, McMahon (1999) has argued that the emergence of the imagery of the 'New Father' was a legacy of 'New Man' imagery and that the 'New Father' image was, in many respects, more successful in becoming a positive representation of men, because "representations of the new, participant and nurturing fathers are more common and are spread over a much greater range of sites" (p. 117) than was ever the case with representations of the 'New Man.' The 'New Father' label has been widely applied to fathers and directed *at* fathers, promoting a belief that fathers have changed to become more highly involved with their children. Where the 'New Man' image failed to appeal to most men due to the feminizing themes of domesticity, narcissism, and sensitivity, the 'New Father' image has been much more accepted based on the assertion that involved fatherhood, while unlike that of 'traditional' fathers, is still

masculine – that fathers purportedly make special contributions to childrearing that are necessary for the normal and healthy development of children (McMahon 1999).

One of the central problems in this optimism based on imagery is that notions of shared parenting do not have to involve actual equality in household and childcare tasks, though they *might*; a rhetoric of gender convergence (with women becoming more assertive and men becoming more nurturing and receptive but still masculine) often distracts attention from the persistence of gender differences with little actual change.[136] As McMahon (1999) asserts, "it turns out that incorporating men into a rhetoric previously reserved for motherhood does not seem to undermine its ability to legitimate the sexual division of childcare" (p. 131). When scholars examine men's actual parenting practices, they typically find that the imagery of the 'New Father' represents what we think men *should do* as opposed to what they *actually do* in practice (Backett 1987; Wall and Arnold 2007; Craig 2006; LaRossa 1988, 1997; McMahon 1999; Ranson 2001; Segal 1990). Most studies find that, while the presence of children in the household has been found to be positively related to time spent in household labor (in addition to childcare time) for both women and men, the effect appears to be much stronger for women (Brines 1994; Gershuny and Robinson 1988; Haddad 1994; Presser 1994; Sanchez and Thomson 1997; Shelton 1992; South and Spitze 1994). Indeed, it is very common for 'involved' fathers to actually be involved mostly as "helpers" (Coltrane 1989, 1996; Deutsch 1999; Gerson 1993). As expected, one of the biggest reasons for this, beyond men's own reluctance to take on equally shared parenting, is that workplaces continue to be fairly family-*un*friendly, particularly for fathers who are actively

[136] Increased paternal involvement in the lives of children without substantial changes in the quality of fathering would seem to me to pose more of a problem than a solution, particularly if one wishes to see children valuing hierarchy less as opposed to more.

discouraged from taking off time to be with families (Hochschild [1997] 2000; Ranson 2001; Singley and Hynes 2005).

However, equally sharing fathers who actually *do* parent in degendered ways gainsay the use of the term 'fathering,' because they come to provide more sensitive and nurturing care giving (Deutsch 1999; Coltrane 1989). Change is possible, because even men who had previously been prepared to be 'traditional' fathers are completely capable of 'mothering' in situations of necessity, such as the death of a spouse (Risman 1998b). Likewise, Coltrane (1989) attributes "maternal thinking" to men who have been transformed by the process of becoming equally involved parents.

It's also the case that couples who equally share parenting make it possible for their children to be more sensitive to inequality. For example, in their study of feminist parenting, Mack-Canty and Wright (2004) found that, in addition to practicing non-sexist parenting, feminist parents[137] engaged in parenting that "enables their children to become conscious of and to challenge hierarchy and oppression generally" (p. 876). In particular, these families went beyond trying to provide alternative gender models for children by explicitly working to change accepted patterns of hierarchal authority within the family (male privilege and unnecessary parental authority). Mack-Canty and Wright (2004) assert that, by removing as much hierarchy from the family as possible, these families foster the empowerment of all members of the family, including children.

Likewise, in their study of children reared in feminist households, Risman and Myers (1997) argued that, while there were inconsistencies in how likely the children

[137] Feminist parents were those who those who identified with feminist principles and who parented from feminist perspectives.

were to notice and assert the fact that boys and girls are different[138] (while asserting that adult men and women are the same), the children were overall 'post-gendered.' As they wrote,

> These children are not post-gendered in that they obliterate the differences between boys and girls; on the contrary, they embrace and occasionally celebrate them. They are post-gendered because they do not use these differences as dichotomies nor to be used as a basis for ranking each other. What all of these children have in common is a focus on kindness and gentleness. They can be masculine or feminine or both, but they are all humanitarian (P. 249).

These children must actively negotiate the meaning of gender, and this gives Risman and Myers hope that, with time, the children may come to recognize that they are able to completely recreate their ideas about gender for themselves, though they do not believe that, even if they do so, they will "offer a viable threat to the existing social structure" (p. 250).

SPENDING TIME WITH CHILDREN

Most of the men enjoyed spending time with their children, and they struggle to make the time for this to be possible. Generally, this means scaling back from work to facilitate spending time with them, though the men vary in how much this is a possibility. The men varied in how much they were able or willing to do this. For instance, Paul Denbigh chose to open a daycare with his then partner to allow him to be with his son all of the time. Charlie Adkins and his partner shifted into part-time work to be able to ensure that one of them was at home with their children on a daily basis. Other men maintained the jobs they had when their children were born, but they negotiated time with their children in various ways.

[138] Risman and Myers (1997) attribute this to the inability of feminist parents to completely screen their children from sexist influences outside the family.

As I have discussed, Josh Lewin represents a man who intentionally made choices to spend time with his family instead of maximizing his career options. He learned from his effort to become a successful fiction writer that it wasn't worth the tradeoff. In order to make sure that both he and Diane get enough time with their daughter, Bella, they take turns balancing work and family in different ways. He said,

> This is an example of the kinds of things we do. Diane needed to go to [another country]. That's for her work. … That was great. We all went, … and then Bella and I left Diane there and came home. And Diane had three more weeks to work on her own stuff. … You know, that kind of thing works out really well … in a number of ways. It gives Diane her space to do her work. It gives me time alone with Bella, which is necessary. Which I sometimes struggle to create, you know. … When the three of us are together, Bella relies more on her mother than she does on me. And I tend to step back. … There are certain things that Bella and I have a tradition of. So, she'll come to me for certain things. … Um, but the balance is that they're a little more connected … to each other, and Bella's more likely to go to her … for help or something. … So, it's real important for me to have those times in which she's dependent on me completely. When I have to deal with her. … So, those three weeks were real important to me. And I didn't do anything else. … My main thrust for those three weeks was, 'OK, I'm going to take care of Bella. And I'm going to make sure that I take care of her, AND I'm going to try to make sure I can do my own stuff too.' Because … part of taking care of her is being able to do my stuff and her do her stuff and also get together. That's part of the balance I try to create. … It's real important that we renew that and keep doing that. So Diane gets her time as a professional, and I get my … concentrated time as a parent, um, and then it switches. … That's the balance that you're always aiming for.

It's clear that Josh is performing far more than just 'helping' Diane in parenting. While he indicates that Bella is a little more connected to Diane, this does not necessarily indicate that Diane is the primary parent. The fact that Josh works to spend time with Bellah one on one to maintain a close connection marks him as an involved father. Of course, it is important to recognize that the fact that he is currently a graduate student makes it somewhat easier for him to structure his time in this way during the summer.

Gary Estes and his wife have made a different choice, because what makes it possible for him to pursue tenure as a professor is that Kate is staying home with their daughter, Serena, for at least four years. Gary told me that the decision for her to stay home was made years ago. They discussed these issues when Kate was finished with her Master's degree and was working in a fairly well-paid position and when he was still in graduate school and very much uncertain about his future job prospects. He says that they decided then that the person with the lower income at the time their first child was born would stay home with the child. At the time, it seemed to them not at all clear that he would be the one who would out-earn her. As it turns out though, the decision to pursue his opportunity to secure a tenure-track position in Columbia set them up for a more gendered arrangement, because Kate gave up a well-paying and very satisfying position in Berkeley to relocate here for Gary's job. She was unable to secure full-time work utilizing her education in Columbia, so, when she got pregnant, she was the one to stay home. It is true, however, that this matches the desire she has expressed numerous times to him that she be able to stay home with their children, so it is not something she experiences as an imposition.

Over time, Gary has been less able to spend time away from work, particularly since he started the tenure process. Even so, his career provides for a level of flexibility that many others do not provide, and he takes advantage of opportunities to go home during the day to see Serena. As he explained to me, a big reason for this is that he is fascinated by his daughter, and he misses her terribly when he is away from her. I discuss his engrossment with his daughter later in this chapter.

Ray Morrow enjoys somewhat less flexibility, though he does have summers off to spend with his children, which he does. As a new assistant principal, he has to work longer hours than he did when he was a teacher. This has reduced his ability to be home with his children during weekdays, and, as I have already recounted, it has led to him scaling back on how much routine work he does around the house. At the same time, he is still very involved, albeit not equally, in the everyday care of his sons, perhaps more so than Gary. It is unlikely that he would have reduced his level of involvement without the increased job responsibilities, and what is important about the fact that this is happening now is that he forewent earlier opportunities to take assistant principal positions in order to relocate for Jenna's career. The shift in their relative contributions represents a long-term attempt to work out a measure of equity between the two of them in their careers.

In contrast, Brian Mason represents a father who has done considerably less to accommodate time spent with his children in order to pursue his career. He acknowledged to me that his approach to work and family has been very unbalanced, because he privileged work over time spent with family. He somewhat regrets that today, and he has begun recognizing that it is possible to scale back at work without suffering negative consequences. As he said,

> It has gotten better. It used to be very unbalanced, I think. Well, I would have liked, while I was pursuing tenure, to not be so obsessed about trying to publish stuff in journals. I still spend A LOT of time working. … It is possible for me to spend less time working and probably achieve most of what I want. It wouldn't be that big of a sacrifice, probably. I've been noticing that I can do that lately. I could be more balanced I think. I spend too little time with my boys. I would like to spend more time with them, and I think I would like to spend more time with Ada. We are getting more time now. The problem with the time I spend with Ada is that is the time I spend also with my kids. … Charlie Adkins and Frances work half time so that they take care of their kids an equal amount of time.

> I couldn't work half time and actually keep my job. [laughs] I could probably do more than I do.

According to Brian, the significant factor that has allowed him to make the choice to be less involved in parenting is that Ada's family is wealthy. Because she hasn't needed to work at a full-time paid job, she has been able to stay at home and work on her fiction writing full-time, which has left her 'available' to spend more time with the children. He said,

> It has been mostly her with the kids. Oh yeah. Much more than me. I haven't sacrificed much of my work for the ability to have kids. … If she would have wanted a career, I don't know how much of that is her deciding not to have that career or if just not wanting to make an issue about it. Cuz … her family has some money. So it is not as though we need her to work. If we needed her to work, things would be a lot different. So it is a luxury to do this. The income we have gotten from her family, … she looks at it as though, 'I get to stay at home and write. I get to start this political [non-profit organization]. I can spend all this time with the kids. And so, if I don't want to do all these things, I don't have to make more money than I'm making.' She doesn't have to have a career. … We don't have to make those choices. We just don't. … I don't know how we would react [if she had had to work full-time in a paid job outside the home]. … I know myself and her almost well enough to say that I would be working a lot less. I'm pretty sure. I would probably really resent it. But we would be okay. [But] we don't have to deal with those issues because of the situation.

Brian admitted that Ada wants him to spend less time working when he's not at the office and spending more time with the children and doing more work around the house. He said,

> Occasionally, she will, OK, REGULARLY, she will yell at me for working so much. [Brad: At home?] Yes. When I'm at home, because I've been working all day, and then I come home, and then I'm suddenly writing something. There are dishes to be washed and so on. There are all these household chores that have to be done. We have to do them. And I will be, you know, working. So that's, uh, that's an issue there sometimes. But she's got me well trained. Usually, she doesn't need to say much. Actually, yeah. Maybe I'll feel a little bit of anger when I have to go off to do whatever task it is. [Brad: Because it's disruptive?] Yeah,

> because I was just thinking, but you've got to stop! And, uh, yeah, but my better self usually wins if that happens.

Partly because Ada is going to have less time now that she has created the political non-profit organization, Brian intends to spend more time with the kids. Talking about that led him into talking about how he has typically spent time with them in the past. The contrast with Ada is quite clear: he fathers, while she mothers. He said,

> I'm actually going to step up a lot of the things I do with the kids this year. I think Clay and I are going to take piano lessons, and then we are going to do this junior Lego league where you build a robot. … I will lead a … couple of his friends and so on to build and compete with your robots. It's like a regional and national competition. They build it themselves. You just be there while they build it. But, you know, right now MY ACTIVITIES with my kids are MAINLY leading. … Fishing with them or, and, uh, [long pause] yelling at them. … Picking him up from school. Taking him to school and daycare and, you know, that sort of stuff. There is a difference in the way I do things with the kids. For me, I am much more of, uh, get them into situations where I can corral them and then let just sort of let the mayhem go on, but Ada does things WITH them. So she will take the kids to Sparky's for ice cream. She is always talking to them about stuff. I'm typically talking AT them. She is talking WITH them. She will take them to the library and do things with them. SHE sets up the play dates. I don't set up the play dates. She is often the person arranging for there to be other kids around. She arranges the babysitting. She typically takes care of A LOT of that stuff. Our gender roles are pretty set.

Although he had initially talked about his relationship with Ada as being balanced, when I asked directly about balance, he told me that he was thinking more in terms of the person he wishes he could be than in terms of the person he is. As he said,

> I'm thinking of it from my own perspective. Actually, I'm thinking of it in terms of what I hope to be as a person. I see people do it better than I do it I think. I wish I was more like that. It is to a certain extent. It takes a little bit of effort to actually break out of whatever, you know, is naturally set. Where there is effort, there is failure [laughs] where I'm involved. Now you know why I'm in the job I'm in. I did the thing that was most pleasant and easiest for me to do. I found a way to get paid to do it, so that is my M.O. The path of least resistance. I'm not entirely weak-willed. It is not just that. I want to be the sort of person that wants

> [balance with my wife]. That takes pleasure in that. Then I think, 'I'm not.' I don't really want to do that, you know. That makes me think, 'Well, would I have to make myself do it? And then, maybe I'll become the person that likes that.'

He told me that he actually has experience to suggest to him that it is possible to change and to want to change. Ada forces him to spend time with the kids from time to time. He always resists, but then he finds himself having fun with them.

> The truth is … Ada will drag me to something. Make me do something with the kids, for instance, instead of work, and I will have all this fun. So, [our group of friends] bought a piece of land in the Ozarks on this creek that goes into the Current. It is absolutely beautiful. We bought this property not even a month ago. I was thinking, 'I'm not going to spend the weekends down there. I can't believe we bought it.' But really just regret after having decided to spend lots of money – because it was a lot of money. It is 40 acres. Really beautiful forest. We all went in on this property together to build a group place. I really thought, 'Brian, you are getting yourself into something here. You are not going to have any time. You'll want to work. You have to take some time off to take advantage of this.' But we have been down there twice now and spent this last weekend down there. It was so worth it. That is an example of I don't want to do something that is actually taking me away from work. Now I'm happy that I did it. I'm more likely to do it next time. Same thing is true with the kids. I don't want to take the kids to the park. I end up taking the kids to the park and having this great time playing with them. [Brad: You feel like you should do it again.] Right or want to do it again. It is usually the first time that it is painful.

Somewhat like Brian, Joel has privileged his work over time spent with his family. Despite the sheer amount of time Joel has devoted to work over the years though and despite the fact that he initially did not actively desire becoming a father though, Joel feels that being a father represents his most successful accomplishment in his life. As he said,

> If you'd asked me at the age of twenty, 'Where are you like to be most successful? In your academic work or as a father?' I would have probably laughed at the question. [chuckles] Um, BUT, at this point, I have to say that I've been more successful as a father than I have been at

> my academic work, even though I've probably put a lot more time and energy into my academic work.

It seems that the men's attempts to make time to spend with their children are based on a mixture of constraint and voluntarism. Job and career responsibilities were significant in influencing how much time men had available for their children. At the same time, it is clear that some men made the time by opting out of standard career paths or by entering into careers that provided an inherent flexibility.

SHARED PARENTING

As I have indicated, some of the men are so highly involved in the parenting of their children that their arrangements are best characterized as equally shared parenting. These men share all aspects of raising their children together, which includes routine care-giving work. For some, such as Charlie Adkins and Roger Blackburn, this was a matter of choice. For Ted Evans, however, this was initially prompted by becoming disabled and unable to work. Fortunately, he discovered that it allowed him to appreciate more fully the benefits of being a fully involved parent.

Charlie Adkins and Frances share parenting about as equally as they can possibly manage. As I mentioned earlier, Charlie worked out a job share, while Frances dropped down to part-time at her job. They alternate days at home to take turns at being home with their children, which produces equal sharing by design (and by necessity). As he said,

> I think it's pretty egalitarian. … It really has to be. … When they're really young, you know, you have to do whatever needs to be done. You can't really not change a dirty diaper. … That's always been a really key part of our relationship. You know, an equal distribution of duties. You know, of things that are considered sort of work, and … not so much fun. … We've always tried to really divide those fairly and so that neither of us is feeling like, 'Oh, you know, I've always got to do this crappy job.'

> … But with the kid duties, yeah. I think those are pretty well divided out. Just based on whoever was home at the time.

Roger Blackburn has also always equally shared parenting, and he continued to do so after his divorce from his first wife, Kay. While still married, he and Kay worked alternating shifts, which enabled them to equally share childcare. As he pointed out to me, there was no other alternative, not that he would have sought to get out of parenting in the first place. Because he worked in the afternoons, he took care of Chelsea, their daughter, in the mornings. Chelsea would wake up before him, so he would get up when he heard her and then do everything that needed to be done to care for her: changing diapers, bathing her, feeding her, and so on. Kay pumped her breast milk, so Roger could nurse their daughter Chelsea. In response to my question about why he took on parenting in that way, he pointed out that he had been engaged in care-giving work for some time by that point in his paid jobs. As he said,

> It really and truly was just a matter of fact thing. … The fact that I was a parent and that she had care needs just, you know, I fulfilled my role as her caregiver and her parent. … I don't remember having any conflict about, 'This should not be my role.' Nothing like that. It was just what needed to be done. [Brad: Sure, sure. I'm asking, because a lot of men don't … take on equally shared parenting. And so, I'm just curious, you know, what it is that men do. Not that I don't think men should.] Well, prior to being a parent, I had held jobs as a respite care provider and had been exposed to bathing people and helping people in the bathroom and caring for wounds and doing things that I think a lot of young men … don't have exposure to. So, as a quite young man, you know, 19 years old, I had already bathed and changed tampons in a 55 year old woman. You know? So the changing diapers and the other things that someone might be uncomfortable with if they haven't been exposed to it all, that was just nothing.

After the divorce, Roger and Kay worked out joint custody of Chelsea, and Roger continued his intensive involvement in Chelsea's care. Even after Carrie moved in with him, he continued to do all of the parenting for Chelsea when she was at his home,

because Carrie has been more of a friend to Chelsea than a step-mother according to Roger. Carrie does do some disciplinary work and does establish rules, but mainly she's been someone with whom Chelsea could sing, go to the movies, go shopping, and play.

Likewise, Paul Denbigh has been a very highly involved father. He currently "co-parents" three children with two women. He had a son with Julie and moved in with her, and they began co-parenting. In fact, the purpose running the daycare facility in the first place was to make it possible for both of them to be present for their son all the time. After they broke up, they continued to co-parent their son together. Julie had another child with another man, and Paul became a parent to that girl as well. Then he moved in with Julie as friends. During this time, he started a relationship with Cassandra, who moved in with Paul and Julie for a while. Although Cassandra was not supposed to be able to get pregnant, she did. Eventually, the living arrangement became unworkable, so Cassandra moved out, but Paul remained living with Julie as friends and also maintained his co-parenting arrangement with Cassandra, even though they no longer get along very well. Paul Denbigh elaborated on how he co-parented with Julie and, later, with Cassandra. He said,

> As far as co-parenting, … we both loved our child very much. Our son. And, and, um, and I wanted to be a big part of his life. I didn't want to be a person who was working away from his son all the time and just coming back. … So the daycare seemed like a good way to do it. And, as far as co-parenting, … Neil would spend time with me over at the [the Catholic men's homeless shelter]. … He stayed with me a couple nights a week, and … you know, on the weekends. … We both wanted to be around our son, so we did a business together for those years, and, you know, we've always had a good friendship. [Although it was hard on Julie when I broke off our romantic relationship with her], it doesn't prevent us from co-parenting together. … We've always tried to talk about stuff, you know. Any kind of ideas we had. … We have a fairly similar way of looking at parenting. I mean, she's more materially based than I am, you know, so … we don't share a banking account or anything like that.

> That's one way we've tried to [chuckles slightly], you know, get along. … I mean, … we, you know, try to share all expenses, you know, and so, … she's spent more than I have I know, um, as it works out. … With Cassandra, it's a little more challenging over communicating and, um, you know, we don't really have a friendship really in particular. I mean, you know, she knows that I'll help her out with anything at all. I mean, if there's an issue. … And Marie's with me for just about half time anyway.

I asked Paul to elaborate on the co-parenting. I said,

> [Brad: It's literally co-parenting?] Yeah. [Brad: As opposed to the way many couples work out a division?] Yeah. … It gets kind of complicated with, especially this other job, you know. I mean, Cassandra does a really good job. She is very organized and so puts out a schedule, you know, with getting my feedback on my hours and, you know. … She has the expenses of her house. … And I contribute … like a hundred and fifty dollars a month plus, you know, I take care of her at my house, and she doesn't give me anything for that. I don't want her to. … We have another friend who moved in too, so we have three adults and three kids. Or two kids and a half at our house. … So. Yeah, it seems like it's working in some ways. … Marie … would love to have us both in the same house, but [we've explained to her that we can't]. … We all love the kids. I mean, Julie loves Marie too, you know. She's like an aunt to her. … And Cassandra feels OK about the woman I've been seeing, you know, so yeah. And, you know, we wish each other happiness. I mean, at least I've said that to her. I mean, I think she wishes that for me, although sometimes she's a little spiteful [chuckles], but, eh, you know? It's OK. She's entitled. … I broke off that relationship. … The housemate thing was really difficult.

Paul and Julie never considered an abortion, and they committed to working out a relationship that would be positive for raising a child. They maintained that even after their romantic relationship ended. He said,

> [Julie and I have] been housemates for the last eight years anyway. And we actually each have partners, so it's kind of interesting, but … we all get along. [chuckles] … We never even thought about really aborting the child, you know. … We both were raised Catholic. … Wever really spoke in terms of, 'Well, you know, this is a life. You know, this is sacred. Dadada.' You know. We both believe that as part of who we ARE, but, uh, we both realized that we wanted to raise the child, or we wanted to, you know, to give the young being a chance. … We both thought about trying to, you know, make a relationship work together.

For Ted Evans, the experience of becoming a father was very important, because it helped him to work through the guilt and disappointment that he felt about being unable to work after becoming disabled. Prior to the children and being forced to quit working, he worked many long hours, and he loved his work. He was hit hard by having to stay home. As he said,

> For the most part I'm okay with it. I still have issues with not working and not bringing home the bacon. There is still part of that sexist ideal that, 'I am the man. I should be bringing home the income. Or at least my fair share.' It doesn't eat at me as much as it used to. But, I laugh at myself even, I think well, I'm not really that way, but, there is still a part of me that is ingrained that, you know, growing up, that was the way it was. Man got the job. Took care of all the bills. Women took care of the family and the house and the kids. Yeah. So there is still a little of that in me. [laughs] So I have some guilt issues every once in a while about that. It is not too bad.

When he and Bev had children though, he was able to experience highly involved fatherhood, because he became the primary parent for the children. This was somewhat transformative for him, because he is now thankful for the opportunity not to work so that he can stay home with his children. As he said,

> Time more than anything made me realize that, you know, being the one that worked and brought home the income, you know, may not be as important as I made it out to be in the beginning. The person that stays at home is equally as important, um. After we had kids, you know, I just realized how BLESSED I was that I could stay home and be with the kids. You know. Now I'm happy as HECK that I'm not working. Although I wished we had two incomes and freedom with money, but I'm quite fine with it now that I don't work. … I think mentally [becoming a father] saved me a lot of guilt issues that I would have had if they weren't here. Cuz now I have a purpose. I DO have a job. And it is full-time. [laughs] Even though I don't get paid for it, it is still extremely beneficial. Just so long as one of us is with the kids, that is all that matters.

Being an involved father also reinforces his sense of himself as not like 'manly men.' While it used to anger him that other men would look down on him for being a stay at home father, now he feels pity for other men who don't get it. As he said,

> Just talking about housework, laundry, you know. The color of your baby's poop or whatever, any of those things A MANLY MAN would think are feminine or below anything they would be caught doing. You know. Like some guys can be judgmental when they look at other people who do those kinds of things. A MAN shouldn't be doing that kind of stuff. Like one of Bev's coworkers said to her, … 'I'm the president. [My wife] is vice president. I make all the decisions. She supports me in my decisions. She helps care for the family. The kids are below us. That is the way our family is.' 'Cause he's the man, and he makes the decisions. I don't think that is a good way to go about life. [laughs] … I'm sure he looks at me as being not as much of a man as he is, because I stay at home and deal with the kids. Do the housework. Do all that stuff. Things he would probably never do. Or think that a man should be doing. [Brad: How does that make you feel?] … It PISSED me off a little bit in the beginning. But anymore, I don't really care. Again, I feel so lucky, because I get to be home with my kids that I don't really care what anyone else thinks. If they feel that way, then I feel sorry for them. You know. That they are that blind to the way things really should be.

It seems significant that the men who were the most highly involved in practicing shared parenting were those who were available to spend the time doing care-giving work. Obviously, Charlie and Paul exerted the most choice in this, because they made decisions about work and career based on their desire to be highly present in their children's everyday lives. Roger, who worked alternating shifts with his then partner, and Ted, who was disabled and unable to work, did less to intentionally scale back or otherwise reorganize their work schedules than either Charlie or Paul, but they were no less intentional in working out a shared parenting arrangement. Clearly, they could have resisted doing routine care-giving and domestic work had they wanted to opt for that route, but neither did. Based on this, I suggest that, while the constraint of family-

unfriendly workplaces may be very significant in discouraging shared parenting, it need not be so.

THE INFLUENCE OF FATHERS

By and large, the fathers I interviewed conceived of themselves as explicitly and intentionally parenting in new ways that depart from how they were fathered by their fathers. In particular, they wanted to distance themselves from the pattern of emotional distance and lack of involvement practiced by their fathers. Josh Lewin provides a good example. He explained to me that the lack of connection with his father is probably the reason he's interested in masculinity and why being a father is so important to him. He said,

> As a writer, … all my work was about that relationship [with my father] in a lot of ways. … In one way or another. Um, well, it was also about my relationship to my sister and mother, but it was all about those relationships. But there was a big part of it was family and fathers. … [The] lack of connection and the struggle for connection between. … And then somehow that ceased to be, you know, that big an issue in my life. It's still a submerged issue. It's still there. … It comes out in certain areas. You know? … Um, it's probably a lot of why I'm interested in masculinity. It's probably a lot of why fathering is so important to me.

According to him, since he wasn't fathered by his own father, it is important to him to be a good father to his daughter so that she doesn't have to experience the sense of absence that he experienced. He said,

> It's also not good for men, … especially in terms of like family stuff and fathering. … Men aren't taught to be concerned with that, um, as much as they should, because of how important it is I think. And how important it is for me in my own life. … That was something that was completely lacking for me. You know, that sense of being fathered and having a father who was involved in raising me, and, you know, who I could look to. I didn't have that. … And I want to make sure my daughter has that, you know, and that's real important.

At the same time, while most of the men indicated that they wanted to parent their children differently than they themselves were fathered by their fathers, not all men are equally successful in making this happen. Ray Morrow is a good example of this. He feels guilty about the fact that he is often too impatient with his sons and yells at them too frequently. This is especially ironic for him given that he has learned through his training to be very patient with young children at school. He said,

> You asked about parenting styles. [sighs] You know, I'm so positive at school, but, by the time I come home, I commit a lot of assumicide where I'm like, 'You ought to know better. You should know this.' You know? … Um, and I lose my patience a lot quicker. I become my dad. I can't believe I yell.

He's capable of taking the time to use the behavior management repertoire that he developed as a teacher, but he's often too tired to be consistent with his own children. He regards Jenna as somewhat superior in this regard, and he looks to her for assistance in parenting the way he believes he should parent. As he said,

> Um, but when I consciously think about it, I do the conscious discipline work that we use in school. You know, focus on what you want and not what you don't want. Um. And it's amazing, because, when you do, it works marvelously. Um, but Jenna has helped me a lot in terms of my own parenting in terms of, you know, uh, just being consistent. You know, it's funny, because, in my classroom, I am, but then, when I get home, I'm just too tired to think about it really. You know. Again, I feel like, 'You should know. You come from a good family.' But again, you can't assume kids know how to do stuff. You have to actually keep teaching it over and over and over. So. Um, but she is very patient with them. Um. And it's very … good! … So I think together we make a good team I guess. [chuckles] Unless we are making our kids like schizophrenic, because they don't know WHAT is going to happen. [chuckles]

Ray admitted that he scares his son Eli, and it pains him to admit that this is what his father did to him and his brothers. He said,

> I think Eli is scared of me when I am angry. Like I just pick him up and put him in his bedroom, and I slam the door rather than just closing it. And you know, he's in there, 'I'm ready! I'm ready! [quavering voice]' And I go in there, and I'm in his face like, you know, 'You canNOT hit your brother. Do you understand? You do not hit people. We need to have safe hands in our house. No one should feel scared.' You know, of course, I'm screaming at him, you know, 'No one should feel scared.' Meanwhile, it's like, 'This is exactly what my dad did.' You know? He made us scared. Um. But it was his way of disciplining [chuckles], and boy we towed the line. You know?

Even so, while Ray has difficulty being completely consistent in rejecting his father's example, he spends a great deal of time with his children, talking to them, singing with them, and playing with them. It is clear that he is struggling to make changes to be able to give them the experience of an emotionally warm and inviting home that he himself did not experience.

It is obvious to me that the fathers of the men I interviewed continue to exert a strong influence upon them in how they parent their own children, even when these men wish to distance themselves from the examples set by their own fathers. Generally, this involves sustained attempts to make themselves more emotionally and physically available to their children. At the same time, not all fathers find this equally easy to do, as Ray demonstrates.

PARENTING FOR EQUALITY

One of the most significant findings about the fathers in this study is that they are parenting for equality. As Josh points out, this does not necessarily mean indoctrinating their children into believing a specific political ideology, but, instead, providing particular experiences that encourage their children to develop respect for diverse others and modeling how to share housework and parenting.

Josh Lewin does not want to impose his political beliefs on his daughter. He defines feminism as about respecting his daughter's ability to choose for herself the kind of life that she wants to lead. As he said,

> What's most fundamentally important … [short pause] is that people have the opportunity to build the life that they want. That's what I'm trying to say. … Beyond my own particular preferences for style of, you know, gender, … I really believe in … egalitarian sort of principles and attempting to, you know, kind of make them turn out and all that. But, if she were to grow up and decided to become a housewife and a stay at home mother, um, I'd be worried about that choice obviously. I'd be afraid, because, to me, that would represent something that might be depressing and, you know, 'cause I have my own biases about what that is, but more important than her choosing a career is her being able to choose. And for her whole generation. … That's the crux of civil rights, feminism, all of those things. It's about people not having to be put in boxes. … I don't want her to be pigeon-holed by the stereotypes and discrimination and the history of oppression that exists. … At the same time, I don't want to flip that oppression, you know, and that's what can happen. When you flip it and like, 'You have to be a lesbian feminist with short hair.' I don't WANT that! I would be happy if that were the case, but I don't want her to feel that she has to have that either. But I want her to know she can be that. [short pause] And I want her to SEE that that is very much a part of our lives. You know, and then, you know, she's gotta find her own way. … And the next generation has to find their own way. I would just hope that they wouldn't be so biased as … our world is right now.

Instead of telling Bella who she should be and how she should live her life, Josh attempts to model equality for her.

> You know, there IS a lot of gendering going on even in our family, even with the ideology, but, at some level, there's some basic things that I really take PRIDE in that I think are GOOD. They're really good. And … Bella has no idea that there are men out there who don't cook and don't clean. … She has NO CLUE. She would never have guessed that. … You know, she expects that a man is gonna do a lot of the work and is going to try to, you know, contribute as much as anyone else in the household. … So that's important. She also knows that, you know, a woman works, and it's important. It's part of what she does! … She never sees a woman stay home. You know, that's not something she knows. Mom's got a job, and so do her friends. … It's important that she knows, um, a lot of gay people. That's important to me. You know, that she grows up with that,

> and, you know, despite all the messages that she's getting, and even though stuff can come out of her mouth. … We are modeling, you know, at least somewhat greater diversity. Not as much racial diversity as I would like. Um, that's something that's been difficult for us here in Columbia. … But … at least … a certain alternative outlook on the world, you know. One in which politics is very much involved. You know, and sustainable living as much as possible. Um, you know, tolerance for people who are different. Um, other than George Bush. Um, you know, there's not a lot of tolerance for him.

For Ted Evans, it is much the same. While he didn't stress that he was going to avoid imposing his preferences on his children,[139] he indicated very clearly that he is trying to parent his boys to respect women. He had told me that he is definitely anti-sexist but not feminist. As we discussed this, he revealed that he locates feminism with the women's movement in the 1970s so that it isn't as relevant for him today. To be sure I understood what he meant, I asked, "In terms of … wanting to produce gender equality and respecting women, those are things you are on board with?" He replied, "VERY MUCH SO. I want my kids to never think differently. That it is OK no matter what you do. If you want to be a nurse, that is fine. Doing the cooking, doing the cleaning is fine. That is just part of life." In particular, he's very happy that his son currently has both boy and girl friends. He explained to me that he and Bev stress diversity with their older son, who was old enough to go to Montessori school. As Ted said, "I'm glad he is that way. I'm glad he doesn't just hang out with boys. But we work hard to teach him that everybody is equal. … [Brad: So you stress diversity?] Equality. Short, tall, black, white, same difference. There is just difference. Doesn't matter. Male, female. Doesn't matter."

[139] Ted expressed surprise at the fact that, even though he and Bev had provided their older son with an assortment of play options, he chose to play with fire trucks and other conventionally gendered toys. They decided not to intervene to persuade him to play with different kinds of toys, with the exception of toy guns.

These two examples are very encouraging for anyone concerned with gender inequality. As Josh and Ted demonstrate, one of the most significant implications of men's degendered parenting of their children is the prospect that they encourage (not impose) appreciation for the benefits of practicing respect for diversity and equal sharing. Their children will not need to look only to their mothers for a clear vision of how to produce healthy and/or egalitarian relationships with women and for support for the conviction that men too can do housework and care-giving.

DISCUSSION

The discourse about 'New Fathers' may be overly optimistic, as signaled early on by 'New Fathering' advocate Green (1976) who wrote that fathering is "increasingly a matter of feeling rather than feeding" (p. 182), but there are signs among the men that I interviewed of substantial change in parenting. The men were uneven in the extent to which they had moved toward highly involved and shared parenting, but the majority of them were aware of the need to parent differently than their fathers had fathered them. Most of the fathers worked to make time to spend with their children, and some of them substantially reorganized their work schedules or even choose careers that allowed them to be at home during the day to provide care for their children.

As I have mentioned previously, one of the concerns raised about anti-sexist men's masculinity projects is that they potentially represent individualized and personalized attempts at change that pose little challenge for the ruling relations of the gender order. However, as I have shown here, these men's projects are open-ended, extending their influence into the future in the form of future generations. If it is possible for men who experienced emotionally distant and uninvolved fathers to enthusiastically

take on anti-sexism in an attempt to recreate a less hierarchical world based on respect for women and a desire to explore empathy and emotional connection to others, it seems even more likely (to me) that the children of such men would take on this form of change.

CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have been concerned with accounting for the masculinity projects of a group of anti-sexist men. I looked at the experiences and relationships that make anti-sexism possible (at times even likely) for these men, and I considered the kind of change they have taken up. I found that these men engaged in sustained attempts to recompose their masculinities through degendering and regendering, even when the attempt to do so was disconcerting and difficult. I found that, in the process of engaging in this recomposing, the men demonstrated that they could change the meaning of masculinities and to produce different (and often better and more satisfying) relationships with women and other men than most men seek. I also found that, while the men identified as anti-sexist, there were interesting variations in what that means to them and how they try to carry that out, producing overlapping but also different forms of anti-sexist social change.

In Chapter Four, 'Experiences and Relationships That Support Anti-Sexist Masculinity Projects,' I considered the experiences and relationships that support their anti-sexism, noting that many of the men have been marked as different from other boys and men by others (and by themselves) and that this experience of marginality was important in influencing them to adopt dissident masculinity projects directed toward producing better relationships with women, creating more emotionally satisfying and healthier lives for themselves, and effecting anti-sexist change. I also noted the central importance of relationality for these men, pointing both to the impact of the emotional distance many of them experienced with their fathers and to the intense connection and

respect they established with the women in their lives, particularly with strong mothers and strong partners.

In Chapter Five, 'Masculinity Politics I: Degendering/Regendering and Contesting Difference/Dominance,' I treated their masculinity projects as manifestations of a form of exit politics, and I considered how the men's attempts to recompose their masculinities through contesting constructions of gender through difference/dominance influenced the kind of masculinity practices they adopted in their everyday/everynight lives. I argued that the men had in common the renunciation of hegemonic expectations for masculinity, though I also pointed out the diversity of approaches adopted to accomplish this. As I showed, some focused more on contesting difference, while others included a focus on dominance as central features of their projects. The men who problematized men's privileges and male dominance most explicitly embraced wider moral horizons that led them into an engagement with the gender order as a whole instead of focusing mostly (or entirely) on effecting personalized changes in their individual lives and relationships. In this chapter, I also considered how the discourse focused on 'New Men' influenced the projects of men by shaping their projects in ways that they could not just ignore, even if they rejected the overly optimistic, disparaging, and/or commercialized representations of their projects.

In Chapter Six, 'Masculinity Politics II: Promoting Personal Growth or Producing Equity/Equality,' I turned to the central difference between therapeutically-inclined projects and those defined by a central commitment to social justice. I demonstrated that these two projects draw on two vocabularies of motive to justify the way they resolve the moral dilemma of how to negotiate divisions of household labor and

parenting in their relationships with their partners. All of these men indicated a concern with issues of distributive justice in their relationships, and they all used the standard of 'fairness' to define what was just and what was unjust. However, as I pointed out in this chapter, the men drew on two different vocabularies: a therapeutic vocabulary of motives that defined 'fairness' in terms of 'needs' and a social justice vocabulary of motives that defined 'fairness' in terms of equity and/or equality. Though there is some overlap, these two vocabularies produce different kinds of change, because men drawing on a therapeutic vocabulary have a tendency to narrow the scope of moral concern to the emotional health of their relationships and the ability of partners in those relationships to pursue self-development, while men drawing on a social justice vocabulary focus more on issues of relative contributions of each partner in the relationship to make it more likely that distributions of work and rewards will even out in the long run.

In Chapter Seven, 'New Fathers,' I looked specifically at the parenting of the fathers in the study. As I pointed out, while some of the men fall short of equally shared parenting, those who do become highly involved fathers actually parent in degendered ways much like their partners. Though a couple men spent most of their time working, the rest of the fathers struggled to balance work and family time. Those who did the most to restructure work (or opt for jobs and careers that made this more possible) more closely approached equally shared parenting. I also observed that this more highly involved, anti-sexist parenting potentially broadens the scope of their projects by influencing their children to take up anti-sexism when they are older. Interestingly, this is also the case for men who adopt therapeutically-informed projects.

I now return to the theoretical issues that ground this study. As I established earlier, the central concern of this project is to produce relational and processual accounts of anti-sexist men's masculinity practices. I adopted a cultural analysis that focuses on practice, discourse, and narrative to produce accounts of the men's masculinity projects that respect their becoming-in-relations. Because I argue that we need to have ways of talking about the agency of active and intentional practices in order to be able to account for collective gender projects that involve social coordination and power struggles with others over the social organization of interests (Ferree 2003; Ortner 2006d; Sewell 1992), I adopt the concept of project (Connell 1987, 1995; Ortner 1996b, 2006d; Sartre 1963). I argue that acknowledging that humans are capable of establishing trajectories of action through reflecting upon and evaluating the present and projecting their intentions toward the future need not be thought of as a voluntarist conception of agency. As Emirbayer and Mische (1998) point out, "the formation of projects is always an interactive, culturally embedded process by which social actors negotiate their paths toward the future, receiving their driving impetus from the conflicts and challenges of social life" (p. 984).

My focus on projects leads me into taking a position *somewhat* (but not completely) opposed to those who prefer a more recursive conception of agency. This includes others who have adopted a practice approach to the study of gender. For instance, reflexivity is a central concern for Risman's (2004) theory of gender as a social structure. Following Giddens (1984), she too assumes that most action is a habituated and non-reflexive enactment of taken for granted gendered cultural expectations, though

she is particularly interested in identifying how people might do gender with intent (or even refuse to do gender) to produce change.

Likewise, Patricia Yancey Martin (2003) articulates an approach that emphasizes a distinction between gendering practices and the practicing of gender. She defines the first portion of her two-sided dynamic (variously "gender practices," "gendered practices," and "gendering practices") as:

> [standing] for a class of activities that are available – culturally, socially, narratively, discursively, physically, and so forth – for people to enact in an encounter or situation in accord with (or in violation of) the gender institution. Practices are per se conceptually distinct from people who practice them. They are available to be done, asserted, performed – that is, practiced – in social contexts. They are potential actions – Connell's (1995) configurations of practice – that people know about and have the capacity or agency to do, assert, perform, or mobilize (Martin 2003:354).

She defines practicing gender as "the literal activities of gender, physical and narrative" (p. 354).

While she conceives of people as "gender-agentic," she, like Giddens (1979), is careful to see their practices as "guided only sometimes by intention relative to gender" (Martin 2003:355). As she points out, this recognizes that "people can and do practice gender both while intending to and without intending to and that others often perceive them as doing so irrespective of their intentions" (p. 355). She maintains that some people, some of the time, are reflexive about their practicing of gender, while, for much of the time, most people have only a "liminal awareness" of their mobilization of masculinity/masculinities and femininity/femininities. She also asserts that subordinates are more likely to be reflective about gender practices than are superordinates.

The main issue I take with this approach to practice is that it utilizes an individualized conception of the practicing of gender (Connell 2003; Ferree 2003) that

lends itself more toward accounting for the reproduction of gender relations instead of transformation and change.[140] Despite the fact that Martin recognizes that what she calls the practicing of gender may be intentional and reflective, she places much more emphasis in her analysis on the assumption that people are so "practiced" in gender that they practice gender almost effortlessly. As Ferree (2003) points out, the analogies Martin deploys to establish a view of practicing gender as based on well-practiced skill (learning to ride a bicycle, learning to swim, learning to play the piano) are inappropriate for accounting for the relational and interactive nature of most gender practice, because they are over-learned "solo performances in which individuals acquire something uncontroversially deemed to be a skill" (p. 375). As Swidler (2001b) points out, "the crucial thing about social practices – and the feature that differentiates them from most habits – is that they are the infrastructure of repeated *interactional* patterns. They remain stable not only because habit ingrains standard ways of doing things, but because the need to engage one another forces people to return to common structures [emphasis in original]" (p. 85). Of course, we should add to Swidler's observation that, in times of change or in relationships in which people wish to effect change, "returning to common structures" is not necessarily desirable or effective.

While I agree that many of the gender practices in which people engage are routinely enacted without much reflection and that there are settings where habit and routine are more likely than either practical-evaluative agency or projectivity,[141] I argue

[140] As I argued in Chapter Two, this privileging of reproduction is a recurrent problem in the reproduction, production, and practice literatures and is by no means unique to Martin's (2003) treatment of practice (Ahearn 2001:117-120; Connell 1987:94-95, 2006:254-255; Emirbayer and Mische 1998:1003-1004; Holland and Eisenhart 1990:26-42; Ortner 1996b:1-3; Sewell 1992:13-16).

[141] Even in these settings though, practical-evaluation and reflexivity may be present even when the actual gender practices reproduce existing patterns. A good example came from Jon Webb, who talked to me about how difficult it is for him to be 'political' at work given that he teaches at an elementary school. He

that it is a mistake to heavily emphasize recursive agency as the main way gender is enacted, especially in times when the strategies of the past no longer satisfactorily resolve the persisting gendered moral dilemmas that people face. While the men in this study sometimes failed to produce intended change, the overall trajectory of their practices was directed toward a rejection of hegemonic patterns. They wished to be different kinds of men and to have different kinds of relationships than most men seek.

Connell (1995) argues that there is a mismatch between the social character of gender issues and the individualized practices with which the counter-culture generally handles them. He argues that therapeutic methods of reforming personality treat the individual as the unit to be reformed and propose more individuality as the way forward, searching for a 'true self' or a 'real me.' Connell argues that individualized projects of reforming masculinity at the level of personality are ineffective, because they do not provide stable solutions to the dilemmas that lead men to work toward change in the first place. Such an individualized practice often evokes guilt and encourages passivity. It may make some men feel better about being men, but Connell sees this as about modernizing patriarchy without contesting it. It may represent containment, not revolution, in relation to the patriarchal gender order.

As I have shown though, while anti-sexist masculinity projects influenced by therapeutic culture are likely to focus on individual men's lives, they are also focused on men's relationships. Therefore, it is not completely accurate to assert that therapeutically-informed projects treat the individual as the unit of change, since they are fundamentally relational, though the emphasis on reform may not be as far off the mark,

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has to carefully negotiate his desire to challenge heteronormativity and sexism among his students, and this calls on him to make compromises in how he presents himself (as married or not?), how he directs discussions about controversial subjects, and how he talks to parents and co-workers.

given that the concern with 'needs' and the reluctance to politicize masculinities may lead men to treat social issues as matters of (mutual) self-development and to move away from engagement with broader issues of inequality. Also, as I have shown, therapeutically-informed projects involve *rejecting* guilt (and other negative emotions), while social justice-oriented projects tend to involve contending with guilt to motivate practices that make equity/equality more likely, so it is important to make distinctions between different counter-cultural influences on men's projects.

As a sociologist, I'm sympathetic to the concerns of scholars such as Raewyn Connell (1995) and Judith Lorber (2000, 2005) who argue that we need to foster institutional changes to be able to actually produce substantial changes in the gender order as a whole. At the same time, I'm not quite prepared to concede that the anti-sexist projects of individual men pose minor implications for broader feminist and anti-sexist change. Progressive changes in family regimes (Connell 1987, 1995) may make it harder for unequal families to ridicule and minimize the impact of anti-sexism and feminism. Also, families that equally share housework and parenting (even those that strive to do so) may produce generations of children who are less likely to conceive of families in terms of difference/dominance.[142]

We need more institutional support for recomposing masculinity through dissident masculinity projects. We also need people to work toward degendering of institutions themselves (Connell 1995; Lorber 2000, 2005). A number of the men in this study found it somewhat easier to engage in various degendering practices because they had entered into careers that provided a degree of flexibility that is far too often not

[142] I do recognize the influence of peers, which has the potential to work against the attempts of anti-sexist and feminist parents to parent for equality.

present in other careers. It is probably not realistic to assume that most men would be able to engage in projects directed toward recomposing masculinity along anti-sexist lines given how much they would need to struggle against workplace conventions and rules that encourage long hours at work away from families (Hochschild [1997] 2000).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

One limitation of this study is that it is based on interview data, which has the capacity to produce ethnographically thin accounts of the everyday/everynight practices in which I am interested. As Martin (2006) points out, "reducing dynamic events to words … can take the heart and heat out of action by reducing multi-faceted dynamics to one-dimensional, static forms" (p. 268-269). Initially, because I was concerned about this issue, I had planned for the men and their partners to complete time-use diaries and then to interview them about their completed diaries. I encountered reluctance to complete the diaries, sometimes from the men themselves and other times from their partners, and I eventually decided to forego collecting that data. In the end, I found the interviews to be satisfactory, because I was able to elicit talk about practices and the everyday/everynight contexts of peoples' lives, talk that often took the form of narratives. These narratives allowed me to account for how the men's practices took shape over time and also to understand how those practices made them feel about themselves and their relationships. I was also able to embed these narratives in public culture, "bodies of images, claims, and representations created to speak to and about … actual people" (Ortner 2006b:80) to better understand how these discursive formations shaped and provoked the men's subjectivities in particular ways. Because of this, I believe that the men became more than merely talking heads in my analysis. Still, I do believe that an

ethnographic stance committed to thickness calls for research utilizing participant observation and other methods of accessing projects in process in the interactional context of participants' lives.

A second limitation is that my sample is not very diverse. I attribute this to my snowball sampling method. It's not very surprising that men recruited from feminist networks on and around a university would produce a sample in which the men are mostly similar to one another, especially in terms of education and race/ethnicity. Beyond that, it *may* be that a study of men engaged in anti-sexist masculinity projects is likely to produce a sample much like the one I utilized. For instance, in their study of what they called "post-gender" families, Risman and Johnson-Sumerford (1998) argued that a high level of educational attainment (and the ability to attain a high-paying professional career) are necessary pre-conditions for women to be in a structural position to be able to negotiate 'fairness' in relationships with men. It's important to also note that they argue that these are not necessarily sufficient conditions for producing egalitarian relationships. I find this to be very plausible. It's also the case that research consistently shows a positive relationship between college education and gender detraditionalization (Astin 1993; Bryant 2003; Etaugh and Spandikow 1981; Funk and Willits 1987; Lottes and Kuriloff 1994; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Renzetti 1987). At the same time, this is the sort of thing that should be established empirically. It certainly is not the case that only upper-middle class and well-educated men share housework and/or parenting equally. For instance, in her study of married couples that share parenting equally, Deutsch (1999) found that, although the majority of families who participated in her research were middle class and well educated, a number of blue-collar

families also practiced egalitarian parenting, though they mostly did so out of necessity. These families both lacked the funds to afford high quality child care and also somewhat mistrusted paid child care, so they worked out alternating parenting shifts for their children as a solution. The meaning of those arrangements were fairly different when compared to the division of labor of the rest of her sample, but that is precisely why we need more research with more diverse samples in the future.

Thinking to the future, it is important for us to further explore the differences between therapeutic masculinity projects and social justice masculinity projects. Given that I found that the kind of change anti-sexist men attempt to produce partly depends upon the particular vocabulary of motive that they draw upon, we can better understand the prospects for anti-sexist change by talking to such men about how they conceive of their projects as moral projects and about the differences in how their projects unfold over time. It would also be wise to be open to other vocabularies as well. Additionally, a central concern of this research should be to account for the status of guilt in their projects, since it seems likely that guilt does not mean the same thing for both groups of men. Last, I believe that it could be fruitful to look more closely at the narratives about change that these men tell about their lives to extend our understanding of how they produce accounts to make sense of the difference between them and other men that they find so central for whom they are as men engaged in particular masculinities.

Contributions

I have argued that this research is important to cultural sociology, because it demonstrates the usefulness of a relational, practice-based sociology that is historically situated, that eschews imposing structural and cultural determinism, and that refuses to

assume too much creative resistance or voluntarism. A practice-based sociology is neither micro nor macro, and it treats the interrelationship of structure and agency and the interrelationship of society and individual carefully. This project is also valuable to the field of gender studies, because there are actually very few empirical studies on men practicing equality in their everyday lives. This study takes anti-sexist masculinity projects seriously and looks at how they are constructed in process instead of treating anti-sexism as a character or personality trait.

This research is also important, because it complicates our understanding of the possibilities of anti-sexist masculinity projects and because it complicates the conventional sociological critique of therapeutic culture. As I have shown, anti-sexist men have at least two vocabularies of motives upon which they can draw, and men who use these vocabularies tend to produce different kinds of change. This suggests that those who are interested in the 'man question' would find it worthwhile to explore men's use of these two vocabularies in greater detail to better understand the prospects for anti-sexist and feminist change and to search for other possible vocabularies that other men may use. In addition, to find that therapeutic individualism can serve as more than just a resource for men who are retreating from relationship commitments and looking inward to cultivate an emotionally satisfying experience of being a man without needing to engage in substantial change to accommodate actual (and perceived) demands of feminist women is very interesting. As I have shown, therapeutic individualism can also serve as a resource for anti-sexist men who wish to engage in introspection to enable better mental health through personal growth and to cultivate interdependence that will help them to deepen and enhance relationships with the women they love. Recognizing this

challenges sociological critiques of individualism and therapeutic culture that are based on claims that these systems of meaning one-sidedly erode commitments to relationships and communities. At the same time, it is important to recognize that using therapeutic culture as an anti-sexist resource potentially pulls them away from a commitment to pursuing equity and equality in their relationships and away from pursuing political change through feminist activism.

APPENDIX 1

Name	Age	Sexuality	Race/Ethnicity	Relationship Status	Parental Status	Education	Primary Occupation	Secondary Occupation
Charlie Adkins	43	Straight	White	Married	1 son (5) 1 daughter (6)	Master's	Environmental Protection and Sanitation Employee	
Roger Blackburn	46	Straight	White	Married	1 daughter (14)	Bachelor's	Social Worker	
Paul Denbigh	46	Straight	White	Single	1 son (18) 2 daughters (7 & 13)	Bachelor's	Coordinator – Interfaith Peace & Social Justice Organization	Telephone Interviewer
Gary Estes	35	Straight	White	Married	1 daughter (2 months)	Ph.D.	College Professor	
Ted Evans	43	Straight	White	Married	2 sons (1 & 5)	Master's	Disabled – Not Employed	
Mark Holland	27	Straight	White	Single	N/A	Bachelor's	Counselor Assistant – Substance Abuse	
Milo Johnson	36	Straight	White	Single	N/A	Bachelor's	Social Worker	
Tucker Kinsey	35	Queer	White	Single	N/A	High School	Undergraduate – Social Work	Residential Victim Advocate
Josh Lewin	43	Straight	Jewish	Married	1 daughter (8)	Master's	Graduate Student - Counseling	
James Nagel	21	Straight	White	Single	N/A	High School	Undergraduate - Nursing	
Brian Mason	48	Straight	White	Married	2 sons (4 & 8)	Ph.D.	College Professor	
Benjamin Moraga	25	Queer	Latino	Single	N/A	Master's	Graduate Student - Sociology	
Ray Morrow	31	Straight	Jewish	Married	2 sons (1 ½ & 3 ½)	Ed.D.	Assistant Principal - Elementary School	
Ryan Ostrin	34	Straight	White	Single	N/A	Bachelor's	Graduate Student – Social Work	Counselor – At Risk Youth
Geoff Riley	28	Queer	White	Single	N/A	Master's	Graduate Student - Sociology	
Joel Sewald	55	Straight	Jewish	Married	1 daughter (21)	Ph.D.	College Professor	
Doug Silverwood	38	Straight	White	Single/Divorced	N/A	Master's	Domestic Violence Shelter Case Manager	
Chris Simpson	27	Straight	White	Single	N/A	Master's	Student Affairs Professional	
Andrew Sutherland	52	Straight	White	Married	N/A	Bachelor's	Social Worker	
Alexander Turner	30	Straight	White	Married	1 son (16 months)	Master's	Graduate Student - Communications	
Jon Webb	31	Straight	White	Married	N/A	Master's	Elementary School Teacher	
Sam Youngblood	23	Straight	White/half-Jewish	Single	N/A	Master's	Graduate Student - Communications	

APPENDIX 2

Demographic Questions

How many long term or serious relationships have you been involved in?
Have you ever cohabited with a partner?
Are you currently in a relationship with someone?
Relationship status (marital status)
Duration/Length of Relationship
Parental status
Age
Partner's Age
Race/Ethnicity
Partner's Race/Ethnicity
How would identify in terms of sexual orientation?
How would your partner identify in terms of sexual orientation?
Educational Attainment
Partner's Educational Attainment
Do you work? Where do you work, and what do you do?
How many hours per week do you work?
What is your annual salary?
Does your partner work. Where does she work, and what does she do?
How many hours does she work?
What is your partner's annual salary?

Upbringing and life course:

Can you describe the family you grew up in?
[Conditional upon 2-parent family] What kind of relationship did your parents have?
What did your parents do for a living?
I am going to ask you a series of questions about relationships. I am interested to know how these relationships influenced how you came to be a man:
How would you describe your relationship with your father? Are/were you close? Where there tensions between you? Do you see yourself as similar to your father? Are/were there things you liked to talk to him about? Are/were there things that you deliberately avoid or avoided discussing with him?
How would you describe you relationship with your mother? Are/were you close? Where there tensions between you? Do you see yourself as similar to your mother? Are/were there things you liked to talk to her about? Are/were there things that you deliberately avoid or avoided discussing with her?
Did you have any older male relatives who were influential in your life? Are/were you close? Where there tensions between you? Are/were there things you liked to talk to him about? Are/were there things that you deliberately avoid or avoided discussing with him?
Did you have any older female relatives who were influential in your life? Are/were you close? Where there tensions between you? Are/were there things you liked to talk to

her about? Are/were there things that you deliberately avoid or avoided discussing with her?

Did you have siblings? Sex and birth order. How would you describe your relationship with her/him/them? Are/were you close? Where there tensions between you? Are/were there things you liked to talk to her/him/them about? Were there things that you deliberately avoiding discussing with her/him/them? Are there ways that your relationship with your sibling(s) had any influence on the kind of man you have become? Affects your relationship with your partner?

Could you talk about friends and peers you had while growing up? How did your friends influence how you came to be a man?

Could you talk about defining moments in your life that have influenced who you are and how you relate to others?

Current Relationship:

How long have you been in your current relationship?

How did you meet? What was it about your partner that made you want to be in a relationship with her? Why do you think she wanted to be in a relationship with you?

What do you like best about your relationship? What do you like least about your relationship?

What do you think makes it possible for you to have the kind of relationship that you do?

Would you describe your relationship as an egalitarian relationship?

If so, how did you come to be someone who wants to be in an egalitarian relationship? What life experiences influenced you to want to be in this kind of relationship? Did anyone influence you in this direction?

Could you imagine being in this kind of relationship with another partner?

Is there something special about her that moved you in this direction?

Could you talk about defining moments in your relationship? Have you experienced any crises in your relationship? How were they resolved?

Work:

How do you feel about your job? How much do you like it? How *identified* with your work are you?

How does your partner feel about her job? How much does she like it? How *identified* with her work is she?

How *invested* are each of you in your work life? Who is more *invested* in work, you or your partner? Or neither? How do you feel about that?

Would you like to be more/less *invested* in your job in the future? Were you more/less *invested* in your job in the past?

How does your work life affect your relationship/family life and your relationship/family life affect your work life? Could also ask: Is trying to balance work and family an issue for you? What do you have to do to balance the two?

Does your work provide family friendly policies? Have you ever taken advantage of policies such as these? Would you ever considered taking advantage of policies such as these? Why or why not? Do you feel there would be any consequences if you took advantage of these kinds of policies? Would they have any effect on how you feel about yourself? About your work? About your relationship?

Have you had to make career decisions that affect you as a couple? How did you make those decisions? Have you had to make decisions about where to live?

Parenting:

[Questions about anticipating being a parent for those who currently do not have children.]

[Questions for those wanting to be child-free.]

Where or from whom have you learned the most about being a parent?

How has being a parent changed your relationship with your partner?

Do you think being a parent has changed you as a person? How? Do you think being a parent has changed your partner as a person? How?

Can you describe how you and your partner are dividing and sharing parenting responsibilities? Take me through a typical day.

Tell me about the parenting practices in your family. How do you think these practices compare to other families/couples you know? In what ways, if any, would you like to change your parenting practices? Why?

Overall, what percentage of the parenting and childcare are you doing and what percentage is your partner doing?

Would you say that one of you is the primary caregiver of your child/ren? Who? How did you decide that one of you would be the primary caregiver? OR How did you decide that you would equally share child care?

How do you feel about the current division of parenting responsibilities? If you could change anything about it, what would it be?

How do you think your partner feels about the current division of parenting responsibilities?

Do you expect the division of parenting responsibilities to change in the future?

Do you know of any families in which the father is as involved in childcare as the mother?

How do you and your partner compare in your approach to parenting? Similarities/differences? How are differences usually resolved?

Are there any differences between your relationship with your children and your partner's relationship with your children? Would you say that one of you is closer to any of your children?

Typically, who disciplines the children? How do you and your partner discipline your children?

With whom do you talk about parenting?

In what kinds of activities does your family participate as a family? With other families?

Power, Sharing, Finances:

How are decisions made in your relationship? How do you think this compares to other families/couples you know?

How do you and your partner manage finances? Do you keep finances separate, do you jointly manage joint money, or does one person control the finances? How do you think this compares to other families/couples you know?

In a typical week/day, what percentage of housework are you doing and what percentage is your partner doing? What sorts of things/tasks do you do? What sorts of

things/tasks does your partner do? [Probes include: Who shops for food? Who plans meals? Who cooks meals? And so on.]

In a typical week/day, would you have more, less, or about the same amount of free/leisure time (e.g., reading, exercising, watching TV, going out with friends) as your partner?

How often do you keep track of how much [housework, child care, *caregiving*] you/your partner *actually are* doing in your relationship?

How do you keep track of how much [housework, child care, *caregiving*] you *should be* doing in your relationship? Do you compare how much you are doing to someone else [partner, other men he knows, father, etc.]?

Who keeps track of what needs to get done around the house? Who makes sure things get done?

Do the two of you have similar cleanliness standards, or do you disagree over how clean the house should be? If similar/same, have you always agreed over cleanliness standards?

How *satisfied* are you with the current division of housework?

How *satisfied* do you think your partner is with the current division of housework?

I'd like to talk about the issue of equity vs. equality. How do you approach issues of equity and equality in your relationship? [strict equality? strict equity? balancing equity and equality when and where it makes sense?] Why do you do it?

Do you or have you ever argued about/disagreed about/fought over/negotiated housework?

In general, what kinds of things do you argue about/disagree about/fight over?

How are conflicts resolved? Is one partner responsible for working out conflicts or is it mutual?

What kind of advice would you give to other people about being a couple, getting married, being a parent, etc.?

Producing Equality Through Other Means Besides "Sharing":

Do you engage in public or symbolic acts as a couple to display your equality to others?

What do you do to support your partner in the things/activities she considers important? What does your partner do to support you in the things/activities you consider important?

Social Support:

Do others support/praise your efforts to be egalitarian with your partner? Who, why, and how?

Do others do things to undercut/criticize your efforts? Who, why, and how?

Intimacy, Romance, Passion, and Sex:

When something is bothering you or you have something you have to work out, who do you talk to?

Who keeps track of how the relationship is doing?

How do you *communicate* in your relationship?

What do you do to make your relationship work?

Who is responsible for *emotional intimacy* in your relationship? Why? How do you go about producing *intimacy* in your relationship?

A major relationship issue for many couples is expressing emotions. Many men feel unable to talk about how they are feeling or don't consider it important to talk about these things. How able do you feel to express your emotions to your partner (and with children)? Is talking about how you are feeling something that is expected in your relationship? [being honest, being open, sharing feelings, caring for others, etc.]

A lot of couples lead parallel lives, not spending much time with each other and not talking with each other about what goes on in their everyday lives when they are apart. Others have much more shared worlds, either because they spend a lot of time together or because they talk to each other about their everyday lives. Where do you and your partner fall on this dimension? How involved are you in the parts of your partner's everyday life that she considers important (work, school, daily experiences, hobbies, children, etc.)? How involved is your partner in the parts of your everyday life that you consider important?

What do you do to produce and maintain *romance* in your relationship?

What do you do to produce and maintain *passion* with your partner?

Who, if anyone, is responsible for initiating sex? Does one person initiate sex more often than the other? Why?

How do you coordinate/decide how often and what kind of sex you have? Is there reciprocity?

Does having children affect your ability to be intimate as a couple (emotional, sexual)? How do you work this out?

Past Relationship(s):

What about past relationships? How did those relationships compare to your current relationship? Did you practice equality then? Etc.

Feminism, Male Privilege, Gender Inequalities:

Do you identify as a feminist? When did you first begin to identify as a feminist and why? Does your partner identify as a feminist? Do you know when she first began to identify as a feminist and why?

Have you had experience with the women's movement or with feminist thinking?

Do you and your partner talk about gender inequalities and injustices?

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VITA

Bradley Wing was born in Clinton, Iowa in 1971. He attended the University of Iowa and received a dual-Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Psychology. He moved to Columbia, Missouri in 1995 to attend graduate school at the University of Missouri, Columbia. He received his Master's degree in Sociology in May, 2000. His Master's thesis was an interview study of teacher socialization of pre-service teachers in a college of education that was undergoing reform. He is graduating with the Ph.D in Sociology in August, 2008.