

**ALTERNATE LOCATIONS: STRATEGIES AND CONCERNS IN THE
CANADIAN PRO-FEMINIST MEN'S MOVEMENT**

by

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B.A. Concordia University 1995

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the department of

Women's Studies

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Simon Fraser University
August 1997

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0-612-24213-7

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Over the past two decades, men's groups and organizations have formed throughout North America in response to various aspects of feminist movement. Some address men's rights in child custody or divorce cases, while others respond to an isolation some men feel in society and from one another and act as therapeutic refuge, broadly termed the mythopoetic movement. The pro-feminist men's movement aims to understand and support feminist projects for gender justice. In this paper, I address some central issues of the pro-feminist movement. These include the overlap that exists between politicized men's groups and the mythopoetic approach, the issue of diversity within men's groups and the relationship between pro-feminist men's work and the women's movement.

This study employed theoretical sources and qualitative interview research with seven men from Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax in uncovering the issues to be analyzed. It is unique in that most feminist methodology does not address the issue of "studying up" - that is, studying those with greater social privilege than the researcher herself. Participants were asked questions concerning their interest and involvement with feminist issues, the goals and activities of their men's groups, and their views on men's place within feminist work.

My project identifies three major areas of concern. One, tension exists between the politicized approach of pro-feminism and the more individually-based work favoured by mythopoetic groups. I discuss problematic elements of mythopoetic work while highlighting the importance of engaging in both personal and political change - an element stressed by the men I interviewed. Two, it is essential that pro-feminist men define a workable strategy for their activism, which takes into account the critique and concerns of feminist women. The men involved in the study cite this as a central concern. Third, I found there to be a lack of diversity within men's groups, along the lines of race, class, sexuality, age and ability. I conclude that the relative homogeneity can be seen as a place from which both determination of goals and definitions of masculinity itself must be subverted and broadened.

For my father,

Harold F. R. Nelson 1930 - 1985

who believed I could do anything

and my mother,

Joyce E. Nelson 1932 - 1985

who left me strength

...let him see that society depraves and perverts men. Let him find in their prejudices the source of all their vices, ... let him see that all men wear pretty much the same mask, but let him also know that there are faces more beautiful than the mask covering them.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Emile

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to sincerely thank my senior supervisor, Meredith Kimball, for her consistent, excellent support and advice. Her comments and suggestions were invaluable throughout the research and writing process and her support and accessibility as I worked long-distance have not gone unnoticed.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of my second reader, Susan Wendell, whose questions and advice during my research stage always served to help develop and clarify my ideas.

Many thanks to both Kiran Nath and Kevin Davison for many thought-provoking conversations and much continued support.

Finally, I wish to thank the men who devoted their time and ideas to this project through interviews. Their interest and generosity played a large role in making the project what it is and will not be forgotten.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRO-FEMINIST MEN'S MOVEMENT

Feminists have always studied men. We have critically examined their values, beliefs and behaviours through the lenses of religion, politics, literature, philosophy, history and science. We have noted their interactions with us in familial, intimate and other relationships. We have assessed and disputed their responses to women's demands for equality in a variety of contexts, and have experienced degrees of dismay or hope at various moments. Despite this, many of us are surprised and bewildered to hear of the existence of movements of men who are responding in one manner or another to our demands and our critique.

My project, to better understand the politics and activities of the Canadian pro-feminist men's movement, was motivated by a number of factors. First, I wished to distinguish pro-feminist men's politics from the more commonly-noted movement of mythopoetic men, whose work stems from a feeling that men have given up too much power in response to feminist changes. At the same time, I wished to critically examine elements of mythopoetic work which have made their way into groups which do support feminist goals. Second, I hoped to concentrate my empirical study on pro-feminist men in Canada, as opposed to those of the more publicized American men's movements. Finally, I wished to discover what the pro-feminist men's movement is, the motivations from which it has evolved and how directly and effectively it addresses the needs and goals of contemporary progressive gender relations. I aimed to

formally and critically study male assumptions regarding male privilege and advantage in response to women, the larger society and each other.

This work intends to contribute to a growing awareness of men's movements, within feminist and women's studies, which emphasizes the need to be both aware and critical of forms of anti-patriarchal work being carried out by the other gender. It does so through examination of written sources and through interviews with men involved in pro-feminist groups or organizations. The project was by no means able to tackle every issue of concern to gender relations but aims to shed some light on several main concerns. It represents the voices of pro-feminist men and feminist women, and includes their role in forming my own vision for pro-feminist work.

In this chapter, I will present the central ideas I have chosen as foci from written sources on the pro-feminist and mythopoetic men's movements. The second chapter will discuss methodological issues I dealt with in both considering the nature of this study and interviewing, and a third chapter will present the results of my empirical work. The final chapter will analyze the issues which have emerged in a more detailed manner, drawing together the written work and the voices of the men who offered their views in an interview format.

An overview of writing by pro-feminist men and women has revealed three issues critical to my study. First, the integration of personal and political realms in men's lives remains an area of

contention and debate. According to much literature, men's relationships with women and other men, childcare responsibilities or roles within the home are sometimes analyzed and changed with little consideration of the need to mobilize against institutionalized sexism. Alternately, men sometimes develop a strong political consciousness while doing little to apply the principles to their personal lives. Michael Kaufman, among others, writes of the need to integrate these two tendencies:

I've always had great respect for both ideas, and believe that you have to change both individual people and society. But it wasn't until I started trying to figure out what patriarchy had to do with my own life that the relationship between personal and political change started getting clearer.
(Kaufman, 1993, p. 276)

It is crucial that men make emotional shifts which allow them to deeply understand and process feminist theories. Attention is given, particularly in the work of Victor Seidler (1989, 1994), to the problem of "adopting" feminist beliefs and values as a way to eradicate male guilt, without making necessary emotional changes that coincide with true understanding and empathy.

A second issue concerns the need for ongoing attention on the part of pro-feminist men to the views of feminist women. Literature exists which reflects women's views of the role of men within feminist work and critiques aspects of both the mythopoetic and pro-feminist movements. In most cases, mythopoetic workshops and retreats are held up as examples of backlash sentiment, against which feminists and pro-feminists must struggle. Women also express concerns about the tendency of men to change on a personal

level, or to become more sensitive as partners, while failing to challenge patriarchy on a broader scale. While some men are aware of these issues, I believe that continuing attention to feminist reactions and deconstructions is crucial. I include the voices of women as a conscious attempt to credit the original source of ideas comprising the pro-feminist movement, as well as a reminder that male privilege is often best critiqued from outside its own experience.

Like many early, and some current, feminist works on "femininity", masculinity theory often conceptualizes "men", or "the masculine" as pivotal of a white, heterosexual, western ideal, while failing to acknowledge the nature of this focus. In recent years more and more work on masculinity has emerged from Queer Studies and African American Studies programs, which seeks to explore identity politics and issues of representation across various, interlinked social locations. Work exists on the psychological conditioning men of various identities receive, and on problems of difference and conflict within many communities.

In light of this crucial challenge, a third major element to be presented here concerns the sole focus on gender in much work on masculinity. This concept shapes not only the definition of "masculinity" itself, but the strategies proposed for changing both male roles and gender inequities. Further, it determines which groups of men are included, or excluded, in the discourses on masculinity.

Public or private transformation: mythic warriors and pro-feminist activists

To better understand the issue of personal versus political issues in masculinity theories, it is useful to turn to the work of the Mythopoetic movement, and to examine an ongoing debate between these men and those who are considered pro-feminist. This contention concerns the issue of public activism versus personal self-actualization, including the determination of needed changes and how to go about enacting them. Pro-feminist men who are critical of the mythopoets' tendency to focus on therapy-oriented work discuss the lack of awareness of issues of male power and privilege within that movement. At the same time, they address the issue of how one is to go about engaging in change that is supportive of feminist goals and problems which can arise in facing feminist challenges, such as excessive guilt, or retreats from women which are evidenced in the mythopoetic approach.

The Mythopoetic movement, headed by pioneers such as Robert Bly and Sam Keen, derives its title from its emphasis on myth and story-telling, from which male archetypes and initiation rituals are gleaned. This work invokes the belief in an essential "deep masculine" self, also called the "Inner Wild Man" or "Inner Warrior", which has been buried through time due to men's betrayal by their fathers, who worked away from the home and abandoned their roles as initiators of their sons. Feminists and mothers are seen as abetting this process by insisting that men become soft, imbuing them with feelings of guilt and worthlessness as men. Bly's key work, Iron John, written in 1990, has come to be seen as a

principal text of the mythopoetic men's movement. This work describes the roots of the lack of male self-esteem:

The male in the past twenty years has become more thoughtful, more gentle. But by this process he has not become more free. He's a nice boy who pleases not only his mother but the young woman he is living with. (Bly, 1990, p. 2).

It also proposes solutions, which include the cultivation of all-male space, the enactment of ancient rituals from a variety of non-western cultures, and the eventual self-liberation from responsibility for the oppression of women - something men tend to accept, apparently, with little argument.

The work of Sam Keen (1991) and other proponents of this movement refers to similar male dilemmas, stressing that modern men are unhappy despite their alleged social power and privilege. A separation from the feminine realm is advocated, as is the use of extensive male-bonding rituals.

Although many mythopoetic proponents insist upon the success of their movement in helping men to become better, more nurturing fathers and partners, it has been pointed out by pro-feminist writers that creating a new sense of manhood cannot be accomplished without attending to the important issue of male power. Indeed it is crucial to distinguish the emergence of new forms of masculinity from the relinquishing of patriarchal domination.

The anthology The Politics of Manhood (Kimmel, 1995b) is a good example of work which addresses this issue. Here, pro-feminist men argue against the tenets of the mythopoetic movement, and the mythopoetic leaders are invited to respond. A critique of

the mythopoets' failure to acknowledge men's power can be seen in Michael Kimmel's (1995a) essay, which deals with the historical male flight from domesticity and compares this tendency to the Mythopoetic emphasis on all-male space and retreats to the woods. He calls for these men to "come home" and take action in fighting injustice (Kimmel, 1995a, p. 115).

Similarly, other pro-feminist authors in this collection stress the importance of politics and point to the mythopoets' tendency to avoid male responsibility for social change. As Kimmel and Kaufman write:

It is a retreat from the historical specificity of the present era, a retreat from political responsibilities to confront male excesses that daily manifest themselves on our streets, in our schools, in our workplaces, in our bedrooms, excesses such as rape, violence, spouse abuse, gay bashing, high risk sexual behaviour, drunk driving... it is thus a retreat from women, from adult men's responsibilities to embrace women's equality and struggle against those obstacles that continue to lie in the path of gender equality. (Kaufman & Kimmel, 1995, p. 41)

Another writer, Jerry Kupers (1993; 1995), explains his fear that the Mythopoetic movement will ultimately fail to challenge inequality, and thus patriarchy. He stresses that it is possible to address male suffering without blaming it on feminist politics and gains. His work takes a psychological approach and calls for greater integration between the personal and political concerns affecting men's lives.

Although most mythopoetic writers, in response to pro-feminist challenges, are defensive, arguing that academic critique has no place in their movement (Bliss, 1995; Diamond, 1995; Kipnis, 1995),

several have recognized the necessity of applying the personal changes they have made in the broader social realm (Allen, 1995; Benjamin, 1995).

(It is not only the Mythopoets but also pro-feminist men who must work to maintain awareness of issues of male power and privilege. My concern stems from a degree of overlap which exists between the two movements, and perhaps a tendency for any group work to become overly self-indulgent. For example, an article by Canadian pro-feminist writer Bert Young discusses problems observed in his own involvement.

My experience in the activities of men's groups, until recently, suggests that most of our activities and ideas were designed to build a safe haven for ourselves to feel better about who we were as men. Our 'wounded' selves needed a place where we could come to shed our burden and expose our tortured souls to each other without women present... Attempting to change ourselves did not mean that the social reality changed with us. If anything, we became more insular and more drugged with out newfound freedom of being a special kind of man. We could laugh at our 'wimpiness', and at the same time reveal to women and other men that we had found a new way to be masculine without too much struggle and too much loss of power and privilege. (Young, 1993, pp. 316-317)

Young's challenge to men reflects the perspective of Bob Connell; who is concerned that many male attempts to change simply create new forms of manhood, while maintaining hegemonic positions. Connell provides explicit directions for men's work:

Pursuing social justice in power relations means contesting men's pre-dominance in the state, professions and management, and ending men's violence against women... Pursuing social justice in the gender division of labour means ending the patriarchal dividend in the money economy, sharing the burden of domestic work, and equalizing access to education and training. (Connell, 1995a, p. 229)

A central concern of mine in pursuing this study was not only to uncover men's thoughts on personal and political transformation, but to get a deeper sense of how one goes about shifting paradigms and counteracting years of social conditioning. I have often noted the ease with which some men speak of feminist principles and pay lip service to equality without necessarily understanding how they are personally implicated in upholding power imbalances. While I strongly agree that the mythopoetic motivation for and method of engaging in emotional work is problematic in important ways, I do feel that a process of self-interrogation is crucial for men who hope to sincerely work toward eradicating patriarchy. Michael Kaufman (1993) addresses this issue, feeling personal change to be more wanting than political awareness among many men.

While many men are sympathetic to the ideas of women's equality and watch with approval as the barriers fall, for most men there is little connection between these changes for women and their own lives. They support the idea of equality for women, but maybe they still find ways to dominate the women around them... They don't yet see that in feminism we can find some of the answers to the crisis in masculinity. (Kaufman, 1993, p. 260-62)

As men begin to question their own ideals and lived experience of masculinity from a feminist perspective, a common reaction is one of guilt. British writer Victor Seidler (1994) discusses this issue and speaks to the problem of developing a deeply sincere appreciation of feminist-theories. In his view, wallowing in male guilt has served as a way for men to show feminist women that they identify with radical feminist analyses of men as the oppressor. Seidler stresses that men must move beyond attempts merely to "do the right thing". Central to his work is a critique of the concept

of reason as motivation for change:

...we cannot simply reject our masculinity as if it is 'wrong' or 'bad' or 'essentially oppressive to women'. This is not to say that we cannot change the ways that we are. What is at issue is the model of change that we inherit within our culture... This is part of a Protestant tradition that is still very much with us in the idea of 'mind over matter': that if you take your mind off what is troubling you, then the feelings of despair or sadness will somehow disappear. (Seidler, 1994, p. 101)

Seidler also expresses concerns similar to those of Kupers (1993; 1995), Connell (1995a) and others. Even sincere men, he argues, have taken critiques of masculinity only as far as the personal realm - by becoming more nurturing as partners and fathers, and getting in touch with their emotions. He calls into question the omission of issues of power that underlie social institutions.

In a similar vein, Kenneth Clatterbaugh (1990) advocates a greater focus on issues of power, and further investigation of the different power struggles that occur between women and men as well as among men as a gender. His emphasis on three major elements in the study of masculinity - roles, stereotypes and ideals - forms the basis of his approach to looking at power on various levels.

Underlying the personal/political issue is a central question concerning men's motivation. What, if anything, begins the process of self-reflexive gender analysis? What will motivate men to begin a process of change at any level? Whether this transformation begins in private or public awareness, it would seem that a reward must exist for giving up power, for defying and refusing the traditional privileges manhood has to offer in its hegemonic forms. Stanley Aronowitz (1995), in an essay imbued with much personal

reflection and experience, posits that men will be unwilling to question power and privilege, much less to give it up, until they are made to see the costs of this power to their own lives - namely, the emotional isolation from others that comes with traditional concepts of manhood.

This idea returns us directly to the necessity of men relating social issues to their lived experience. The process by which one begins this may take different forms and hold varying rewards and hardships along the way. However, a significant element of this transformation may be found in working with and listening to women's perspectives and critiques. Leo Bersani (1995) posits that male feminism risks becoming a "love affair between men", as most men fail to form constructive dialogue with women. The need for dialogue leads me to emphasize the importance of male pro-feminist attention to feminist women's perspectives.

Feminist reflections: some women's perspectives on male pro-feminism

Women have responded to the growth of men's movements with a mixture of scepticism and approval. They have criticized both the cultural appropriation and the lack of political focus in the mythopoetic movement and have stressed the importance of men recognizing and deconstructing their own advantaged positions in light of various feminist challenges. Other common concerns centre around the lack of diversity within both backlash and progressive

men's movements and the need for men to listen to the perspectives of women while also taking responsibility for their own processes of personal change and social action.

Harry Christian (1994) reports the findings of his study of life histories of anti-sexist men working for gender equality in Britain. He investigates the influences in the lives of these men, which helped to form their anti-feminist politics, and in his conclusions, writes:

...it is not enough for some men to become aware of the masculine role's limitations. A link has to be made between that and a decision to become politically active in support of feminism. The most significant link illustrated by the experience of most men in my study is the importance of direct personal political influence by individual feminist women. (Christian, 1994, p. 189)

Since the beginning of the mythopoetic movement, critical concerns of feminists have coincided with extensive media attention to the phenomenon. Susan Faludi's (1991) work devotes an extensive and critical section to this task, citing examples of Robert Bly's angry responses to women questioning his motives at conferences and lectures.

Perhaps not surprisingly, many feminist critiques centre around issues similar to those raised by pro-feminist men who reflect critically on their own movement. For instance, there is great concern on the part of many women about the need for evolving male identities that account for both personal and social issues. Meg Luxton (1993) stresses the different levels on which men must raise their awareness and work for change:

Anti-sexist work needs to go on publicly and privately simultaneously. Some men are willing to act publicly...

without ever dealing with the sexism in their personal lives... On the other hand, many men who work hard in their personal lives, who are willing to struggle hard with their lover, their children and their housemates but who never act publicly are similarly failing to deal with sexism. (Luxton, 1993, p. 370)

There is a feeling that perhaps what is being accomplished constitutes the creation of a softer and more gentle male, as opposed to more traditional, macho forms, rather than an eradication of patriarchal gender relations. Fear exists that men's groups will ultimately serve only to make men feel better about themselves, leaving behind the politicized struggles of feminism. As bell hooks writes:

The aspect of the men's movement advocated by men like Robert Bly rarely addresses the issue of dismantling patriarchy. Instead, the focus of this branch of the men's movement seems to be more on the production of a kind of masculinity that can be safely expressed within patriarchal boundaries...The most frightening aspect of contemporary men's movement...is the depoliticization of the struggle to end sexist oppression, and the replacing of that struggle with a focus on personal self-actualization. (hooks, 1992b, p. 113)

Although hooks' comments above refer to mythopoetic approaches, she is also critical of some pro-feminist work and cautions against similar de-politicization in this realm. She refers to the work of John Stoltenberg (1989) as having disengaged with the pro-feminist political goal of educating other men, pointing to the irony that Stoltenberg represents the radical edge of men's movement.

It is important to consider that even a decline in patriarchy as we know it does not necessarily lead to the instigation of a system built on equity. Barbara Ehrenreich (1995) points out that the decline in the old system of patriarchy, with its token

breadwinner male heading the traditional family, has not lead to a decline in male dominance, but only a re-defining of masculine roles which maintains male power.

Similarly, Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1995) notes that the emergence of a "softer", more gentle form of masculinity, as presented in the media, has not brought about an equitable re-distribution of power. She further cautions that male discourse around masculinity issues can become little more than another way to privilege male subjectivity. This is a crucial element for men to keep in mind when organizing. It points to the need to be clear about the reasons for engaging in men's work, and to eliminate the mythopoetic notion of organizing around men's suffering, attributing it to lost fathers and tyrannical mothers or feminists. In this vein, Rosemary Radford Reuther (1992) remarks on the irony of men feeling the need for a private "movement" addressing their pain, and stresses that organization must be rooted in public acknowledgement of accountability for sexism. She draws a parallel between men's organizing and a (fictional) movement on the part of white people responding to racism.

Let us imagine a parallel "white people's movement" arising that would claim to solve racism primarily by seeing it as a problem of the wounded white psyche. We are told that white people are deeply wounded by the lack of positive white role models, exacerbated by the "vicious" criticism of white people that took place in the civil rights and apartheid movements. It is acknowledged that white people have sometimes been immature and have used their power aggressively, but that is only because they were insecure in their whiteness. (Reuter, 1992, p. 16)

However sceptical one might be of what already exists, there

is little doubt among women that some form of men's movement is necessary, and that feminism can no longer be seen as a movement concerning only women. As Gloria Steinem writes:

Make no mistake about it: Women want a men's movement. We are literally dying for it. If you doubt that, just listen to women's desperate testimonies of hope that the men in our lives will become more nurturing toward children, more able to talk about emotions, less hooked on a spectrum of control that extends from not listening through to violence, and less repressive of their own human qualities that are called "feminine"- and thus suppressed by cultures in which men dominate. (Steinem, 1992, p. v)

As bell hooks (1992b) points out, men must begin to see feminist movement as central in their own lives, and to see their work as part of the larger struggles women have already begun.

Ideally, men's movement should merely be a segment under the larger feminist movement... When feminism is defined as a movement to end sexism and sexist oppression, it is clear that everyone has a role to play. Fundamentally, the struggle is not defined as a conflict between women and men. It is defined by resistance to a politic of patriarchal domination that is perpetuated and maintained by nearly everyone in our culture. Defined in this way, there is no question that men can engage fully in feminist struggle. (hooks, 1992b, p. 113)

Similarly, Lynne Segal (1990) emphasizes that socialist feminism presents a ready-made political agenda for men hoping to join in gender-based struggles.

As the architects of a movement for gender, racial and other forms of equality, women are necessarily concerned with the activities of groups of men attempting to support our goals. We can and should expect to have a voice regarding the shape of men's participation in feminist activities, and would rightly critique or comment on the their interpretation and development of feminist theories and goals. The need for men to listen to feminist

critique was stressed in my interviews, but was mentioned less in most written work by men that I have read. Starhawk, among others, reminds us:

Men have to listen to women...I become alarmed when I hear statements that imply that men have already listened to women too much, been made "soft" by the feminist movement...A lot of men are strong allies, good friends, staunch comrades in the struggle. They are not the problem. The problem is the legions of men who haven't even begun to get it yet, who still have to prove their masculinity by ordering bombing raids or humiliating their female co-workers, the men who make us afraid to walk down lonely streets at night. The men's movement I could trust would figure out how to reach those men. (Starhawk, 1992, p. 30)

This is not to say that men's groups must take full directive from feminist women. It is crucial that men take responsibility for their own transformation, educating themselves and other men, in order to shift the burden of responsibility away from women. Although this issue was mentioned in some pro-feminist men's writings and in my interviews, I found no written work that proposed a specific model for balancing consultation and cooperation with feminist groups and the need for independent thought and action.

While an exact pro-feminist model for men's groups may remain somewhat elusive, women writers are clear as to what they do not wish to see occurring. Many have formed visions in direct opposition to mythopoetic texts they have read or workshops they have attended. In addition to concerns over the self-indulgent nature of much of this work, the movement is felt to be fundamentally anti-woman, due to its emphasis on separating from

the feminine and the many misogynist sentiments expressed in works such as Iron John (Bly, 1990). There is also reason to be critical of its constituency of mainly white middle class men, who are able to attend workshops and retreats due to their material and financial privilege.

Women also speak against the cultural appropriation in many men's groups rituals - an aspect in direct opposition to feminist anti-racist politics. It is noted that many such rituals are used to reaffirm men's power and control, and are taken from cultures in which women's status is the lowest. Hattie Gosset writes:

playing drums? dancing around the fire? camping out? is this some more pseudo tribal stuff? a revised ersatz "heart of darkness" number? a bunch of boys playing games with the cultures of people they dont (sic) know how to live next door to? (Gosset, 1992, p. 21)

Although many pro-feminist men write strong critiques of such practices as well, their movement can also be criticized for its lack of attention to diversity, particularly in terms of racial politics. Many are aware of the need to expand their strategies to reach a wider audience of men. It surprised me that only a few women writers mentioned this lack of diversity with regard to the mythopoetic movement and fewer still recognized it as important in pro-feminist circles. bell hooks was one writer who tended to be critical of pro-feminist work, noting her lack of comfort at a conference she attended with a black male friend.

We were both disturbed by the complete lack of any emphasis on race. We were disturbed by the discussions of masculine identity that were based on the assumption that all men share equally the rewards of patriarchal privilege in this society. Privileged white male thought, experience and culture was often presented as a norm standpoint. (hooks, 1992b, p. 116)

In contrast to white women writers who spoke of their comfort around and faith in pro-feminist men, hooks' experience at this conference as a black woman, to me, seems to accentuate the importance of hearing critiques from marginalized perspectives. I turn now to a discussion of issues surrounding marginality and diversity in men's work.

Difference and the dominance of gender issues

As feminist theory struggles to grapple with charges of white, middle-class, heterosexist bias, so too do men working for gender justice need to improve not only awareness but the integration of issues of difference in their work. By this I refer to the necessary formation of new paradigms as alternatives to the traditional (and current) "add-on" method of dealing with racism, classism, homophobia and other marginalized issues. Despite a growing body of cultural criticism which deals overtly with these forms of discrimination (e.g. Connell, 1995b; Kaufman and Kimmel, 1995), many men's movement writers fail to incorporate perspectives which would not only reach a wider range of men, but might challenge current participants to interrogate their privilege. As Blye Frank writes:

(A) criticism of the pro-feminist position of men may be that even with their claims of 'gay affirmation' and anti-racism, they often do not fully articulate the privileged position of white, heterosexual, middle-class and abled professional men, or their own support of those privileged positions. (Frank, 1993, p. 339)

There remains an unacknowledged bias in much work which stems,

I believe, from the way in which masculinity has been defined, despite the recent tendency to speak of "masculinities" instead. While I appreciate the tendency of many authors to speak of a hegemonic masculinity, which refers to a domineering, patriarchal, traditional western male ideal, it sometimes becomes clear that difference is seen as pivoting a white, western, heterosexual norm and that, while they may be rightly and usefully critical of hegemonic identity, they do not account for the perspectives of those who are victimized by these forms. For example, John Stoltenberg (1994) addresses homophobia, but his focus is solely on asking straight men to renounce theirs. While this is important, it makes clear that the intended audience of this work is heterosexual. In contrast, Lynne Segal (1990) employs marginalized perspectives in attempting to understand the dominant forms of masculinity, as an alternative to examining sexist or racist oppression only from the perspectives of those who benefit from it. She cites the work of James Baldwin, a gay black writer, in demonstrating her point:

I have spent most of my life, after all, watching white people, and outwitting them, so that I might survive. I think I know something about the American masculinity which most men of my generation do not know because they have not been menaced by it in the way that I have been. (Baldwin, cited in Segal, 1990, p. 177)

Despite Segal's progressive approach, I was critical of her tendency to fall into a common trap of discussing only black men as representatives of all men of colour or 'different', meaning non-white, ethnicities.

A few authors attempt to deal with difference by inserting

a chapter on "black men" or "gay men" after their discussion of masculinity or, as Clatterbaugh (1990) chose, a chapter on both "black and gay men". While upholding a conception of these identities as Other, such presentation also fails to deal with the intersection of sexual identity with gender and race. Similarly, although Seidler (1994) acknowledges the unequal distribution of power among men, he stops short of bringing race considerations into his analysis of class and economic differences.

Several authors (Connell, 1995a; Kaufman, 1993; Kimmel, 1995a, 1995b) take a well-integrated approach on issues of difference, in particular when dealing with racism and heterosexism. However, I have found little or no mention of physical disability, except as a passing reference. This seems an important omission, given the attention to physical prowess and strength as central in defining traditional manhood. The association of disability with weakness, thus with femininity, could be further explored, as could the perspectives of disabled men with regard to possible fears of physical violence. It is also important to acknowledge that some men's retreats or activities - particularly mythopoetic weekends in the woods - are not wheelchair accessible.

A common theme in several works was the role of the military in shaping masculinity. Its product was held up by several authors (Clatterbaugh, 1990; Connell, 1995a; Kaufman, 1993; Mosse, 1996; Segal, 1990) as an ultimate form of hegemonic manhood, in terms of the power it bestows, the conformity it embodies, and its unquestionable misogyny in defining masculinity - as, literally,

not feminine. What I found missing in these theories was, first, any analysis of how certain men, in military recruiting, have been and are seen as more expendable than others, and second, discussion of the racism and imperialist ideology that underlies men's training to dehumanize the enemy.

Perhaps the most striking example of inattention to diversity can be seen in John Stoltenberg's (1994) assumptions about the dominant form of masculinity. His work seems to conclude that most, if not all men, strive to achieve a hyper-masculinity bent on violence, dominance and the conscious subjugation of women. I am critical of his tone, which is sarcastic, bitter and superior, as he pokes fun at men who are less evolved in renouncing their masculinity. Above all, I disliked the fact that his work lacks any analysis and seems concerned only with satirical blame and rhetoric. Stoltenberg constructs a dichotomy between good and bad men - those who are guided by their manhood and those guided by selfhood. This not only reduces the problem of sexism to a personal and private level, evidenced in statements like "Racist hatred and violence are driven by identity anxiety..." (p. 136), but his approach fails to account for the experience of men of a variety of backgrounds. Most men, I would argue, are likely to experience their manhood somewhere along a continuum between Stoltenberg's "perfect" and "strictly oppressive" categories. Here, I think some of Kenneth Clatterbaugh's comments are useful:

We started out with the claim that the components of masculinity - roles, stereotypes and ideals - are historically situated and relative to specific groups. But that is just a beginning. What factors need to be included in these

categories? and to which group(s) are they relevant? the stereotypes and ideals themselves may be misleading. And the men under study are not all masculine in the same sense. Finally, even the criteria by which we can distinguish masculinities need to be defined. (Clatterbaugh, 1990, p. 159)

In order to address concerns about diversity it is essential to examine the experiences of a wide population of men. As a white feminist, I have long found it useful to respond to challenges to my own privilege by reading both theoretical and fictional work by women of colour. From this comes not only a greater appreciation of a variety of life experiences and backgrounds, but a greater understanding of how my privilege is implicated in the suffering of others. In attempting to gain a better understanding of Black male experience, I turned to writers such as Cornel West (hooks & West, 1991; West, 1995), who discusses violence, power and gender relations within a context of racial oppression, and Manning Marable (1995), who provides an analysis of violence against the black community and the particular issues this presents for black men as both victims and perpetrators. Majors and Billson's (1992) work offers a sociological perspective on Black male social and emotional experience through examination of the "cool pose" or public persona adopted by many black men as a defensive posture in a racist environment.

Jewish male experience is explored by Harry Brod (1988). Several authors in his collection grapple with having learned patriarchal values from their fathers while at the same time recognizing the value of their fathers as mentors and guides. As Rabbi Michael Gold writes: " (Jewish) masculinity is bound up with

helping a child function in society and providing that child not only with book knowledge, but values and a world outlook". (Gold, 1988, p. 88)

Barbara Brietman's (1988) essay discusses the qualities that have been cultivated by Jewish men in order to survive. She lists humility, generosity, self-abnegation, love, conciliation, eagerness to please, restraint and serenity - all of which one would be unlikely to come across in many accounts of society's desired "masculine" qualities. This was a striking example of how some male experience will be omitted in conceptions of male socialization; it also subverts the assumption that all men strive to embody mainly negative, macho qualities.

It is crucial that the politics of masculinity incorporate knowledge of the various contexts in which violence and oppression occur - an essential component of recognizing that masculine ideals affect various communities, and various men, in different ways. For instance, King-Kok Cheung (1990) describes stereotypes of Chinese American men as effeminate and weak. Further, this work identifies the stereotype of Chinese men as misogynist, and situates such behaviour within a context of emasculation and racist oppression. Comparing this manifestation of sexism with those described by several African American writers, Cheung writes:

Men of colour who have been abused in a white society are likely to attempt to restore their sense of masculinity by venting their anger at those who are even more powerless - the women and children in their families. (Cheung, 1990, p. 241)

This strikes me as a clear demonstration of why it is insufficient to speak of "male violence" , or "male sexism", as totalizing

phenomena.

In a similar vein, Richard Fung (1995) writes of the "effeminate" stereotype of Chinese men in the historical context of Chinese immigration to Canada. At the same time, he addresses gay experience among Chinese and non-Chinese men, and questions the idea that a men's movement based on gender issues is relevant to all men:

(M)en's movements, whether in support of, hostile, or indifferent to feminism, have generally been founded on precepts that come from the experience of middle-class, straight, white men... Although gay men are not immune to misogyny... our sexuality generally puts us outside the direct mobilization of men as the perpetrators of male (hetero)sexual violence in rape and spousal abuse. Similarly, while straight men may want to learn to touch other men (and still remain straight), it is homophobia that makes same-sex contact taboo - gay men are already penalized for touching. (Fung, 1995, p. 296)

The work of bell hooks has been invaluable in clarifying problems which permeate the issue of difference among masculinities in anti-sexist work. hooks (1992a) problematizes the common assumption that Black men are emasculated and passively accept measurements of their manhood according to white, sexist standards. Of standard scholarship and representation of Black men, she writes:

This work conveyed the message that black masculinity was homogenous. It suggested that all black men were tormented by their inability to fulfil the phallogentric masculine ideal...Erasing the realities of black men who have diverse understandings of masculinity, scholarship on the black family... puts in place of this lived complexity a flat, one-dimensional representation... It does not interrogate the conventional construction of patriarchal masculinity or question the extent to which black men have historically internalized this norm. It never assumes the existence of black men whose creative agency has enabled them to subvert

norms and develop ways of thinking about masculinity that challenge patriarchy. (hooks, 1992a, p. 89)

At the same time, hooks is far from silent on problems of gender inequality within black communities. She (1994) critiques the equation of black liberation with the assertion of black male power. This notion is similar to the concerns in King-Kok Cheung's work, that sexism must be viewed within the context of other forms of oppression, as male assertion of power sometimes results from racist ideology and practice.

It has become clearer within feminist movement that the dominance of gender-based ideologies not only creates an insufficient view of the lives of many women, but that attention to the problematics of sexism alone requires contextualization, as these issues affect different women in different ways. It would be unacceptable and simplistic to write a text on "femininity" without further qualifying specifics, or to study, simply, "women".

Likewise, the literature by and about pro-feminist men requires reflexive and critical attention when grappling with definitions of masculinity and the resultant proposals for change which stem from them. It is apparent that some such work is occurring, and that a number of critical sources exist from both inside and outside the movement. It remains to be seen how successfully these will be incorporated, and a more detailed analysis of the issues raised here will be explored throughout this thesis.

Chapter 2

FEMINIST METHODOLOGIES AND STUDYING "UP"

In approaching the methodological concerns pertaining to this study, I was forced to recognize a lack of precedential work which addressed my particular situation, as well as an absence of studies of a similar nature. Considering my position as a woman feminist researcher interviewing men who were self-proclaimed pro-feminists or feminists became a task to which only certain aspects of the methodological strategies were relevant. This chapter will discuss the preliminary problems I encountered when planning my empirical study and how I chose to deal with them, as well as some underlying challenges this type of study presents to feminist methodology.

Western feminist methodology, typically concerned with the problems of exploitation or mistreatment of subjects, speaks largely to the concerns surrounding the study of individuals or groups in positions of lesser social power than the researcher herself. In recent years, a body of work has developed around cross-cultural research, challenging not only methods but the ethnocentric assumptions upon which they may be formed (Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1996). Focus is almost always upon the study of other women, and the issues involved in interpreting and representing both their similarities to and differences from one's own life and values. If not stated, it is almost always implicit that feminist research is research by women, about women's lives.

A consideration of "studying up" - that is, studying those in **more** powerful social or economic positions than oneself - led me to examine a few studies by women who had looked at communities of men. Sharon Traweek's (1988) study of male physicists and Carol Cohn's (1987; 1989) work with nuclear defense intellectuals proved useful as examples of feminists doing fieldwork in male-dominated settings and using their observations to analyze the discourses that underlie these communities' values and beliefs. However, neither writer discussed her methods or approaches in detail, and neither study proved highly similar to mine, in that the men I interviewed differed significantly from those in such studies in their political views and aims. These studies necessarily took on more powerful "others" who could be viewed as antagonistic to feminist issues, while my research participants could be considered allies and active supporters, despite their locations as holders of male privilege. In this sense, I found myself in an ironic predicament, attempting to examine not simply those with greater social power, but those who were invested in promoting awareness and repudiation of that power.

Diane Wolf, discussing issues of power differences within feminist fieldwork, describes different levels upon which one may realize privilege in a research situation. She writes:

Whereas white women from the "First World" may experience multiple levels of difference that boost their privileged position when working in Third World countries, postcolonial feminist scholars working in their own country, or scholars of colour working with their racial-ethnic group in the United States, experience their class and educational privilege, at the very least. "Studying up" - studying those with more power than the researcher - is perhaps the only way to subvert this

particular power hierarchy. (Wolf, 1996, p. 2)

Unfortunately for my purposes, Wolf does not expand on the latter idea. I found it interesting that studying up was presented only as a way to subvert power hierarchies and not necessarily as essentially beneficial to feminist knowledge.

Deliberating on the absence of examples forced me to consider the nature of my project, and its place in the greater body of feminist empirical work, in a different light. For example, what does the limited literature tell us about the prevalence of or value placed upon this type of study? Perhaps the trend toward studying "down" is indicative of two ways in which privilege can function in a research situation - first, it allows us to avoid intimidating work arrangements with others in which we might not have control and authority, and second, it obscures the need to explore the perspectives of those in more advantaged positions concerning their own situations of privilege.

Some thoughts on studying men

Since beginning this research I have been occasionally approached with the challenge of whether or not it is "feminist" to study men. I argue that feminist attention to gender justice must necessarily account for transformation within both genders. Further, although feminist studies aim to counter the predominant historical focus on the activities and realities of men, it is essential that feminist critique afford attention to the study of masculinity in a manner which examines privilege as a central

focus. It was important for me to consider how feminists might study men, how we might uncover and assess what they are doing in response to women's critique, our needs and our challenge.

One positive reference was found in Marcia Wright's words on the value of research on male subjects.

A feminist approach to male subjects must be ventured, in part because men who are "public" affect women and in part because they must also be rendered as private persons influenced by women and involved in the social reproduction of gender relations in the intimate as well as the extradomestic arenas... I am committed to the scrutiny of male lives for the sake of showing the play of power in its fullest sense, inclusive of women. (Wright, cited in Reinharz, 1992, pp. 142-143)

While considering the necessity of exploring the privilege of those in socially powerful positions, as well as of hearing the perspectives of men themselves on issues concerning their social locations, I came across writing by bell hooks which discusses historical methods by which black people have critically observed white behaviour.

Although there has never been any official body of black people in the United States who have gathered as anthropologists and/or ethnographers to study whiteness, black folks have, from slavery on, shared in conversations with one another "special" knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people. Deemed special because it was not a way of knowing that has been recorded fully in written material, its purpose was to help black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society. (hooks, 1992a, p. 165)

This perspective enabled me to resituate my thoughts on methods of "studying" human beings, and on what it means to observe and demystify those who have long held power over you in various ways. It reminded me that methodology can begin in lived experience and observation, out of which theory is shaped.

hooks (1992a) goes on to discuss how white people react with outrage upon learning that black people scrutinize and form opinions about them, and how this is a function of the inseparability of racism and privilege, as it speaks to our unconscious assumptions about who owns the privileges of looking and judging. Her work calls into question that which has been constructed as unquestionable - the culturally-/self-awarded material and symbolic advantage of certain groups over others. Although such assumptions have been reversed through some facets of feminist change, anti-racist struggle and gay and lesbian liberation movement over the past several decades, we have yet to incorporate theories about the necessity and the particular problematics of studying the more powerful "Other" into general conceptions of methodological ethics. As long as there remains reason to call it studying "up", there remains reason to undertake such investigation.

Empirical research as praxis

Another prominent issue in current/ feminist methodological dialogue is that of the importance of contributing in a significant way to the lives of one's research participants as a way of balancing the usually one-way appropriation of benefits in a research situation. Some methodologists, such as Patti Lather (1991), see feminist research as necessarily enhancing feminist goals in a pro-active way. Lather gives several examples of work

aimed at change, including a research project on violence in the family, which generated enough publicity to result in the creation of a women's shelter.

There is debate over the degree to which research can or should be change-enhancing. For instance, Shulamit Reinharz speaks of participatory studies, in which "the distinction between the researcher(s) and those on whom the research is done disappears" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 181). This process involves shared decision-making about the direction of the project and mutual self-disclosure. It is presented as a partial answer to concerns about appropriating subjects' experience strictly to further one's own work. Another method, "Needs Assessment" seeks to allow a community's specific needs or goals to determine the direction of research, rather than forming such goals before consultation (Reinharz, 1992).

Due to my own position as a woman feminist vis a vis the group I was examining - pro-feminist men - I felt that, again, many common feminist research goals did not apply. Although I had concerns about the protection of my subjects' identities and the correct and sensitive interpretation of their words, I did not set out to empower them or assess the needs of their particular group. Indeed, it would seem inappropriate and awkward to set out to "empower" or "liberate" a group with greater social power and privilege than those closer to my own identity (women, feminists). My feelings about the project are well-aligned with Maria Mies' comments on the integration of research and praxis:

It is much more a matter of the reunification of life and thought, action and knowledge, change and research. I can imagine no freedom for women without this reunification. This is not to say that every single women's research project must have a direct relation to an action. (Mies, 1991, p. 68)

Feeling that my project aimed to provide greater understanding for feminists of the activities and philosophies of pro-feminist men, as well as positing the possibility that the dialogue and certain critique would further self-reflection among the groups of men themselves, I did approach my research as goal-oriented, though not from the angles described in most feminist works. I aimed to provide a feminist "watchdog" on the activities of pro-feminist men and to alert feminists to the fact that supportive men's movements existed, alongside the backlash groups with which we are all more familiar. I wanted my work to address the issue of whether there was a place for men in feminist work, and if so, what that position might look like, in their own view as well as mine. Further, I aimed to assess the effectiveness of such groups in putting their values into action and to come to some conclusions as to the possibilities of their initiating change in other men's values and actions. Finally, I hoped to address issues that seemed to be afforded insufficient attention within the pro-feminist men's movement and to use the results of my study as a challenge to men to reflect on some aspects of their work.

Some notes on qualitative research

A study by Harry Christian (1994), of pro-feminist men in Britain, used similar approaches and techniques to my own.

Christian employed qualitative life-history interviewing to uncover detailed information about the men's lives and political views. Making use of feminist methods which address the value of qualitative inquiry, he acknowledges the limits of life-history interviewing for forming conclusions about all anti-sexist men's lives, while asserting that such in-depth inquiry is essential to "exploratory analytical description and a contribution towards grounded theory construction rather than positivistic theory-testing" (Christian, 1994; p. 16).

Due to the aim of my inquiry - that of uncovering subjects' views of their life experiences and their opinions on issues related to men and feminism - I felt that quantitative methods would serve little function and would not fall within the scope of the project. I was concerned that the broader overview a survey-based study might provide would preclude the chance to explore issues in greater depth and would treat research participants as statistics, rather than validating individual experiences. As Jayaratne and Stewart write, "One frequent source of enthusiasm for qualitative methods stems from their potential to offer a more human, less mechanical relationship between the researcher and "the researched"." (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991, p. 90).

A central issue in my study was the connections men were able to make between transformations in their values and beliefs and the formation of political activism based on these values. I felt that interviewing in depth would be the most effective way to discover and analyze such connections. Similar concerns are highlighted in

Maria Mies' discussion of feminist variants on empirical methods, which account for the influence of personal experience in forming theory and praxis. She writes:

In feminist research we counter th(e) alienated concept of empiricism with the old and new concept of experience as it determined the knowledge of all women and men who are still involved in material life and production processes... This concept includes our experience of our own bodies as well as our experience with the environment. It mediates between internal and external matters. (Mies, 1991, pp. 66-67)

In order to get a sense of broader activities and a profile of the make-up of men's groups, I relied on information published by the groups and an overview, at the beginning of each interview, of the group each man belonged to. Other than a general group profile, I was more concerned with an analytical discussion of the issues surrounding the men's political activism and personal views.

Limitations

I am aware of the limitations of a small study sample, in terms of making overall conclusions about the movement as a whole, as well as the limits this presents to representing men from diverse backgrounds. Cannon, Higginbotham and Leung (1991) address this issue:

Since qualitative research frequently involves face-to-face contact between researcher and subject, open-ended rather than closed-ended questions, un-structured rather than structured interview schedules, samples are typically small. To generate theory, it is much more useful if the small samples under study are relatively homogeneous, since extreme diversity makes the task of identifying common patterns almost impossible. Unfortunately, as a result, much of the newly emerging scholarship on women excludes women of colour and working-class women of all races. (Cannon et al., 1991, p.

115)

Due to the small size of my study, it is difficult to get a sense of what an accurate cross-section of pro-feminist men's groups might look like, along the lines of race, ethnicity, sexual-orientation and social or economic class. My participants were mainly white and heterosexual, with one exception, and from a mix of class backgrounds. When asked to outline a cross-section of their groups, or the movement in general, most affirmed that it is a largely white movement, made up of a disproportionate number of middle-class, educated, professional men. Those who identified as having come from a working-class family defined themselves as middle-class presently.

Most men found it difficult to speculate as to the number of gay or bi-sexual men in the movement, stating that sexual orientation of members was not really discussed. They felt, overall, that the purpose of coming together for political projects, such as violence against women, did not always necessitate a coming out process, and felt it would be inappropriate to ask most of the men about their sexuality unless they knew them quite well. Some men who had been involved in smaller, discussion-based groups reported that most if not all the men in their groups were heterosexual. One man speculated that at most of the larger conferences, about forty per cent of the men were gay. Most of the straight men discussed the importance of learning to overcome their homophobia and identified their groups as gay-affirmative. One man identified as bi-sexual and mentioned

experiences of discrimination and misunderstanding from both straight and gay communities, although he did not specifically refer to the men's groups' position on this and felt that in most cases within the men's organization he belonged to, it remained a private matter.

I have relied on the fact that most of the men I was referred to turned out to be white, on word of mouth from my participants and on my reading, in determining that there are few men of colour present in these groups. (The one man of colour in my study stated that he was the only non-white person in his activist group.) I therefore felt it would be tokenizing to seek out certain people for the reason of their race or ethnicity alone, and inaccurate to make generalizing statements based on such a small sample. I have chosen instead to address the issue of why there is not more diversity, and asked participants questions surrounding this issue in interviews.

Setting up and conducting interviews

In attempting to contact potential participants for interviews, I relied partially on word-of-mouth from my supervisor, friends, or, in one case, a relative, who knew of men who were involved in pro-feminist activities. In several cases, I wrote to organizations, such as the White Ribbon Campaign in Toronto, and Men for Change in Halifax, asking for information and the names and phone numbers of men who might be interested in speaking with me. I contacted individuals through letters and follow-up phone calls

to set up times and locations. In three cases, I was referred to another participant through someone I had already interviewed.

In total I spoke with seven men, one from Vancouver, three from Toronto, one from Montreal and two from Halifax, all of whom were involved in men's groups which focused on either personal discussion around issues of sexism, political activism or, most often, a combination of the two. In all but one case, that of a telephone interview, I was able to ask questions about the participants identities along the lines of class, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Participants identified as heterosexual in all but one case, in which the man identified as bi-sexual. All located themselves as middle-class, although two mentioned having come from working class backgrounds originally. All identified as white except for one man, who was of South Asian origin and of the Muslim faith.

Participants represented a variety of disciplines. Two were professors, one of whom was moving more toward involvement in counselling and presenting workshops on gender issues, one was a massage therapist, one worked for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and another was a psychotherapist. One participant, a former teacher, worked in family violence prevention and one was a graduate student.

Interviews were taped and transcribed, and varied from one to two and a half hours in length. In one case a long distance interview was conducted by telephone as my Vancouver participant was unavailable until after I had begun research in Toronto. Face-

to-face interviews were held in an agreed-upon location - usually the offices of the interviewees, in one case in a cafeteria and in one case at his home. Initially I hesitated to conduct interviews in private homes due to concerns about safety. It was interesting to note this example of "the degree to which male violence holds power over women's lives, considering that my concern extended even to men who are actively working against male violence. In this particular case, after conducting a few other interviews and speaking with this participant, I felt comfortable with his suggestion to meet in his home.

All participants were given a consent form (Appendix A), which guaranteed confidentiality through the choice of a pseudonym and other protections. They were offered the opportunity to approve direct quotes that were used, and were informed that they could refuse to answer any question or stop the taping at any time without explanation.

Despite most participants' lack of concern about confidentiality, I insisted on using pseudonyms initially in all but one case, in accordance with the ethical obligations agreed to in my proposal. In one case, that of writer Michael Kaufman, it was agreed that the use of a pseudonym would be inappropriate due to his prominence as a key figure in the pro-feminist men's movement and the fact that I frequently quote his writing throughout my text. (As with the other participants, he was given the opportunity to approve all quotes from his interview which are used later in the study.) It would have felt awkward to write the

views of one person under two different names - one real and one a pseudonym. In other cases, the men were asked to choose a pseudonym but were given the option of using their real name after they had read the interview results, which included their own quotes. Some wished to be identified as they preferred their groups' work to be made public and had spoken with the media or published articles before.

All the men I interviewed showed a great deal of interest and support. All but one person I contacted were interested in speaking with me. Our discussions were enjoyable for me and, despite concerns around the issue of studying "up", I felt comfortable speaking with these men. This could be partially due to their awareness of and experience with feminist issues and comfort in speaking about them, as well as the fact that there was relatively little reason for them to be uncomfortable or defensive, considering that they are supportive of much of the body of work from which my interests stemmed. It is possible that their heightened awareness of gender hierarchies, compared to that of many men, furthered the comfort level in the research situation. I was also aware that some aspects of my identity which were shared with some subjects - ie. I am heterosexual, white and from a working-class background - may have contributed to feelings of understanding or familiarity.

Many of my interviewees' ideas and views were ones I supported, although I usually refrained from expressing my personal standpoint on issues that were covered, at least until they had

answered or the interview was over. This was a conscious choice due to my concern about influencing participants' views. Although many feminist methodologists, including those whose work I have cited here, advocate an active, reciprocal dialogue between the researcher and participants, I felt that the nature of the work - again, a study of people who were not in need of my assistance or support for their empowerment, called for a different approach. My particular situation as a member of a group that my subjects were attempting to support placed me in a position which I felt was not conducive to my sharing equally in the discussion. Although I did not assume that my opinions, if expressed, would necessarily shape responses, I did want to guard against such possibilities in order to ensure the validity of the information I obtained. Participants seemed comfortable with the focus of conversation being mainly on their own experience and views, as was I.

In the pre-interview contact, I did answer questions as to what my research involved, the general content of my questions and, in some cases, why I had become interested in this topic of study. In one case, I sent questions to a participant beforehand. I also offered a copy of the results of my study as well as a copy of the transcript of our interview when complete (see consent form, Appendix A). Most were interested in receiving these documents and most expressed gratitude at having had the opportunity to reflect on their views. Several also provided me with useful media articles, brochures or archival documents about their groups.

My interview schedule (Appendix B) was designed as an informal

guideline by which to structure conversation. In most cases, questions were not asked exactly as they were written out, and the order tended to shift. Instead, I used them as a general reminder of the topic areas of importance. Several participants responded to the last question - asking if there was anything they would like to add - with one or two further points, whereas some felt that everything had been covered. For the telephone interview, a shortened version was used (Appendix C), although the interview lasted for nearly an hour and several other topic areas, not included in the brief questionnaire, were addressed.

Often, an interviewee would broach various topics within a single response, answering several questions which hadn't been asked yet. This tendency proved interesting in that it affirmed my sense that the topics of questions were central issues. As my questions were derived mainly from the literary sources I had read and my thinking about prominent issues within the written work, it was also interesting to note the similarities in the content of the empirical and theoretical research. These patterns will be discussed in the chapters which follow.

Chapter 3

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Throughout the process of speaking with pro-feminist men, I was surprised to find that emergent themes related closely to those I had already identified in the texts on masculinity issues. Although my questions aimed to address the areas I had seen as central, most participants touched on several of the main themes without prompting, making some questions unnecessary. For instance, opinions about the mythopoetic movement came up when discussing personal change, or men's fears surrounding feminist change were discussed when describing reactions to pro-feminist presentations or talks. Keeping in mind the great deal of overlap, I have attempted to delineate four main topic areas to be discussed in this chapter.

I will begin with the participants' descriptions of how they became involved in the pro-feminist movement, including how they came to view the need for male feminist activism and what their early influences were. Second, I will report on the activities of the men's groups and some relevant issues in organizing and forming goals. Third, I want to outline the respondents' views concerning the appropriate role for men to play in feminist politics. This will include their vision of the kind of work that needs to be done on the part of men, their contact with feminist women and how they respond to feedback and critique. It will entail discussion of the Mythopoetic approach, including the tension and the harmony that

can exist between the goals of personal and political change. Finally, I will address participants' views on the reasons for lack of diversity in the movement and their ideas concerning how to transform the situation.

Early influences and involvement:

When questioned as to how they became involved in men's groups, several participants mentioned the influence of partners or women friends who encouraged them to consider gender issues. Some identified a key turning point, such as a failed relationship or a realization about their own behaviour, while others described a more gradually-developing curiosity or awareness. In most cases, the influence of feminist women in the men's lives was extremely prevalent, but other factors combined with this to stress the importance of the issue. Bob, for example, spoke of the influence of a feminist activist girlfriend in high school, which coincided with his growing interest in socialist issues. This led to his reading of socialist feminist texts, which has continued into recent years while he has become involved in the White Ribbon Campaign.

Peter Davison¹, of a Halifax men's group, spoke of his

Some participants wished to remain anonymous and chose first-name pseudonyms, while others wished to be identified. In order to remain consistent, participants will be referred to by first names only, after being identified with their full names in cases where such permission was granted. Peter Davison will be referred to by first name only after this initial reference.

involvement in the Peace Movement as having contributed to an understanding of gender inequity:

I guess I would have started on the macro level - looking at the global issues of, you know, who's really running this planet, and it became moderately obvious to me that it was men that use war to solve their problems, and violence. And so from the macro to the micro - interpersonal violence and dating violence and stuff like that - it's all on a spectrum of how men see the world and their own insecurities and their need to control. So that all started to work from the big down to the small.

Peter also mentioned his ex-wife as an early feminist influence, and described the end of his marriage as a catalyst for personal change and reflection concerning his place in society and what it means to be a male. He went on to identify the Montreal Massacre as a key turning point, at which gender issues and concerns over male violence became more central for him.

Writer Bert Young², who has been involved in men's groups for much of the 1980s and 90s, described his involvement with his long-term partner, a strong feminist, as important to his awareness of male privilege. He also spoke of other feminist women he had associated with as academic colleagues or friends, and described a key early experience at a conference of mostly women where feminist issues were being discussed:

As the day progressed I became more agitated, sad, depressed, guilty... And I came to the realization that there was not much point in me going to these conferences when the work to be done was outside the conference with other men. But I had to find other men who were experiencing the same feelings and emotions and political sort of questions that I did, because I didn't have any problems relating to the feminist positions

After this initial reference, Bert Young will be referred to by first name only.

- I had a problem with "what am I doing here? - I realize that there are some serious problems with inequity here; what am I going to do about it?"

Bert spoke of having worked in writing and editing for a leftist/anarchist publication, and of the lack of support for gender issues in the left in general. His search for like-minded men led him to explore discussion-based men's conferences and eventually political activism around gender issues.

Several men spoke of an invitation from another male as having led them to become involved in their groups, even when they were unsure as to their exact needs or goals. For instance, Sam, who is involved in the Halifax men's group, described this process:

A colleague of mine mentioned that he was involved in this group called "Men for Change", and mentioned a little bit about what they were seeking to do. It just felt like an appropriate thing for me to look into. I guess I've had a long questioning of the typical point-of-view - the male perspective, if you like. Also, through personal history - I spent five years in the military, so I got a sense of what that aggressive learning can be like...So in a broader scope, some interest in exploring is from the personal level - really feeling that there were some issues that I needed to explore and, since I'd been looking for someplace, this seemed like the place to start.

Similarly, Daniel, from Vancouver, was initially invited by a friend to come to a men's group. He spoke of having spent little time in a men-only environment, feeling unsure as to how to relate to a group of only men and having a desire to learn.

Salim, who is currently involved in the White Ribbon Campaign, spoke of an already-existing awareness of violence against women through personal witness of a woman going through such abuse. His concern manifested itself at first in efforts to bring the White Ribbon into his faith community, and later in direct involvement

after meeting a representative who participated in a community event:

He was talking about the White Ribbon Campaign and I decided that I did want to get involved in a more formalized structure that was attempting to want to see a shift in behaviour - a shift in terms of paradigm...

He, too, mentioned having had strong influential women in his life, who had shaped a great number of his values and beliefs.

Michael Kaufman¹, writer and co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, spoke at length of his early interest in feminist issues, describing certain events that triggered involvement. One such example was as follows:

It wasn't until the end of a major relationship in the late '70s that I started doing some counselling for the first time and that led to a training program in peer counselling, and a workshop, and the workshop started every morning with a men's group. And I walked into my first men's group at this week-long retreat, and I felt completely uncomfortable. There was one guy who looked like a stock-broker, another guy who looked like a football player and another guy who looked like who-knows-what... I looked at them and thought 'God! - I don't have anything to talk about with these guys!' And sure enough, one of them was a stock-broker and one of them was a football player... but as soon as we'd open our mouths, the things that would come out were the same, the issues and feelings about the expectations that we faced as men... It was one of those "lightbulb going off" types of experiences, and for me it really shifted what I was doing in my life and I began in the early '80s to do some men's support groups and counselling groups...

He went on to describe how counselling led to an interest in reading, and finally in writing to address issues he felt were missing in books on masculinity. Since the late '80s he has helped to establish various men's organizations which address awareness of

¹After this initial reference, Michael Kaufman will be referred to by first name only.

men's violence against women.

Activities and Goals of Men's Groups:

The men involved in my study belonged to organizations or smaller groups which dealt with masculinity issues in a number of ways. The two men I spoke with in Halifax, Peter and Sam, are involved in both a small support group, where personal issues are discussed, and in a broader activist organization, from which this and other small groups formed. The organization, called "Men for Change", has done curriculum work within the school system to educate children on gender issues, as well as organizing or supporting a number of community events. Members are concerned with promoting awareness of violence against women and support the nation-wide White Ribbon Campaign and the Nova Scotia-based Purple Ribbon Campaign, a symbolic commemoration of the Montreal Massacre.

Peter, a founder of "Men for Change" and a participant in a small group, explains the activities of the reflection group, which is made up of six to eight men:

...they commit to meet for a period of time and they renew that covenant, because you need to have safety and trust built and you can't do it if you have an open door policy. My reflection group, the one I'm in, has been meeting for five years...there's a need that's being met there. People are often fascinated as to what we talk about and I say we really talk about everything - except sports and finances, which just don't seem to come up; they're just not interesting to us! So the traditional form for men's dialogue is not something we explore. We talk about who we are, on an emotional level, who we are in terms of our challenges, hopes and fears, and all that sort of stuff.

He went on to describe quarterly retreats which the group

makes to the farm of one member, where they work together and enjoy potluck food and socializing. He spoke of elements of the Mythopoetic movement which the group has explored, including ritual, poetry and story-telling.

Sam, who is involved in the same group, also spoke of the value of the reflection group, and added that the group attempts to have an occasional open evening where new men can come to find out more about the group's goals.

Both men spoke at length about their political work as well. Peter described the work the group has done in classrooms.

What we found happening was that we were getting called into schools to talk about being a male and masculinity stuff... the teachers would think it was fabulous because it's sort of - finally - a guy talking about being a guy.

A further project which emerged from this experience involved the writing of a three-volume set of books (Davies, Davison, & Safer, 1994) around issues concerning violence and relationships aimed at young people, which the authors (three group members) market themselves. Peter spoke of both the success and content of this project:

...we actually had a tremendous response from it. It's actually being sent across North America, but we're marketing it here in Nova Scotia... the Violence Prevention Secretariat in Ontario has purchased 700 copies... We've also been selected out of twelve violence prevention resources in North America... for a three-year study by the University of Winnipeg. I'm going there next week to teach the teachers how to use it. So needless to say it's catching on, and the reason it's catching on is because there's a gender analysis. It looks really deeply into why it is that men are violent and how it is that we socialize. I mean, it takes years of training to turn a boy into a violent man, and what are the components of that training, and how does the media impact on

that? How do role models impact on that, how does our language impact on that and how does the family impact on that?

The Halifax group has also participated in Take Back the Night activities by providing food and setting up the post-walk events, and has organized different series of films and guest speakers around gender issues for public attendance.

Three participants were active in administrative and organizing levels of the White Ribbon Campaign, based in Toronto. Michael spoke in detail of the campaign's origins, which began in 1991 following both the Montreal Massacre and two violent crimes against women in the Toronto area. He described being contacted by an acquaintance who had remembered his involvement in a men's pro-choice effort which had appeared in the *Globe and Mail* a couple of years before:

...he wondered if we could revive the idea of doing some sort of newspaper ad of men saying we were just appalled by these types of crimes. And I thought of that a bit, and felt that what we needed was not a one-shot ad...but some way for regular guys, men in the thousands or tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, whatever, to be challenged to express their opposition to men's violence against women... (we wanted) to not do something that was just sort of exclusive for those 'in the know'... or consider themselves on the left, because if indeed we know that violence against women is epidemic in our society, if indeed we know that it involves men as perpetrators - men right across the society - then, get to those men!... We wanted a vehicle to get men talking, to get men thinking, get men challenging other men, and came up with this idea of a white ribbon...

The overall goal of the White Ribbon Campaign is to raise awareness among men and to act as a catalyst for men to examine our behaviour and to challenge other men to speak out. And wearing a white ribbon we see as a public pledge never to commit, condone or to remain silent about violence against women.

Taking up this discussion, Salim added his long-term vision for the organization:

I think that the ultimate objective of the group is to actually see a time when it doesn't need to exist anymore, because you've reached the point where (violence is) simply something that's not done, and eventually that may mean that the need for shelters is not so great, because there won't be survivors - there won't be people having to negotiate through these kinds of relationships.

Although the effort began in Toronto, White Ribbon groups have become a nation-wide phenomenon, as ribbons are distributed by sports teams, shops, community groups and schools. Wearing of the ribbon was originally encouraged during the time of commemoration of the Montreal Massacre. Due to protest from women's groups, who felt the focus was being shifted from women's activism, recent years have seen White Ribbon events take place a week or so earlier. Efforts involve both men and women in some areas, and the organization has focussed on the specific issue of violence against women:

We felt from the beginning that this should be strictly non-partisan, that we wanted to... not let any men off the hook. We wanted to have an organization that's a place for someone who's conservative, or someone who's liberal, or New Democrat, or - it doesn't matter; I don't care what! And one way that we did that was to say that our focus would be fairly narrow; we weren't an all-embracing pro-feminist men's organization; we were not going to address all the issues that are feminist issues... (Michael)

Reflecting many of the written sources I have read which discuss White Ribbon, Bert expressed his regard for the organization's success:

I think probably that is one of the few positive examples... I think that the issue of men's violence against women was something that men had little choice but to be cognizant of and recognize and support women on...I think the issue, and

the White Ribbon attempt to make it an important issue that the whole society would take seriously, has been successful.

Alongside White Ribbon there exists a loose network, called the "Men's Network for Change", which consists of pro-feminist men's organizations throughout Southern Ontario and Montreal. Both Michael and Bert were involved in the Network's establishment, although they did not speak of it in detail. Several participants referred to the Network as a resource for contacting other groups or receiving publications. For Bert, establishment of the Network seemed to be a response to his perceived need for a more political focus within the men's movement.

...after about five years of support group work, going to annual conferences, writing about my experiences and stuff, I got really upset at one of the men's conferences, and raised a political issue... what I was saying is "is there a politics to the men's movement, and if so what is it?"... that led in six months to some dialogue, and a group of men in Toronto and a couple in London and myself decided that we were going to call for a weekend conference that might be called the "Men's Network for Change"... We worked through some of the dilemmas of where you could be spiritual... but you could also be politically aware that the movement was for change - men need to change; men need to help other men and to support women and identify with women's struggles, etc.

So then the horrific events that occurred six months later at Ecole Polytechnique made this a bit more poignant to say the least...The men's movement, in terms of the network itself, moved fairly quickly...

It was interesting to note that several men referred to the Montreal Massacre as a catalyst for organizing and raising awareness of violence against women, and it struck me that this tragic event has become one of the few identifying concerns unique to Canadian pro-feminist organizing.

Daniel spoke of an event his group organized around Dec. 6, which included inviting men they knew from work or other venues to

a commemorative gathering. Each man was asked to bring a potluck dish and twenty dollars and donations were split between NAC and the local Rape Relief groups. The gathering was treated as a time for men to reflect upon the massacre and the ways in which men are raised to be violent in our society.

Daniel's group, made up of only five or six men, meets once a month in the Vancouver area to discuss personal matters of concern to the men involved. He described the group as concentrating on a "feelings" level, as all of the members are well-versed in intellectual discussion or academic issues and enjoy a chance to speak about personal issues with other men. Despite the focus on support and discussion, the group obviously forms and carries out activist goals as well. Besides the above example, Daniel described an endeavour during which the group went to a talk given by prominent men's rights leader and anti-feminist Warren Farrell. The members placed themselves strategically around the room amidst the Farrell-supporters and in turn disputed everything he had to say. Daniel reported enjoying the effort and felt it was appropriately disruptive. He also spoke of a desire to get involved in efforts to educate young men in the school system about gender issues.

Overall, it became fairly clear that certain issues are central in pro-feminist men's organizing, including ending men's violence against women, educating and mentoring boys and supporting women feminists' organizations where possible. Along with this activism, there exists a continued effort to better understand

masculinity itself, both as a constructed social phenomenon and in its various meanings for individual men. I will turn now to the manner in which both the personal and political arenas come to shape men's vision of their place in feminist politics.

**The role of men in gender politics:
personal versus political work...**

Virtually all the men I spoke with expressed concern over the necessary integration of personal and political goals in achieving gender justice. Those who were involved in reflection groups concerned with discussing experiences, fears and hopes around masculinity issues were also engaged in translating their personal discoveries and changes into political activism and in seeking ways to support women's initiatives for change. Despite agreement that the integration of both realms was essential, views on how to go about personal transformation and self-discovery differed greatly. This can be seen most strongly in the interviewees' feelings about and participation in the mythopoetic movement. While some men found elements of mythopoetic work beneficial or therapeutic, others expressed concerns over the use of rituals and felt that the work was limited in its ability to advance social change.

Bert, when asked if he found there to be anything useful about this movement, replied emphatically:

NO!!the mythopoetic leaders and the mythopoetic followers want to identify with the quote soft male that the industrial

revolution has caused us to be and (make the point that) 'we also suffer - like YOU WOMEN!, and that we men need to be liberated like you women!... so you should be patient and understanding and let us run around naked in the woods'... I think actually it's done serious damage. I think it's self-serving. I really do think no matter how much the argument would be couched, that it is anti-woman. In my estimation - both anti-radical and impractical.

Addressing the issue of using rituals in the men's movement, as is common in the mythopoetic groups, Bert continued:

I've been one of the people who have been opposed to ritual in the movement... when I first started reading Keen and Bly and read a few other critiques of them, I seriously began to question the rituals that were being used when we got together in the men's group. And now I refuse automatically to be involved in any rituals... I think (they) really affirm and re-establish the rituals that men have always had to exclude women, to restore their manhood, to reaffirm their identity or whatever. I don't think it helps women. All societies that we know of that have those kinds of rituals have the highest inequality - women have the lowest amount of say or participation in the political reality and the cultural reality... So I don't think we need to bring this back!

Bob, describing his reaction to reading the mythopoetic literature, stated:

I think it's important that one gets in touch with themselves, but the process that they were describing I found highly problematic and highly sexist as well. And there was no movement toward collective change - it was all an individual basis. That's something that, again, I see as important, but unless there's a macro approach to changing attitudes and behaviours, it's not going to be altogether effective.

Salim spoke of what he felt to be an elitist approach that characterizes mythopoetic groups, addressing the irony of the groups' view that they have become "enlightened" or more aware, while they easily overlook issues of class and privilege.

...what is the composition of the movement? Who are the men who make up the movement?...The fact that you have a certain level of income or you've reached a certain level in your life speaks to the fact that you are able to participate, but there are other men for whom this would be a complete luxury,

because they're more worried about... whether there's going to be enough money for groceries, whether, you know, there's going to be this for the kids, that for the kids... so please, don't get lulled into this sense of the fact that you're somehow doing something to change the order of things...

In contrast to the views of the previous three men, Peter and Sam found value in mythopoetic work while carrying out their political activism, and felt that the two movements could be complimentary. When asked about his opinions of the mythopoetic movement, Peter replied:

Well, I think it's really neat. And there's a lot of controversy about it: one of the guys in the group says "Well, that's great - men can learn to cry but they still hold all the power"... And I think that's really important...there's a really important balance, I think, that needs to be struck there.

Describing what is appealing about the mythopoets, he continued:

I'm fascinated by the juxtaposition of the "in control" businessman with the tie and, you know, working and breathing on the fourteenth floor (with) the image of a man dancing naked in the woods, drumming, putting face paint on... I think it introduces a whole realm of possibilities for men... it unpacks some of the vulnerability of masculinity, some of the deeper truths about what masculinity could be. I think there are very distinct advantages of that, with the possibility that men that are only locked into that exploration of what it is... can very much be trapped by a certain self-indulgence in that level of exploration.

Sam also described the movement's value, emphasizing storytelling as something that has been particularly influential for him.

I think there's a lot of power and potential in stories. I think that's where empowerment comes from - being able to express our story and describe our story and our life... and being heard. And also the lessons that are to be discovered in those tales, those explorations of music; I think there's a lot of age-old wisdom to be found there.

When questioned about the common criticism that the movement fails to acknowledge men's power, Sam expressed disagreement:

I think part of that dismissal is not really understanding or not really experiencing what that movement is about. I think part of it is kind of that angry young male energy that can be quick to cut away at these older leaders who have been leading the men's movement, or just the older ideas...

Having looked into American mythopoetic texts, I was initially surprised to hear pro-feminist men defend mythopoetic ideas, and wondered at the contact they may or may not have had with groups or writers in the States, who are generally far less supportive than they themselves of feminist goals. Michael spoke to this issue:

...there hasn't been as big a split in Canada. The men involved in mythopoetic stuff are also sympathetic to feminism, see themselves as pro-equality... so what's often happened is that the debates in the States come up here and mythopoetic types, or men involved in these efforts... say "what are you talking about? - you know, I send a cheque off to NAC and I'm working on these different causes"...and in the States what's happened is... it's a movement more to the right, with more of a structure including men who are explicitly misogynist and anti-feminist.

Identifying his own position, he referred to problems with culturally-appropriated rituals and the lack of attention to men's power and privilege, while cautiously mentioning positive aspects:

...it provided a place for many men, for the first time, to actually talk about their lives AS MEN - as human beings, but as MEN - to talk about their lives and their fears and to look at their relations with other men, their relations with their fathers and so on... So, you know, I'm not a big supporter of the mythopoetic men's movement, but I think that it's important to know that part of what they've done is express a real need that many men have had. Now, that much said, I think that a lot of what they are, what they do is at best limited, and in the hands of some of them is downright reactionary.

Regardless of their personal practices, all of the men involved stressed the importance of integrating personal and

political change as a key issue for men's movement. As Michael stated:

...our work has been marred by a false polarization. You know, do you change society and then as a result change individuals, or change individuals and as a result society will be changed? What I say is - why don't you do both? Why should you decide? And there's compelling reasons that you must do both. Otherwise you have attempts to change society that just reproduce the ugly patriarchal power relations...And both become a corrective for each other - so you're not just involved in navel-gazing, nor are you just out there sort of heroically changing the world while, you know, if you're heterosexual, your wife stays at home with the babies doing the cooking.

Obviously for Bert, this issue was not addressed early enough in the men's work in which he was involved. Most of his criticisms of both the mythopoetic movement and the pro-feminists reflected his concern over a lack of political focus. He states:

I think it's absolutely necessary for men to spend time learning how to emotionally communicate... But I think that once they learn that, then they are prepared to take another step...

His criticisms stemmed from a feeling that the personal aspects of men's groups held more appeal for many men, as he joked: "You want to get a group of men out you put up a banner called 'Father and Son Night'; you put up one called 'Women and Men Challenging Equality' - there's five of us in the room!".

When asked if it were possible to be engaged in both emotional and political work at the same time, he quickly answered:

Women do it all the time! - What's unique about us? And (women) have done it from a much more disadvantaged position than we have, because you have less power, you've had to struggle for recognition... at the same time, you had to handle all the normal emotional life experiences that most men do..

Asked which realm of change was more important, Sam replied:

Well, I would say they go closely hand in hand and it would be really hard for me to separate the two. And how I choose to be on a personal level would certainly be reflected in my community and within my family situation. I would hesitate to focus on just one at the expense of the other... I think that if I don't do my homework with myself that the work I do outside - externally, let's say - is valuable to a certain extent, but it may not have the roots it would require to really go far.

Peter's views reflected this position:

...for me, it has been useful to explore the personal, but to translate it to the political: that is the whole journey. If, as for the personal, I don't translate it to the political then it's half a journey for me.

Salim saw this process as beginning with involvement in activism and naturally including processes of personal reflection.

...I can't see that the processes have to be mutually exclusive, because I think that, by getting involved in these types of things, you're constantly engaged in a process of reflection because you're speaking to other men... But that doesn't mean to say that I think one gets involved in the group... because your intent is to go through a process of self-discovery, because that's very selfish! I think that that's one of the secondary benefits.. which is a wonderful outcome. But you really should go into it because you're really committed to the idea of change...

When asked to identify what, specifically, a man can do to begin a consciousness-raising process that works on a level deeper than intellectual understanding, Michael summed up a number of ideas that most participants had touched on:

I think part of it is the process of learning to listen to women and to know that there's been a whole part of human knowledge that's been undervalued and downplayed by men and the institutions of society... This happens at a social level; it happens at an interpersonal level... Another way is by looking at the way our masculinity has been constructed... (What I've found) is that the very way that men have defined power is the source of men's own pain, alienation, fears, insecurities, sense of not being powerful - that men set up an impossible task to perform. And the

ways that masculinity develops involve setting up these strong ego barriers - or, in sort of more popular language, I use the "suit of armour"...

The third, I think has to do with men's practices, because I think to a large extent what we do...plays a role in creating our attitudes and our beliefs and our consciousness. So, for example, if men - whether it's with the assistance of women or just by our own evolution - men play an equal role in housekeeping and childrearing, it affects who we are, not just our beliefs - it affects our consciousness... Because who we are is not just something that's formed once and for all and static, but it exists in dynamic relationship with our lives. ...I'll add a fourth: the fourth is for men to engage in public social action, as men, addressing gender issues - in the broad sense of the term.

The next section will expand on the first point raised by Michael - the necessity of listening to women - and address some ways in which pro-feminist men's groups are receiving feminist critique and considering women's mandate in defining their goals.

The role of men in gender politics:

fe(men)ism?

When asked about the responses they had received concerning pro-feminist work, the men reported mainly positive feedback. At the same time, several discussed issues pertaining to relations with women's groups, including some scepticism on the part of feminists. When asked about the need for separate male and female spaces in setting goals, discussing needs and organizing, most men felt that more integration in the future would be preferable. At the same time, they recognized the need for men to carry out certain goals on their own as a way of beginning to take responsibility for change, which has typically been left in the

hands of women's groups. They respected the need for women to have space without men present and spoke of the importance of asking women's groups what support was needed, rather than assuming. For instance, in answering questions concerning an appropriate model for male organizing, Bob stated:

The problem is that men are not assuming responsibility. Men's violence against women has been perceived as a women's issue... Women have enough on their plate and men need to do something about it...It would be nice if men were assuming responsibility and then we could work sort of collectively, but as it stands...men need to attempt to make men aware.

Similarly, Salim spoke of the importance of men's responsibility in educating and informing themselves and other men.

I think from a long term perspective it would certainly be wonderful to be able to do more work together, but I think that women have had to be responsible for the whole process of education and awareness and outreach for such a long period of time that if there is a group, and in this case a group of men, that is willing to take more of a role in educating men... I think that's a good thing.

I think there's a personal level of responsibility that you have to take that says 'I as a man am going to learn more about what sexism is all about', and that's not to say that a woman is not able to teach a man about sexism, but that it adds another level of responsibility to it by saying 'well, help me to understand because I don't understand', rather than saying 'I'm going to try to do something about this by finding out myself, and I may ask you questions if that's OK.'

Expanding on the idea of working independently as men, while still considering women's needs, he continued:

...one of the things that we do is certainly take stock of what perceptions exist of us as a men's movement, in this case in the area of violence against women, and certainly consult with women and women's groups.

Bert too stressed the importance of incorporating women's views and gave an example of how his branch of White Ribbon went about this:

When we were doing one of the first White Ribbon Campaigns in Montreal, I contacted the women's centre at McGill and had a meeting with the coalition group with about nine or ten women. We made it clear that we weren't there to tell them what we were going to do for them, or that we necessarily needed them to tell us... We said... 'these are some of the things we've been doing, and the anti-violence work that we've been doing, and we'd like you to comment on it, and is there something that we could do for you?'

Bert felt that women's response to this approach was very positive. When asked what he thought of women's groups who did not want to work with men, he laughed and replied, "I think they're probably very wise!! - Maybe bring them in for the last fifteen minutes of the meeting... And DON'T get them coffee."

Peter spoke of a very similar approach to Bert's in obtaining feminist feedback. He described receiving a message from a local women's group shortly before Dec. 6, asking that the men's group not speak with the press on that day, so as not to take focus away from what women were doing. The men's group had not been intending to speak with the press, but wondered what they could perhaps do to show support:

How can you be a pro-feminist man and not respect what women want? - You can't do that... What we did do is in fact communicate with them and say 'You know, we're not going to talk to the media but thanks for being worried anyway, but what CAN we do?' We offered childcare, we offered to bake cookies, we offered to set up the post-walk event. And they took us up on the cookies and the post-walk event stuff. So, we basically did a very simple thing that men don't do - we asked what is it they wanted...(Peter)

Michael expressed similar concerns and actions on behalf of his organization:

...what I feel is important in something like White Ribbon - we certainly look to women's groups for leadership. If a new law gets proposed, or something happens, then we get on the phone to women's groups and say 'what do you think about

this?', because we know they're the experts... but that doesn't mean that's the end of it... We have the capacity to reach men, in ways that perhaps women don't. So our agenda can't just be, you know, women's groups saying 'here's your task for the week'.

The issue of men seeking women's directives brought up a certain tension between asking for feedback and relying too heavily on women to do the work of setting the agenda. Similar to Salim's concern that men must take initiative, not expecting women to play the role of educator, Michael felt it was important that a men's group not become the "men's auxiliary" of the women's movement.

I don't think that men have a role in the women's movement. By definition, the women's movement is a women's movement. But what I'd say is that, even though efforts to end violence against women, or to secure better childcare, are part of the women's movement - they're not ONLY part of the women's movement; they're not a subset of the women's movement - they are continuous with the women's movement.

Speaking, again, of the views of women on men's organizing, Michael stated that most women are not interested in giving instructions:

...most women we speak to say "Just do it! Don't wait for us to tell you what to do! If you're doing things that we disagree with, you'll hear it. But we don't want you to do this because we're telling you what to do."

Bert, when asked who should prescribe the role of men in organizing around feminist issues, drew an analogy with racial politics:

Well, is it really any different being a white person in North Carolina in the mid-60s and suggesting that I should be telling the N double-A CP how to run their march? If I'm sympathetic and aware that racism exists and I want to declare it as a white person that I'm against that, I don't need to go down to Alabama or Georgia - in fact, I think it was one of the black leaders in the 70s who said 'your best fight against racism is to go to your own back yard and fight it' - that's the hardest thing to do. The hardest thing to do is to do this

kind of work - men's work - in our own back yard.

Bob expressed a feeling that women's groups tended to respond to White Ribbon activism in one of two ways - either with a "pat on the back", which he felt was unnecessary, or with a degree of scepticism, which he felt was somewhat warranted. He spoke of some specific criticisms of White Ribbon, stating that some women have distrusted the campaign for taking advantage of a sort of "Old Boys' network" in order to recruit support and corporate sponsorship. He also pointed out the common misconception that the group receives government funding, stating that this has never been the case. These and other criticisms were raised and addressed in detail by Michael as well.

Michael acknowledged how the immense media coverage garnered by the campaign in its beginning stages served to detract attention from women's activism around Dec. 6, leading women to question the group's motivations.

...and rightly so - they'd been working on these issues for ten, twenty years... I think that our response has been several-fold to that, over the years. One is that the media attention was greatly reduced in the following year and then just completely died - we were no longer interesting. The second thing I'd say is that...because of sexism, certain messages men will hear more from other men than from women...it's wrong, it's objectionable, but it's also part of the reality that we're trying to change...one of the first messages we reach men with is 'listen to women'. So there's a paradox there - it's using our voice to get men listening to women; but that's the nature of the beast...

He went on to describe efforts that have successfully moved White Ribbon events away from Dec. 6, and then raised some misconceptions that Bob had also addressed.

We also, early on, were perceived as an organization with

tonnes of money...There were rumours going around about (how) I was being paid a fortune by the organization. I was briefly on staff parttime... it worked out to about minimum wage I think... We've only been able to afford a very small staff and have donated office space...(Michael)

In response to questions about whether the organization could be rightfully accused of taking money that might otherwise go to women's groups, both he and Salim confirmed that the organization has never accepted government funding. Salim broached the topic of whether or not donation money should be diverted to women's causes, stating:

... we would certainly encourage people, if they were asking us, for example 'is there an organization where I should put this money if I want to do more of a service-oriented kind of thing?'...we'd say yes, there are plenty of organizations that actually do exist, whether it be shelters or otherwise, who work directly with women...

Overall, the men I spoke with were open about the criticism they had received and seemed to conceptualize their groups, and the movement in general, as continually developing projects in need of reflective evaluation. Several expressed appreciation for the fact that my research would add to a necessary, ongoing dialogue between feminists and pro-feminist men.

Diversity and identity politics:

When asked about diversity within their men's groups, participants broached a number of areas, including age range, racial diversity, class background, marital status, sexual preference and physical ability. Although there was general agreement that the movement consisted of mostly white, middle class

men, factors such as age, sexual preference, marital status, ability and political orientation showed a less homogeneous membership. This section will address the current composition of the groups and report on the men's concerns about attracting a more diverse population.

All participants involved in the White Ribbon Campaign confirmed that the campaign's membership is mostly white. Salim, who is of South Asian origin, replied:

...I'm the only person who is reflective of an ethno-cultural community, in terms of a distinct community that's readily identifiable. I don't know the backgrounds of the other men... it's not a question of it not being important, but what brings us together is the fact that we want to work at ending men's violence against women...But that's not to say that we don't appreciate and we're not wanting to make a more concerted effort to be sure that the organization is really reflective of the diversity of the community that exists...

Both Salim and Bob stated that the majority of organizational members could be considered middle class, based on factors such as professional status and education level, while Michael pointed out that more diversity exists in terms of class when considering the many groups across the country who are active. Michael posited reasons for the lack of diversity along racial lines, stating:

I think it's about several things. I think part of it is because the core of the organization has been white men with connections with particular communities - our style of working, or working in English, or whatever, even though we've made attempts to go beyond that. I think it's also - the men in some communities have been less touched by feminism than men in other communities, and I think it would be naïve to say otherwise - I mean, that's just the way things still are... there are active volunteers in Toronto from Ethiopia, who were very committed, who also talked about how hard it was working in their community, because they said that for many people... violence against women was still completely unchallenged... So I think partly it has to do with the nature of different communities, partly it has to do with how we've done the work.

I don't think we've done a good enough job in terms of getting resources for translation, getting resources for the outreach that will draw men from diverse communities...

Bob expressed a strong concern that the organization is not targeting all men and that the representation is not reflective enough of the population. He reported that members are aware of the situation, but cited barriers such as language, time and the small size and low funds of the organizing body:

I'd say it's virtually exclusively our problem, by design. And a lot of the time the reasons given that I've found have been 'we don't have enough money, we don't have the resources, there's so few people in here, that we're just going from one sort of event to another'...and it's something that comes up quite often - that more efforts need to be made. But to this date, they're not something that I'm particularly happy with.

Bert also reported that the groups with which he had been involved lacked diversity along the lines of race and class. When asked if he felt members of the movement were examining racism, he replied:

No...no. I don't think we've ever dealt with racism. I mean, again I think that it's like we thought that we were there for one main reason, and it didn't really matter what the other constraints or concerns are... I don't know if you can do all of that work on all of these fronts or positions and not be completely wiped out and drained.

Peter reported that his group has had a fair amount of diversity over the years along the lines of race and ethnicity, but that the current membership is mainly white. He did not speculate as to the reason for this change, but later added:

Our subtitle is "pro-feminist, male-positive, gay-affirmative", and we did have anti-racist in there, but to be quite honest with you, I've done nothing towards that...there is a black men's group. It's a sort of peer group - "Black Men Reaching Out" - and they try to work with younger men. I have no idea who is the contact for that I'm afraid... I know black

men and that sort of stuff, but we don't have an ongoing dialogue as to what it means to be a black male in our society, and we haven't really done a lot of bridges in terms of the racism issues.

While it was difficult for most of the participants to speculate as to the proportion of straight, gay and bisexual men in the movement, there seemed to be a general feeling that more diversity existed in this area. As Michael stated:

One thing that's been really important about pro-feminist men's organizations in Canada is that it's been one of the few places for straight and gay men and bisexual men to be together and work together in a very sort of gay-positive milieu, and to challenge some of the homophobia that's been there...

Peter too felt that, although his group consisted of mainly straight men, more efforts had been successfully made to contact and work with gay men on various projects. He spoke of having become very comfortable around gay men as a result of pro-feminist work. Bert expressed similar benefits of the groups he has participated in, and felt that as a whole the movement was fairly diverse in terms of sexual orientation. He mentioned conflicts that took place in the earlier years, but felt that these served to bring the issue into the open, and that homophobia was something which has been much more consistently addressed than race issues.

Asked about the presence of disabled men in the movement, Bert cited several examples of men with disabilities who had become involved. Peter described his group as "all able-bodied", with the exception of one man who had come to meetings in a wheelchair. For the most part, this issue was not discussed in detail, although Salim expressed strong personal concern over issues of access,

influenced by his work in health promotion.

Michael referred to a wide range of ages that exists when one considers that the White Ribbon has become a recognized symbol in many schools, although the board members themselves are apparently in their thirties and older. It seems that men who participate in reflection groups also tend to be in their thirties and above. Peter attributed this to a development process which typically leads men to concentrate on more traditional goals throughout their twenties, such as establishing a career and a family:

...typically the men's movement has been thirty-five and older, or thirty and older, because that's the age that, for some reason, men in our society start asking questions about who they are - who they are as lovers, who they are as workers, who they are as professionals, who they are as men. And so... not surprisingly, most of our group is thirty-plus. And with some very delightful exceptions - we've had some fabulous men, and I wish I was half as aware as they are at age twenty-one, twenty-two...

None of the interviewees reported on the upper age range of men involved, although Bert spoke of the need for newer young members to take over the planning of events from those who had been involved for a long period and were growing tired. I am aware that mythopoetic gatherings tend to include more senior men, due to the focus on mentoring and respecting the teachings of older men.

Issues of diversity were not unfamiliar to the participants or their groups, and my sense, overall, was that men's groups are facing the inevitable struggles which have challenged feminism as a whole to broaden its horizons beyond gender-based issues. Men's groups are presently looking at the lack of diversity, and some are developing ways of inviting a wider community to share in their

activism, but such steps are in the beginning stages. It will be interesting to see how successfully they are able to incorporate new perspectives, and how concepts of men's needs and goals may be further developed and transformed as the relative homogeneity of the community is contested.

Chapter 4

CONTEXTS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN MEN'S MOVEMENTS: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Before assessing the usefulness or practicality of any social movement, we must be clear as to the reasons for its existence, as well as the groups or individuals whose interests it aims to serve. The various strains of men's movements have all begun as responses to feminist critiques and reforms, although these responses have been varied and have dealt with transformation in different ways. A common root of men's organizing has been that men feel unfulfilled or that something is lacking in their lives. Reference is often made to the tension between men's power and men's pain (Kaufman, 1993; Messner, 1997; Pleck, 1974/1995), drawing attention to the irony of possessing social power and privilege while feeling powerless or insecure. Methods of resolving or dealing with this tension touch on many issues, including men's emotional lives, the political stance they choose to take on feminist concerns and the ways in which they will go about defining a role for men in the face of these issues.

This analysis aims to tackle several, although not all, issues of relevance to the pro-feminist men's movement. Major areas that have been approached through my reading and interview work will be expanded and suggestions for further work and change will be included. I will begin with a discussion which compares and contrasts approaches favoured by the Mythopoetic groups and the

pro-feminist movement. This will necessarily entail attention to both personal and political issues and the inseparability of the two realms. My second section will address issues concerning the role of men in feminist politics, including separate activist spheres for men and women and the issue of men receiving and responding to feminist feedback. It will include my own vision, along with those of others, of productive ways to begin considering feminist challenges and personal change.

A central issue of concern to my study has been the very definition of masculinity itself. I will discuss, as my third point, problems connected with how masculinity tends to be defined, and which groups of men may be excluded, based on the white middle class paradigms that are usually dominant. My concerns surround issues of not only race and class, but of differences in ability that are overlooked, and age groups which may be unintentionally omitted. I will incorporate, throughout, suggestions which pertain to the future direction of pro-feminist men's movements.

The political and the personal: pro-feminist and mythopoetic men

The pursuit of personal empowerment has become a commonly-accepted tenet of our North American therapy-oriented society, particularly in recent years. Self-help proponents and counsellors, through workshops and literature, encourage and instruct us in how to access and utilize our inner power, or rediscover our "true self" (Kitzinger & Perkins, 1993). Similar

ideas can be found in key texts of the men's movement and are reported to be central at men's workshops and retreats. Robert Bly's Iron John (1990) focusses on the need for men to regain the "deep" or "true" masculine, while Sam Keen's (1991) work advocates a male journey toward self-actualization. A central component of such work is the fact that it is specific to men and addresses the issue of male pain and suffering. It has become clear through my interviews and written sources that men must necessarily examine their own attitudes and lives in order to adjust to a changing society, as well as to carry out pro-feminist work. Addressing the pain or frustrations of traditional roles and models of manhood is central in this work. It is also apparent that a certain tension exists between the mythopoetic and the pro-feminist approaches. However, a degree of overlap exists between the two movements, which renders dichotomous models inaccurate.

In chapter one I briefly discussed the anthology The Politics of Manhood (Kimmel, 1995b), which attempts a dialogue between Mythopoetic and Pro-feminist men, drawing conclusions about the usefulness of both movements and of a greater fusion of the two. While it may be worthwhile to form dialogue and to look for common ground, the many thorough critiques of the mythopoets by pro-feminist men support my feeling that men who hope to further feminist goals must be extremely cautious when adopting ideas put forth by mythopoetic leaders. Although The Politics of Manhood attempts to draw the two camps closer, many basic criticisms of the

mythopoetic movement went unanswered, particularly in the areas of responsibility to women and understandings and misuses of the rituals that have been adopted. It is sometimes inferred that the mythopoetic movement offers models for personal change, while the pro-feminist ideas present a chance to put personal transformation into action on a broader scale. I think it must be made clear that, among other problematic elements, the personal exploration prescribed in key mythopoetic texts such as Iron John (1990) is fundamentally counter to feminist aims.

Given this theoretical conflict, I was surprised to find that some men who were actively pursuing pro-feminist goals were also interested in mythopoetic ideas and spoke highly of the movement. As I mentioned in Chapter three, it was suggested that this may be a distinctly Canadian feature, based on a much lower level of polarization between the two movements. Although it was somewhat surprising to hear pro-feminist men discussing myth and story and the value of retreats at which drumming took place, the reasons that were given for separate spaces had little to do with avoiding women and were explained as spaces where men could deal with homophobia and confront their emotional problems together, as opposed to the more traditional pattern of expecting women to be their emotional care-takers. They seemed to have little understanding of the mythopoetic values as I have understood them, and as some critics have understood them. An example of such critique can be seen in Bert Young's work:

(The mythopoetic leaders) argue that men do not need to embrace feminism or form political alliances with women to

create gender justice. On the contrary, what men need to do is recover and restore their lost masculinity to its rightful and ritualistic place in industrial society. To accomplish this difficult task these softened males must immerse themselves in deep therapeutic modes of mourning the loss of their former selves, preferably in a natural environment. (Young, 1993, p. 324)

It is clear that men in my study who supported mythopoetic tenets or gathered in masculinity discussion groups, such as Peter, Sam, and Daniel, did not share a view of feminism as a hindrance to emotional work. It seems fair to surmise that they had not based their activities on the major American texts and thus remained somewhat free to interpret or redefine elements of the movement for their own purposes. I have come to feel that what my interviewees practice and value as mythopoetic work is dissimilar from what many mythopoeists advocate, in that it is directly linked to an understanding of male power and privilege; it has coincided with the taking up of many activist goals and movement toward becoming closer allies with women.

While this would seem to support the notion that the two movements can be successfully combined, again I would strongly caution that ideas associated with the mythopoetic movement must be considered critically and questioned thoroughly as to their usefulness to any feminist project, and certainly to any organization that includes anti-racist initiative. It is essential that problematic elements be recognized and addressed.

While I was engaged by Kimmel's (1995b) conclusions concerning the need for greater cooperation and dialogue between the two camps, I found it more difficult to accept that mythopoetic values

should be employed. I remain unconvinced that the two movements work toward similar goals, particularly after reading the more defensive and sexist mythopoetic responses (e.g., Allen, 1995; Kipnis, 1995). In attempting to explore my own reaction, I realize that my gender has much to do with this. As a woman and a feminist, it is more than a matter of being unable to overcome my initial shock and anger at reading Iron John (Bly, 1990). It is something to do with the fact that the mythopoetic men's movement is a movement for and about men, not for or about gender equality. Bob Connell (1995a) speaks to this issue, addressing the absurdity of a movement of men forming "as men" without addressing patriarchal inequality. It is this glaring fundamental absence, couched in the vision of a movement separate from but not counter to feminism, which stands even more positive qualities, such as fuller emotional lives for men, on shaky ground.

It would perhaps be fruitful to consider the context in which mythopoetic work is practiced, and to keep in mind the range of responses to this movement, including the varying degrees of political awareness informing its practice. I am not certain that a small group of men deciding to go on a weekend retreat constitutes a similar approach to the organization of a large, expensive, inaccessible conference. Nor does storytelling and drumming between friends necessarily occur within a context of misogyny where men are encouraged to "bust women in the mouth" (Bly, cited in Faludi, 1991, p. 310) in an argument.

Context becomes a crucial defining element when we consider

reasons given for what is known as mythopoetic practice. While the pro-feminist approach would advocate separate space and retreats for men in order to subvert the pattern of expecting women to do their emotional work, some mythopoetic leaders would advocate this space as necessary due to the harmful effects of "the female realm", and of feminism, on male development. The latter feeling is evidenced by Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette's (1990) work that concludes:

...it is clear that the world is overpopulated with not only immature men but also tyrannical and abusive little girls pretending to be women. It is time for men - particularly the men of Western civilization - to stop accepting the blame for everything that is wrong in the world. (Moore & Gillette, 1990, pp. 155-156)

Robert Bly parallels this feeling in his comment: "There's a disease going around and women have been spreading it. Starting in the 60's, the women have really invaded the men's areas and treated them like boys." (Bly, cited in Faludi, p. 310) A Toronto men's group advertisement takes a similar tone:

"Join other men who have a commitment to face their lives and *take their place in the world*. Discover the potential of the archetypal masculine structures - the King, the Warrior, the Magician, and the Lover." (Harbord Health Centre, 1996, emphasis mine)

It is important that the distinction between attitudes be clear. In this sense, there is a need to define exactly what one's motivations are for participating in what appear to be mythopoetic activities, as well as the goals of such endeavors.

It was interesting to note differences between mythopoetic work as I have understood it from the texts and that of my interviewees. Although I have been unable to find written sources

that address possible differences between the Canadian and American movements, Michael's comments in his interview, that Canadian men tended to see little contradiction between their work in both movements, confirmed that some discrepancy is likely to exist. As is evidenced in Kimmel's (1995b) work, bridging the gap between movements in the States is an arduous task involving greatly polarized views, despite the common ground a few men from each side were able to claim. I can only speculate that this difference may be due to a greater conservatism in the United States, linked with the strengthening of the Right in the last decade. Perhaps the existence of a greater number of men's rights groups, as well as the Promise Keepers, a fundamentalist Christian men's organization (Messner, 1997; Minkowitz, 1995), have acted as a greater caution to American men on the Left to reject any men's work that seems Right-leaning. The mythopoetic movement certainly incorporates elements of Right-wing ideology, evidenced in its support of biological determinism and the traditional nuclear family, although most participants would consider the movement to be apolitical.

Michael also raised the point that feminist ideas have had a greater impact in Canada than in most countries in the world, including the United States. He cited the much smaller number of active American pro-feminist men who attend masculinity conferences, which, proportional to the population, would equal about thirty or forty men in Canada.

Some emotional work raised in both movements warrants attention. For instance, many men discuss issues relating to their

fathers and the lack of male role models in their lives. While it is tempting to rule out a need for specifically male role models, it is important to remember that society is far from a utopian point at which all or the vast majority of human beings are gender-neutral in behaviour, appearance, attitude and, perhaps most importantly, power. For those who are engaging in a process of change, it may be necessary to see other members of one's gender living and behaving in non-oppressive ways, in order that cultural influences and stereotypes be offset. It is my hope that the models and mentors being selected are embracing of a full range of human values, rather than Robert Bly's "harsh, sometimes demanding, testily humorous, irreverent, impatient, opinionated, forward-driving, silence loving" masculinity (Bly, 1990, p. 94). Presumably, a feminist goal would be that masculinity (and femininity) would be rendered irrelevant when deciding how to live one's life and that an assumed need for the father will be replaced by a requirement for love, care and good role models, regardless of the gender of those providing for these needs. There is no place for this in Bly's model, which clearly states that a woman is incapable of adequately raising a healthy male child in the absence of a male parent.

I find irony in the fact that mythopoetic men clearly see the absence of their fathers as a source of pain, and yet choose to blame this on the industrial revolution, mothers, or an "old style" of masculinity, rather than on patriarchy. Further, if they listened to feminist perspectives with less defensiveness and

hostility they would understand that absent fathers and partners are a target of critique and a source of pain for women as well - many of whom have already been working to change the situation for decades. There is as yet a great resistance to naming patriarchy or male power as sources of such problems, and this lack presents a space in which pro-feminist analyses of the patriarchal family are crucial. Countering the simplistic mythopoetic tendency to blame insufficient fatherhood on the Industrial Revolution, Bert Young writes:

Unfortunately the historical record prior to the Industrial Revolution does not indicate that young men who benefited from this wonderful teaching from their fathers treated women as equals, shared power and control over society, rarely - if ever - sexually assaulted and/or battered women, and promoted opportunities for women to pursue intellectual and political vocations. (Young, 1993, p. 325)

A further problematic area existing in the overlap of the two movements is the question of cultural appropriation in a climate which claims concern over racism and ethnocentrism. Finding inspiration in myths and stories is not necessarily problematic in and of itself. What can be seen as problematic is a vision of the world as one's personal oyster, from which stories, values or customs of any culture can be extracted for personal use, taken out of context and re-vamped to suit one's own needs. For instance, much of the mythology used in Iron John (Bly, 1990) has been demonstrated to be clearly decontextualized and historically inaccurate. Noting the contrived appeal to emotions in Bly's work, Bob Connell (1995b) cites several unsupported, and apparently unresearched, claims and refutes them with facts. One example

follows a passage in which Bly lumps together the men of New Guinea, Kenya, North Africa, the pygmy territories, Zulu lands and the Arab and Persian cultures, and claims that men of these cultures have lived together "in soul unions for hundreds of thousands of years" (Bly, cited in Connell, 1995b). Connell writes:

The mind boggles. None of the cultures listed has lasted for 'hundreds of thousands of years.'

Bly isn't interested in the truth of what he says; he is interested only in its emotional effect. The effect of passages like these is to create a sense of continuity between his readers/hearers and an imagined stream of forefathers stretching back into the mists of the past.

To create this kind of effect, however, requires intellectual confusion and that is the second point to be made about the book. To produce his myth of an over-arching male culture, Bly muddles together bits and pieces from different periods of history, different cultures, different modes of experience. He grabs a sun-king from China, an initiation ritual from Aboriginal Australia, a poem from Ireland, and throws them all into the blender. (Connell, 1995b, p. 83)

A lack of respect for and understanding of other cultures is certainly problematic, as is the commodification of their rituals in retreats that are reserved for the privileged few. Critiques have been made which give evidence that some rituals are traditionally used to validate male privilege. As Kimmel and Kaufman write:

(w)hat we actually learn from non-industrial cultures - as opposed to what we might wish we had learned - is that these initiation ceremonies, rituals and separate spheres have everything to do with women's inequality. One survey of over 100 non-industrial cultures found that societies with separate men's huts are those in which women have the least power. (Kaufman & Kimmel, 1995, p. 29)

While it is difficult to compare and substantiate differing levels of oppression in different countries, the tendency to exoticize other cultures and to assume that their systems of initiation are

preferable is in itself an expression of racist bias.

Many sources of ritual happen to be countries that are lesser developed, exploited and kept impoverished by rich western nations. Perhaps it should be no surprise that the pattern of cultural invasion and appropriation of another nation's artifacts and traditions by white western people, and white men in particular, spills into a movement by and for mainly privileged men in western, industrialized nations. Referring to rituals that use Native American traditions, Kimmel and Kaufman write:

(t)oday, blackface would be immediately transparent as racist. So men's movement leaders encourage what we might call "redface", - the appropriation of Native American rituals and symbols - the drum, chants of "ho", warpaint, animal names, etc. And they imagine that these Native cultures expressed a deep spirituality, an abiding love and respect for nature, and a palpable sense of brotherhood. What they are really doing, we believe, is projecting onto these cultures their own longings and their own needs. Such a project relies upon racial, and racist, stereotypes. (Kaufman & Kimmel, 1995, p. 31)

Connell echoes this sentiment:

Aboriginal men are not real people to Bly, worth getting acquainted with on their own terms. Like Zulus, Arabs and the rest, they are cyphers that fit into a particular slot in his imagination. When Bly's followers go to the woods to beat on drums, they are not respecting real African or Native American traditions. They are enacting a stereotyped, basically racist, notion of the primitive. (Connell, 1995b, p. 84-85)

It is heartening to read pro-feminist critiques of culturally problematic elements of men's work, and I have yet to read a mythopoetic response which tackles these issues or attempts a plausible defence. At the same time, I was left wondering how pro-feminist men would address the point I raised previously - that some men who make use of some such rituals are also politically

conscious. Some such men are among them, working vigilantly with women and for feminist causes.

I believe it is fair to claim that this illustrates how a gender analysis alone is insufficient in forming pro-feminist politics. However, as yet, there seems to be little consensus among pro-feminists themselves as to an overall stance on the issue of ritual in the movement. A friend who attended the American 1996 National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) conference reported that 'healing', spiritual circles and ceremonies were used (K. Davison, personal communication, Aug. 1996). As Bert stated in his interview, he has had to make clear, oppositional statements concerning his wish not to be included in rituals at (pro-feminist) gatherings he attends.

It seems that a great deal more dialogue is needed concerning how to recognize racially problematic elements in men's work, while upholding the need for community and exploring non-oppressive ways of satisfying that need. I am left with questions on this issue concerning how, if and when it is acceptable to borrow from other cultures. What comes to mind is the need for respect, education and communication (we do not generally borrow items from others without asking; why should this be different?), as well as the demystification and de-exoticization of the 'Other', which Western culture so easily assumes and relies upon.

The role of men in feminist movement

In general, my interviewees have developed very positive attitudes concerning their role in feminist politics. An important issue, stressed by most, was a focus on women's perceptions of their work. It was not within the scope of this project to empirically examine the responses of women to pro-feminist organizing, however most participants reported positive feedback from women and were candid about criticism or scepticism they had received.

One issue that I felt to be of central importance was that of maintaining a balance between seeking women's input and relying too heavily on their guidance. This issue was addressed in the interview setting by Michael, who felt that it was important for men to take initiative, rather than becoming a "men's auxiliary" of the women's movement. It was also important to most participants that organizing around key events, such as the Montreal Massacre, not take attention away from women's organizing. The need for critical assessment of this balance is addressed by Blye Frank:

A central question for pro-feminist men is how to support women's struggles in ways that do not co-opt feminism or undermine women's attempts to speak for themselves, to gain some real sense of power in the practice of their daily lives. In recognizing they are no longer the 'expert' and, perhaps more importantly, that they never were, pro-feminist men attempt to ask women what men's involvement in feminism should look like, to avoid certainties and the further productions of 'truths' and to commit to challenge themselves and other men who feel that simply speaking out or writing about women's subordination frees men in any way from the practice of patriarchy and phallogentrism. (Frank', 1993, p. 339)

Throughout my study it has become apparent that men's need for personal reflection as well as their interests in pro-feminist activism have required the formation of both discussion groups and broader-based organizations, such as White Ribbon, which address social issues. I was interested in the specificities of why men's space, separate from women, was necessary for either or both of these types of groups to thrive. On the more political front, it seems essential that men take initiative on their own. Reasons given for doing so - such as supporting feminist goals, taking responsibility for both educating other men and changing themselves, as well as respecting women-only spaces and events - are positive.

In terms of personal change, forming reflection groups to critically discuss and debate the issues one is dealing with is also essential. However, I was left with certain questions and reservations, as a woman, about some of this work. I realized that my hesitation stemmed from an ambivalence about men confiding in and becoming close to other men in a context in which women have long been asking men to open up emotionally to women. It was difficult, in this sense, not to hear an underlying note of mythopoetic analysis of the inadequacies of women in supporting and caring for men, evidenced in much zealous and heterocentric insistence on the need for the father (Bly, 1990; 1996). On the other hand, I support the idea of men working through their own emotional issues as opposed to the more traditional patterns of avoidance or expecting women to take over such work. While a

balance is necessary, there is little dialogue, to my knowledge, addressing the issue of women's feelings about what is discussed in these groups, and the issue was not raised in my interviews. I was unable to feel an unguarded sense of relief that such dialogue occurs, and wondered at my own comfort level, were a partner of mine to participate in it.

Learning more about the benefits discussion groups seem to have for many men has helped to demystify them. For instance, Peter spoke of the positive effect of learning to open up in this context and then translating it to listening and relating better to women. Daniel related the growing desire to participate in political activism and spoke of events his group had initiated, which were clearly supportive of the needs of women around them. I would like to know more about the context of exploration in groups on a broader level, the tone of discussion and regard for my (and in general, women partners' or other women's) privacy, in order to be more comfortable with this sort of group.

This brings up the issue of the public/private split, concerning men's emotional lives: it may be beneficial to explore feelings with other men, but I believe it is necessary to maintain a level of openness about what is discussed. In contrast to women-only spaces, which form as safety measures in response to oppression which is tangible and quantifiable, men's groups, although rightly concerned about emotional safety for the men involved, form for reasons which are not rooted in oppression. While it can be argued that there are disadvantages experienced by

groups in positions of power, men's groups must be clear about the distinction between social and material oppression and the suppression of certain qualities which is a price for their power. This distinction was emphasized by Peter, who stated his dislike for language referring to men as "oppressed". Michael Messner (1997) also discusses this issue:

Men do tend to pay a price for their power. They are often emotionally limited and commonly suffer poor health and a shorter life expectancy than women. These problems, however, are best viewed not as gender oppression but as the "costs of being on top" (Kann, 1986) - or at least of trying to be on top. (Messner, 1997, p. 22)

Messner later explains that a shift away from this role-theory definition of male suffering has caused progressive men to begin focusing on "de-emphasizing the costs of masculinity and emphasizing the ways that all men derive power and privilege within patriarchal society..." (Messner, 1997, p. 50)

It would seem that communication around these issues on an ongoing basis is essential for feminist women concerned about men's positions and responses to our politics. Many women I have spoken with react only with surprise, relief and excitement that men are dealing with sexism and emotional issues. I think we can be encouraged, inquisitive and critical at once. Women need to and should inquire as to what goes on, my key questions being: How would discussion be inhibited if women were present? If it would, does this raise the issue of men's secrets and male bonding over things traditionally kept from women? How can women trust men's private group discussions to be respectful, non-sexist and anti-patriarchal? Basically, is there safety in a men's group for

(absent) women?

My questions are intended as a basis for reflection. They do not attempt to argue against men-only groups and do not necessarily posit that such communication doesn't already occur between some men and women. Although this was not specifically addressed, some answers are already implied. Beyond the openness addressed above is a need for the learned closeness and honesty between men to be translatable to male-female relationships, sexual or otherwise, and to a wider context of political work.

Some masculinity texts raise the issue of male guilt as a common response to feminist ideas (Bristow, 1992; Seidler, 1994). It seems counter-productive and absurd to feel guilty for simply "being male", which in itself is not an action. On the other hand, if one has done something "as a male" that is oppressive or harmful to others, guilt is a reasonable response. Perhaps another form would be guilt over having failed to intervene in sexist or abusive actions on the part of other men. I think it is crucial that guilt not become a self-indulgent form of gaining an "in" with women or feminists, and am personally uninterested in hearing male confessional diatribes which do not channel feelings of responsibility into productive activism.

Michael addressed this issue in his interview, citing an example of a U.S. men's group who put out a leaflet entitled "We Men Rape". Michael pointed out the statistical inaccuracy of claiming that all men rape, and felt that there was a great degree

of self-hatred evidenced in such a heading. He clarified the distinction between saying "I'm a male; (therefore) I'm an oppressor", and saying "As a man, I do things that are oppressive". The latter does not rely on biological deterministic explanations and seems to take much more responsibility for identifying and changing one's behaviour. I would personally tend to distrust a group of men who organized under a banner such as "We Men Rape". It would seem that they had either done no research, were uninterested in the facts as opposed to the shock value of a drastic generalization, and/or were attempting simply to appear radically self-derisive in order to be popular with feminists, but in a manner which is very unlikely to be productive in attracting men to their cause or leading to social change.

It was my impression that the men I spoke with had achieved a balance between feeling a sense of responsibility and avoiding paralyzing guilt. However, it remains an issue that may be important for pro-feminists to keep in mind when educating and talking to other men who are learning about feminist ideas. It is essential that constructive channelling of guilt be taught as a way to avoid "politically correct" attempts to gain women's favour through appearing 'better', less sexist or more conscious than other men (Connell, 1995a), and instead to move toward a genuine, accurate understanding of the issues which women can trust.

Along these lines, I had concerns about the work of John Stoltenberg (1994), which I raised in my literature review. In particular, I was critical of Stoltenberg's tendency to place male

behaviour within a dichotomy of good/bad men, and to over-emphasize the degree to which all men internalize cultural socialization to become violent, sexually and otherwise. This raises the issue of forms of male dominance that do not rely directly on physical violence, some of which might be emotional abuse, controlling or jealous behaviour, domination of discussions, failure to listen to others or refusal of responsibility for domestic work.

Most active organizing on the part of pro-feminist men has taken place around opposing men's violence against women. I support the growth of such movement and do not wish to downplay the importance of it in any way. However, it is also crucial that other issues not be ignored. The White Ribbon Campaign literature stresses several times that the majority of men are not violent (White Ribbon Campaign, no date). Although I understand this as reassurance to newcomers that the group is not anti-male, it also raises the question of other messages with which to reach men on a broader, public scale: if most men are not violent, then in what ways are most men sexist, in what ways are most men complicit in systems that maintain inequality? This is not a criticism of White Ribbon, which I understand as having formed with the expressed purpose of raising awareness of men's violence, but a suggestion for other issues which might be explored in parallel campaigns.

At the same time, certain work on a wide variety of issues is being carried out in smaller discussion-based groups, and is evidenced in the material of the Healthy Relationships Violence-Prevention Curriculum (Davies, Davison & Safer, 1994). This

valuable educational material, aimed at junior high students, deals with issues such as gender stereotypes, media awareness, pornography, self-esteem, anger, aggression, sexual harassment and interpersonal communication. More attention to these and other central issues is needed in a variety of age groups, and in a wider variety of settings.

A final concern around pro-feminist organizing is that of the greater legitimacy of male voices. It seems likely that hearing feminist messages from other men may hold more validity for men than would hearing them from women. As was stated in the interviews, this problem can be seen as the "nature of the beast" and is, unfortunately, part of the initial answer to making men more aware. As several interviewees made clear, a primary message when speaking to other men is the importance of listening to women and feminists. It would seem helpful to engage in a great deal of (not necessarily formal) referencing, in order to make clear when speaking to other men that the ideas did not originate with the men's movement and are not newly derived from the current source. Encouragement can be given to read feminist work, articles could be provided in a workshop format or in schools, and the tendency to overvalue male authority can be pointed out when an example arises.

Overall, the directions for pro-feminist movement, both currently and in its necessary future course, are varied and complex. While an obvious overarching suggestion is that men listen to and read feminist work, it is important that they keep in mind the great diversity of feminist perspectives, as well as a

wealth of different perspectives on masculinity by men which may be relatively invisible as yet. I will turn now to this issue.

Diversity issues in pro-feminist men's organizing

Although there are no statistical records to my knowledge, the men I spoke with made general statements concerning the cross-section of the pro-feminist men's movement along the lines of race, class, sexual orientation, age and ability. It seems clear from these and written sources (Frank, 1993, Messner, 1997, Segal, 1990) that pro-feminist organizing has developed largely among men from privileged class and ethnic backgrounds. It was felt that most men begin to approach such work in their thirties or later, and it seems that heterosexual male writers tend to dominate theory and discourse around issues in feminism. As I reported in Chapter 3, it was difficult for most participants to speculate as to the percentages of heterosexual, gay and bisexual men in activist groups.

As well, most men involved are well-educated professionals and/or academics. It has been suggested that such men may tend to embrace these issues due to a greater freedom to choose different ways of living, such as participating more in childcare, exploring more egalitarian relationships, sharing household tasks and working part-time (Segal, 1990).

As evidenced in many of my sources and presented in the literature review, marginalized perspectives tend to remain so, and

it is thus not surprising that definitions of masculinity tend to be reflective of the population that generates theory around these issues. It is easy to project these definitions onto men from non-dominant social positions and to assume that their discontent or frustration results from an inability to live up to dominant standards (Marriott, 1996). bell hooks (1992a) addresses this issue in detail, reminding readers that very few studies exist which interrogate black men's perceptions of their own experience of oppression. It is not the place for white male (or female) scholars to generalize about such experience, blurring distinctions between levels of internalized racism or methods some men may have found to subvert the norms of masculine behaviour.

At the same time, dialogue across race is crucial. I would strongly urge white pro-feminist men who are not already doing so to listen closely to the voices of marginalized men who, although they may very well experience desire to live up to white, middle class definitions of masculinities, will face these struggles within a variety of different contexts, many of which remain invisible in the dominant scholarship.

Theories on marginalized masculinities also have a tendency to leave out intersecting elements of men's identities. For example, theories about black men's frustration over being unable to live up to patriarchal breadwinner standards of the dominant society are based on heterosexist assumptions that ignore the existence of gay black men. Gay men are usually attended to separately, implying that their challenge to hegemonic masculinity is limited to the

realm of sexuality.

Further, I have yet to see critical sources by pro-feminist gay men specifically addressing gay male misogyny. Attention to gay politics seems as yet limited to discussion of homophobic oppression and its audience is straight men, who are (rightly) asked to work through fears of gay men and to challenge homophobia in the public realm. Although such work is crucial, I would caution against the implication that gay men are *only* oppressed, and are never oppressors. It is important, again, that analysis of particular forms of sexism as informed by white heterosexual male norms not be assumed to apply to all men.

I have also noted that there is a virtual absence of discussion in the texts I read of homophobia against lesbians. While men write on the problematics of objectifying women, particularly in considerations of pornography, no attention is given to many straight men's propensity for appropriating lesbian erotica for their own pleasure, or for viewing lesbians solely in terms of their sexuality. Returning for a moment to mythopoetic work, one criticism I have yet to see is that emphasis on the importance of the father figure explicitly undermines the capability of single mothers and, implicitly, lesbian mothers, whether single or in partnerships. It is also noteworthy that the pro-feminist focus on violence against women does not seem to address specific manifestations of violence and harassment toward lesbians.

As I posited in the introduction, there remains a need for

critical sources which consider differences in ability among men. In considerations of male strength, competition and virility this would seem an obvious issue. As well, articles or books on military training (Kaufman, 1993; Mosse, 1996), sports (Parker, 1996; Thornton, 1993), male violence among men or fighting (Canaan, 1996; Weatherbee, 1993) and body image (Parker, 1996) fail to consider the perspectives men with physical disabilities might offer. It would seem insightful to investigate possible links between the fear of gay bashing and the fear disabled men might experience of other men's violence. Although in different ways, both threats stem from straight men's disdain for men deemed physically weak - for gay men, in that they are seen as effeminate, and for disabled men in that disability is often stereotypically associated with weakness and thus with femininity.

A central interest I have developed in the course of this study concerns the age groups of men being targeted in pro-feminist work. My interviews suggest that a fair amount of outreach is being pursued in the direction of high school or junior high boys. Beyond this, there is mention of the fact that most men involved in activist groups are well into their thirties and above, with only a few exceptions. A significant portion of writers are middle-aged academics. Given this evidence, I am curious as to the attention directed toward men in their twenties, or university-aged men.

While American sources sometimes refer to men's studies classes, in which some men of this age group would be included (Messner, 1997), Canadian universities have few such courses.

While some groups exist on university campuses (Davison, 1993), my experience in undergraduate and graduate women's studies programs, activism within the women's centre and other groups working toward gender equity, did not put me in touch with men who were involved in working toward similar goals. A student group, *Montreal Men Against Sexism*, consisted of only three or four men. When feminist issues were raised in my sociology and philosophy classes, the marked conservatism on the part of men in their twenties left me sceptical as to the progress older pro-feminist men had made in reaching and educating the next generation. This presents a further area for growth and expansion of outreach.

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that many men in this age group will not be attending university. Talks or workshops in workplaces, offices, factories, etc. are also essential, as is the production of accessible literature to which men of a wide variety of age groups and education levels can relate.

Due to inaccessible academic language and complex theorizing among well-educated professional men, the pro-feminist movement risks becoming an insular discourse that fails to reach not only men of different class backgrounds, but of different disciplines. In this sense, I was impressed by literature I received from both the *White Ribbon Campaign* and *Men for Change*, due to its avoidance of jargon and its clear and accessible presentation of the issues. I would encourage the continued writing and distribution of such materials, aimed at targeting various groups. At the same time,

I value the importance of academic theory-building and certainly support complex and detailed continuation of masculinity research. I merely hope the movement will maintain a focus on making it translatable for men and boys outside the field.

In light of concerns about lack of diversity, the intent expressed in interviews was to attract a greater number of men from different populations to the movement. While this is an important goal, it is also necessary to be cautious of the tendency to 'include', rather than to 'integrate'. Such paradigms in feminist organizing present a good example, as bell hooks explains:

One reason white women active in feminist movement were unwilling to confront racism was their arrogant assumption that their call for Sisterhood was a non-racist gesture. Many white women have said to me, "we wanted black women and other non-white women to join the movement", totally unaware of their perception that they somehow "own" the movement, that they are the "hosts" inviting us as "guests". (hooks, 1984, p. 53)

In a similar mode, Himani Bannerji reminds us of the tendency to centre white experience as a reference point, viewing difference as divergent from it:

The concept of "difference"... clearly needs to be problematized. Where does such "difference" reside? Who are we "different" from? Upon reflection it becomes clear that the "difference" which is politically significant is not a benign cultural form. The "difference" which is making us "different" is not something that is inherent or intrinsic to us but is constructed on the basis of our divergence from the norm. (Bannerji, 1991, p. 83)

Michael, in his interview, expressed awareness of how styles of working, including working in English, had influenced the homogeneity of the movement. He felt that the White Ribbon Campaign needed to make more effort to obtain resources for

translation. While he felt the organization included men from various social classes as well as being fairly representative of gay, straight and bisexual men, he spoke of the difficulty of reaching diverse ethnic communities, in which violence against women sometimes remained a relatively silent issue.

A large number of the issues that surface for pro-feminist men around homophobia, racism, classism and ablism have been addressed within the feminist movement in the last two decades. Similar to the examples above, an abundance of work has been done and dialogue created around the need to incorporate various perspectives, to specify which group one is referring to, rather than simply "women", and to locate one's own social location in terms of identity politics. It is hardly surprising that men are having to follow in a similar vein and that similar patterns are forming in their activism. Some members of the pro-feminist men's movement seem aware that a ready-made model exists, in feminism, for beginning to examine these issues. At the same time, many references to feminism seem to assume a unified movement with a particular agenda (Rutherford, 1992). In his interview, Michael addressed this issue with the example of the pornography debate, stating that men he speaks with frequently assume that feminists are unilaterally opposed to pornography. Bob Connell (1995a) also raised this issue in a discussion of men's organizing strategies, again citing pornography as a controversial issue.

It is important, when aiming to support a body of ideas comprising as broad a scope as feminism, to guard against

generalizing which would obscure the particularities of different theories, historical perspectives, identities or applications. As Jeff Hearn writes:

(The relationship of men to feminism(s)) would seem to encompass material social relations between feminists and men, as well as feminist critiques of and challenges to men, and men's responses, particularly conscious responses, to feminism. There is also the question of diversity. None of the elements just mentioned is itself unified. (Hearn, 1992, p. 161)

Men who wish to support feminist change must be aware of the movement in its complexity, and must be prepared to support struggles that are not solely gender based, but are informed by a variety of social and political realities. Reading the work of women and men of colour, lesbians, bisexuals and gay men is a starting place for decentring commonly-held tenets of 'what feminists want/believe/do'. Reading texts that discuss the implications of creating diverse movements for equality on a number of fronts, regardless of the identity of the writers, is critical. Michael Messner addresses this need in his request that pro-feminist men incorporate the politics of multiracial feminism:

The task of a sociology of masculinities, it seems to me, is to raise critical questions about the "normal" operation of hegemonic masculinity in such a way that these actions are redefined as "misbehaviors". I am convinced that today the conversations taking place within multiracial feminism offer us the best (though not a perfect, complete or total) theoretical framework through which we might better begin to understand and confront the crucial issues of our day. Multiracial feminism invites us to shift our attention away from simplistic bickering between oppressed groups and, instead, to focus our energies on developing a critical understanding of the complex relations of power that structure our social realities. It is really beyond belief to imagine that a group made up primarily or exclusively of white, class-privileged and heterosexual men could or would ever develop

such a radically progressive standpoint. (Messner, 1997, p. 110)

It is my hope that such perspectives will become central not only for pro-feminist men, but for feminist women from privileged locations aiming to critically examine men's movements.

Conclusion

An overriding feeling I experienced throughout this research and writing process was that of being overwhelmed. There remain numerous topic areas and issues that this work has not ventured to explore and a great number of sources less directly related to my concerns but still crucial to the study of masculinities. A final concern I wished to raise is the tendency of some pro-feminist authors to address too many issues within one text, at the expense, in some cases, of detail and complexity. At this juncture, such a critique strikes me as vaguely ironic, considering my feeling that each area I broach could be a thesis in itself.

Having said this, I will posit that broader overviews of social movements can be useful in recognizing gaps, determining directions for future work and for introducing new perspectives. At the same time, I would like to see a narrowing of focus in some areas and a breakdown of the plethora of texts on 'masculinities' or 'manhood', into specific contextualized issues.

Harry Brod (1987) writes of a vision of men's studies as enhancing feminist understandings of different masculinities in an ever-widening variety of areas. His recommendations for further

research include further, specific work on violence - including men and military training, health issues and working conditions, gay sexuality, pornography, and cultural and media stereotypes. I share these sentiments, and have raised several other issues throughout this analysis that could be taken up as direction for further research.

My concerns around diversity hold central implications for the topic areas that might be explored. For instance, if informed by a variety of perspectives besides gender, a text on pornography could examine the impact of pornography on various communities, differences in the ways in which subjects are represented based on race, different feminist perspectives on this debate, male attitudes concerning lesbian erotica, and countless other issues. Work on the effects of military training on masculine development could explore differences across class and race, gay men in the military, associations with violence toward women, men's fear of violence from other men and its manifestations informed by racism and homophobia, and again, many other areas. To be even more specific, a text could critique a particular facet of men's organizing, such as the use of rituals, but incorporate perspectives of men from a variety of class and ethnic backgrounds.

In an effort to organize more around issues than identities or groups, these examples and other projects might help to decentre both the hegemonic masculine position and the focus on gender and sexism as dominant manifestations of inequality.

A number of women authors, writing on race relations, note the importance for men and women of marginalized, non-white groups in a white-supremacist society of working together to fight racism (Trask, 1993, hooks, 1992a; 1994). In addressing dominant notions within feminism that women must always work separately from men, these writers stress a recognition that sexist oppression will not always exceed racist oppression in the experience of many women. Instead, it will coincide with, help to shape, transform, or take a back seat to issues of racial and ethnic inequality. In some cases, women will feel a stronger allegiance to men who share their experience of cultural imperialism and discrimination than to white feminists who hope to form bonds over an assumed common oppression which has been formulated based on white women's needs. A feminist movement aiming to address the views and concerns of all women, as well as various forms of oppression, thus cannot ignore the presence of men who face similar concerns. While this would seem to make a case for including only men who are affected by other forms of inequality, it is intended merely as one angle from which to subvert the notion that feminism is a movement only for and about women.

The fact that a number of white, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual men have taken up anti-patriarchal struggle and begun to critically question their positions of advantage over women and other men remains a positive occurrence, no matter what further work is needed. I would request that they work to ensure the existence of a space in which their theories might be dismantled

and reconstructed with building blocks from a multiplicity of sites. I would hope that the inclusion of diverse men in such work will result in more than "added on" theories, and will influence growth and transformation of ideas and activities.

Meanwhile, I would request that feminist women remain alert and receptive to the ideas of pro-feminist men, regardless of our level of support, scepticism, hope, fear, even anger. This is not a call to relinquish necessary women-only spaces, nor to increase our workload by administrating the activities of men. I would urge women to remain critical, but not to dismiss the work generated by the pro-feminist movement, and in particular not to bypass opportunities to unite with men around certain issues. It is in our own interest to facilitate clarity in others' interpretations of feminist theory and practice, and it is in everyone's interest to remain open to the critique and challenge of new voices.

Alongside my suggestions, cautions and criticisms lie a deep respect for the work of my participants and a great appreciation for the forerunners of the pro-feminist men's movement. I remain hopeful, encouraged and engaged by the discourses surrounding progressive anti-patriarchal struggle. It may be utopian to foretell visions of a time and space in which inequality does not exist, but perhaps it is not so untenable to anticipate a day when men and women work together toward that end.

Appendix A:
Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate, through a taped interview, in the research of Jennifer J. Nelson as part of her master's thesis in Women's Studies, Simon Fraser University.

I have been informed of the nature of this study and I understand that:

- This interview contributes to work which may be published.
- This interview will be confidential: I will be allowed to choose a pseudonym and a copy of the interview transcript will be made available to me upon my request.
- I am free to request that the tape be stopped at any point during the discussion.
- To protect my privacy, the tape of this interview will be destroyed after it is transcribed.
- I will be informed, at any point until the completion of the thesis, of any direct quotations of mine that the researcher wishes to use. I will have the opportunity either to approve these or to request that they not be used, or to clarify my point if I wish to.
- I am free to withdraw my participation in this project at any time, as well as to refuse to answer any question/s without explanation.
- I am encouraged to contact Jennifer Nelson (416-972-1903, or Email: jnelson@sfu.ca) or her supervisor, Dr. Meredith Kimball (604-291-4130, or Email: kimball@sfu.ca) or the chair of the Women's Studies department, Dr. Mary Lynn Stewart (604-291-4742), at any time, if I have questions or concerns.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

() I would like a copy of the transcript of this interview

() I would like a summary of the results of this study

Mailing Address: _____

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

I. I'd like to start by asking if there is a particular **pseudonym** you would like me to use for you when citing this interview. Also, is there any other identifying information you would prefer I not use - for example, the name of your group?

II. Now I'd like to get some **demographic** information out of the way before beginning the interview. These facts are intended to assist me in getting a profile of the composition of the groups and individuals I research. Please feel free NOT to answer any question/s you do not feel comfortable with:

1) How is your group proportioned along the lines of race and ethnicity? Where would you place yourself in these categories?

2) What proportion of the group is middle class, working class, other? Where would you place yourself?

3) If you feel comfortable, could you also tell me, generally, the proportion of gay/straight/bisexual men in the group? Also, if you like, your own sexual orientation?

4) Can you tell me the general age range of the men in your group? Also, the proportion of men who are young, middle-age, older, and, if you like, your own age?

5) Does your group involve any men with disabilities? If so, approximately how many?

6) Do you personally identify as able-bodied/disabled/other?

7) What is the general educational background of men in the group? For instance, what proportion are university educated, high school educated, etc?

8) What is your own educational background and occupation, as well as those of your parents? What social class did your parents consider themselves to be part of?

9) Have you ever been married? Have you lived with a common-law spouse? Do you have children?

III. Background:

10) Please start by telling me some of your history - what led you to become involved in a men's group?

11) How long have you been involved? Are there any other groups you have worked with in the past or are concurrently involved with?

12) When did you first become aware of male privilege? - What experience or literature (or other avenue/s) sparked this?

13) What philosophies/movements do you draw upon in forming your activism? (ie. Marxist theory, socialism, labour organization, anti-racist struggle, gay and lesbian politics, etc.) How are these ideas incorporated into your activist work?

IV. Goals and Activities:

14) Can you tell me about the goals of your group and its activities?

15) Do you liaison with other groups? If so, are these men's or women's groups, mixed-sex groups, or both?

16) Do you feel it's possible/necessary/preferable for men to organize separately or to work with women? - why or why not?

17) Can you tell me a little about your experiences of working with both men and women?

18) Which groups of men and women/boys and girls do you feel your activism speaks to?/How generalized is it? Which segments of the population get omitted?

V. Men and Feminism:

19) Do you consider yourself to be a feminist? (Do you think men can be feminists?). What does this mean - what are the goals of feminists/feminisms?

20) This leads me to your thoughts on:

a) 'manhood' -what is it and what does it mean to you?

b) 'masculinity' -what does it mean?

c) 'patriarchy' -what does this mean/include? Can you define it?

21) What aspects of feminism do you see men perceiving as a threat? -How can they stop feeling threatened?

22) What is your vision of the role of men in feminist politics? Who should decide what this role should be, if anyone?

23) What is your feeling about female feminists who do not want to work with men? What about women-only spaces - women's centres, "Take Back the Night", etc.?

24) Are men-only spaces ever necessary? If so, why, and what do they accomplish?

VI. Responses:

25) Please talk a bit more about the sort of responses you have had to your work, both individually and as part of a group, including personal interactions -ie. you are at a dinner party and it comes up that you belong to a men's group or do feminist work...

26) In particular, what are the responses of other men? of women? of feminist women?

VII. The Men's Movement:

27) Is there a "Men's movement"? If so, what is it? Who are its leaders?

28) What is your understanding of the mythopoetic men's movement? What elements of this, if any, are useful for men? What aspects, if any, are problematic?

VIII. Difference:

29) Have you encountered issues of difference that are not gender-based? If so, what are they and how do you deal with them?

30) Are there any other problems you've encountered -in organizing groups, defining goals, agreeing upon solutions, etc. - that you would like to speak of?

IX. Change:

31) How do men have to change? What social transformations are necessary to promote such changes?

32) What makes it difficult for men to change?

33) It seems to me that many men's groups focus on male recovery or change on a personal level - within the home or relationships, etc, while others are more politically mobilized. What are your thoughts about this? In which way do your own feelings or your group's goals lean?

34) Is it possible to change on a personal level while also challenging social structures in one's public life? - ie. is this too much to expect of oneself/others?

X. Results:

- 35) How has your work affected your relationships with women: family, friends, lovers, co-workers?
- 36) How has it affected your relationships with other men: family, friends, lovers, co-workers?
- 37) How has pro-feminist work influenced your concept of family? How has it influenced your relationships with children?
- 38) What does your men's group, or pro-feminist men's groups in general, have to offer the next generation? - Do you feel it's accessible to young people?
- 39) What is accomplished by men speaking out against violence, or other forms of oppression?
- 40) What is the solution(s) to male violence?
- 41) Has it ever been your experience that men's voices hold more validity (than women's) in the public eye? If so, how do you counter that?
- 42) Do you see men's groups/work evolving in a specifically Canadian context? Are there differences between Canada and the US and/or the UK? What are they?
- 43) Are there further areas which did not come up in this interview, in which your activism is effective or has achieved certain goals, that you would like to make known?

Appendix C

Telephone Interview Schedule

- 1) Please start by telling me some of your history - what led you to become involved in a men's group?
- 2) How long have you been involved? Are there any other groups you have worked with in the past or are concurrently involved with?
- 3) When did you first become aware of male privilege? - What experience or literature (or other avenue/s) sparked this?
- 4) What philosophies/movements do you draw upon in forming your activism? (ie. Marxist theory, socialism, labour organization, anti-racist struggle, gay and lesbian politics, etc.) How are these ideas incorporated into your activist work?
- 5) What is your vision of the role of men in feminist politics? Who should decide what this role should be, if anyone?
- 6) Please talk a bit about the sort of responses you have had to your work, both individually and as part of a group, including personal interactions -ie. you are at a dinner party and it comes up that you belong to a men's group or do feminist work...

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