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Blye W. Frank

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Article abstract

Contemporary postmodern philosophers are upsetting the knowledge applecart by challenging the underpinnings of modem thought on a variety of fronts. Aerial views, those grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984) based on foundational 'truths' that do not exist in quite the way in which we have often assumed, provide for the consumption of a world located within and based upon notions of epistemological essentialism. Dichotomous underpinnings of individualism and structuralism continue to permeate and saturate representations of men's lives, attempting to collapse and control the messiness as binary, while, at the same time, masking recycled theories of biological and social determinism. In the absence of "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988) arising within local narratives, we have received a "man-made" theory-world of men that offers up a fixity; linear, bounded, dichotomized and disconnected. This paper grapples with some of Frank's ideas about the relationship between the investigation of men's lives and the resulting created knowledge which has helped shape our understandings of ourselves as men, our relation to others and the environment we inhabit daily.

MASCULINITY MEETS POSTMODERNISM
Theorizing the 'Man-Made' Man

Blye W. FRANK
Mount Saint Vincent University

Contemporary postmodern philosophers are not only upsetting the knowledge applecart, they are dismantling it by challenging and contesting the very underpinnings and the resulting restrictions and limitations of modern thought and the processes that hold its production in place (Alcoff & Potter 1993; Nicholson 1990; Sands & Nuccio 1992). Recognizing that all discourse and all knowledge, as well the processes that produce both, are saturated with agencies of power and privilege, in this paper I want the vast and complex territory of the texted-world, in all its various forms, to be opened-up for interrogation and discussion (Harding 1993; Lather 1991). As Alcoff and Potter suggest, no longer is there the "possibility of a general or universal account of the nature of human experience which ignores or limits both the social context and the status of the knower" (1993:1). Rather, all theory and knowledge should be seen to be social products, situated within everyday experiences and practices, contexted and relative to specific circumstances and surroundings (Smith 1990). This paper, then, comments on and grapples with some of my ideas about the relationship between the investigation of men's lives and the resulting created theory and knowledge about men, which helps shape our understandings of ourselves as men, others, and the environment we inhabit daily. Rather than yet another attempt to explain why men do what they do, and a re-determination to 'fix-up' the practice of masculinity, which much of my work has been about, (Frank 1987, 1990, 1991), in this paper I want to begin to tease apart some of our constructed ways of knowing which continue to organize and regulate our thinking and our actions as men (Kinsman 1987), giving a certainty to men's lives that is, in fact, not there. As Haraway suggests, we should attempt to query both the fixity of language and the functionalist order given to both the social and to theories of the social (1990), including those about men. Aerial views, those grand narratives (Lyotard 1984) historically produced by men and based on foundational 'truths' that do not exist in quite the way in which we have often assumed, provide for the consumption of a world located within and based upon notions of epistemological essentialism (Hartstock 1987). Dichotomous underpinnings of individualism and structuralism still endure and invade most current representations of men's lives, seeking to collapse, as well as manage, the uncertainty and messiness of the everyday practice as binary, (self/social; heterosexual/homosexual; privilege/oppression; gender/sexuality) while at the

same time, masking recycled theories of biological and social determinism so that the straight man in drag continues to be seen as abnormal and given a determinative marginality even in the most progressive of the deconstructing of gender and sexuaity spaces (Bociurkiw 1988).

In the absence of "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988:595) arising within the local narratives of men's and boys' lives, we have received a 'man-made' theory-world of men that offers up a fixity: linear, bounded, dichotomized and disconnected from the everyday relations, such as schools, in which men exist and practice their masculinity and sexuality. The recognition that men's practice of masculinity and sexuality is always local, temporal (Connell 1987), ever-shifting, intermeshed rather than sequential, and with boundaries that materialize only in social interaction, should not persuade us to the abandon an exploration and investigation of men, or to despair in our efforts to bring about change in men's lives. However, moving our focus, as Britzman suggests, from 'the real' of men's lives to 'discourses of the real' (1991), allows for the 'real' to be contested (Lather 1991), exposing not only the seams and the ruptures of the *not*-so-rational-self and of men's *not*-so-unified daily/nightly practice, and allows for the diversity, multiplicity, and pluralism of both the self and the practice to be illuminated and clarified, but not classified. Once we begin to take apart the foundational blocks of masculinity (heterosexuality, rationality, privilege, and so on) with all their cracks and crevices, as well as their cross-overs, we can then no longer offer up explanations of the concrete stability which we thought existed (Bernstein 1983; Smith 1984; Sheridan 1980; Haraway 1985; Harding 1986). The pillars of both the rational subject and the unified structure begin to crumble. Dismantling the theoretical assumptions of masculinity and sexuality to which we still cling, often because of the "methodological legacies" (Nicholson 1993:1) used to 'make visible' the lives of men, "allows us to demystify the resulting foundational realities that we have created" (Lather 1992:96) and imagine a world other than the one we have invented. As Lather (1991) suggests, we need to shift "into ways of thinking that can take us beyond ourselves" (p. 164). This problematizing and teasing apart of our own 'man-made' and totalizing knowledge creations, as well as the methods used to achieve them, challenges us both to see what is already 'there' in a different way, while at the same time providing, as bell hooks has said, a re-visioning of a world that is not yet 'there' (hooks, 1990). Certainly schools and other educational institutions need that in their understanding of sexuality.

At the same time that I want us to debate the created certainty and the unified nature of men's lives, the paper also problematizes the desire for certainty and unification, as well as the one best way (Lather 1991) to certainty that continues to trouble so much of our recent investigations and theorizing

about men's lives, including their gender and sexuality. Not only am I making an effort *not* to offer a re-read of men's lives through the textual gaze of the already established frames, I am attempting to provide a critical break with past theorizing about men. I want to challenge and upset the customary 'reading' of men, and ask, as Dorothy Smith often does: 'How is it that we come to know what we know?' (Smith 1990). I want to do that through challenging hegemonic 'truths' located in disciplinary knowledges, themselves often offered as binary splits (psychology/sociology; history/ sociology; philosophy/economics, and so on), which have, in turn, given us fragmented accounts, as well as the socially created hierarchical binaries to which we have become so accustomed as men: heterosexuality/ homosexuality; macho/sissy; privilege/oppression; masculine/feminine; active/passive; and so on. As Foucault pointed out in "The Discourse on Language": the division of knowledge into disciplines is one of the internal modes of regulation and supervision that power exerts, over other discourses.

Quite simply, then, in this paper I am asking us to think differently about how we think (Flax 1987) about men, masculinity and sexuality, and more broadly, how we have come to 'know' the world through the more general artificial polarities which modern investigation and theorizing has invented as 'real'. As Patti Lather (1991) suggests, postmodernism provides a "corrective moment, a safeguard against dogmatism, a continual displacement" (p. 13).

Texting Life: Creating the 'Universal Man'

Through a process of textualization, theories of male identity and male sex role, like all theory, give form to men's lives and analytically anchor that which cannot be anchored: a fluidity of pluralistic, diverse, and contradictory and overlapping ideas and practice in the lived world of men (Lather 1991; Luke & Gore 1992; Nicholson 1990; Harding 1993). The theories by and about men, whether of personality or structure, allow us to read back both the individual and collective practice of men as stable, linear, unalterable and universal. Lifted out of the historically contingent and contextually located daily practice, men's 'life-in-the-text' constricts and diminishes localized positions and performance, casting them into a condensed textual-package, bounded with a universalizing cover that is most often heterosexual, white, middle-class, and abled.

Those grand narratives of men's lives, 'the worlding of the world' as Patti Lather (1991) calls it, have produced a theoretical discourse on and about men that continues to mask the infinitely particular of men's multilayered subjectivities and gives power to a textual hegemony that often reigns supreme

in the medical, legal and religious discourse about what constitutes appropriate reality. This textual hegemony, with its power to both name and invent men's lives, should never be underestimated, for it is most often how we come to 'know' the world. Men's practice is given definition through the established frames, prescripting a complex world as simple. The resulting partial account elevates certain ways of seeing and understanding over others, by allowing some voices to go unheard or to be misrepresented by others: voices that may be physically present in a variety of textual forms, including in our classrooms, but in psychic exile due to a profound sense of alienation or fear. As Marusia Bociurkiw points out in her essay "Territories of the Forbidden" (1988), it is no secret that cultural representations by oppressed groups (gay and bisexual men, men of colour, physically and mentally challenged men, men who 'cross-dress') exist at the bottom of the constructs of image and text which we call culture, most often forming its least funded, least seen layer. In this context, she says visibility is fought for and history, both in its specific representation, as well as in the collective of men, is always something that keeps getting lost. History becomes not the representation of the diverse subjectivities of any one man or the plurality of the collective of men: Rather the process of historizing men's lives through the epistemic privilege of textual deposits hides an assortment of unstated assumptions about who and what counts in a culture that perpetuates inequalities (Bociurkiw 1988; Potter 1993).

The failure of much of the 'new' scholarship on men is the failure to recognize the embeddedness of the assumptions, both theoretically and methodologically, under which it gets produced within a specific historical context. Many men and boys find themselves screened out by these assumptions: "on the outside looking in" (Hooks 1990:25), both in theory and in all the ways in which we represent 'the' culture of men's lives, including the representation of self. As Foucault has pointed out, at any time, multiple perspectives and discourses are present, but only a few are heard. However, it is not as simple as the created binary splits of dominant and subordinate masculine discourses which many men theorizing masculinity continue to invent. Rather, as Foucault (1980) suggests:

> To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must construct, with the things said and those concealed, the enunciations required and those forbidden, that it comprises; with the variants and different effects — according to who is speaking... (p. 100).

Refusing to take the world as a simple formulation of separate and mutually exclusive categories, such as those who have power to name the world and those who do not, disrupts much of our texted knowing and begins to unsettle received definitions (Lather 1992) which act only as fragmentary accounts and which negate the human agency of life.

We must be careful not to oversimplify the issue of representation. Adrienne Rich, in "Taking Women Students Seriously", suggests that to understand the context of the lives of women is not simply a matter of broader representation or a fuller exploration of what is already there, but rather it:

> means that most difficult thing of all: listening and watching in art and literature, in social sciences, in all the descriptions we are given of the world, for the silences, the absences, the nameless, the unspoken, the encoded — for there we will find the knowledge of women. And in breaking those silences, naming our selves, uncovering the hidden, making ourselves present, we begin to define a reality that resonates to us, which affirms our being... (p. 28).

This is not to suggest that men in general, or gay and bisexual men in particular, are rendered equally invisible, misrepresented or silenced in a world of gender and sexual imbalance between women and men. It is to suggest that the texting of all lives is related to power and to the authorial voice with its assumptions about what constitues truth and falsity (Lather 1992).

Of course, it can be argued that some descriptions, interpretations, and analyses of men, masculinity and their sexualities are, in fact, better than others. However, I want to argue here that the problem is not that 'we haven't been able to get it right', even though that is the claim by many 'progressive' scholars. Again, as recognized by Foucault (1980), all theorization and texting creates the 'Other', that which is not us. So the process of theory-creation and of texting the world is not only a process of objectification creating "the Other", for even when we text ourselves as men (that process of narrative so popular in some circles these days), we get a self that is no longer us, for we have an invented and unified rational self in and through the discourse. The texted-unified-man-self, often constructed without emotions and feelings, that pillar of modern-man-thinking, becomes organized through categories such as gender and sexuality. These categories then allow for both inclusion and displacement: any one man can be judged against the position of 'the universal fit'. Put simply, one fits the category or one does not. Not fitting brings with it a variety of social experiences, such as: being fired from the job, or fag-bashed by other students, or being pathologized through the specific, often universalizing categories of psychology, psychiatry, criminology, religion, and so on (Kinsman 1987).

Little has been said about this process of "worlding the world" (Lather 1991) with regard to the "invention" of men's lives through texting. Most men studying men most often incorporate their exploration and analysis within traditional methods of investigation and the theory which supports it, decontextualizing and disconnecting them from both the world which they constitute and are constituted by (Kirby & McKenna 1989), as well as from the texting, in all its various forms, that describes them.

Yet through texting, it is not simply the diversities and pluralisms of men's practice, both individually and collectively, that are obscured. The issue is not one of simply obscuration, perhaps because both the similarities and the differences are not there waiting to be "discovered" in quite the way in which we have invented them. In a constant state of movement and always relative to the historical moment in which they get created, difference and similarity occur at numerous sites and in various shapes for each man, as well as for all men (Bat-Ami Bar On 1993). It is not, as some would suggest, a matter of 'hegemonic' and 'subordinate masculinities'. Rather men's lives are more complex than that: entering and withdrawing from assemblies of similarity and difference in overlapping and contradictory manners. Rather than as mutually exclusive binary static categories such as heterosexual and homosexual, it is critical to interrogate men's lives as diverse if we are to understand how privilege and oppression works. Socially constructing similarity and difference is not a neutral process, but rather very much connected to the historical and social context of the knower. As Lorraine Code, in "Taking Subjectivities into Account" (1993), suggests, "all knowers mare somewhere" (p. 39). In addition, similarity and difference are always connected with assumptions about naturability and desirability (Harding 1993). And tangles of difference and similarity are fashioned by and through language that proceeds to supply a contour to what counts as difference and similarity within and against the dominant institutional arrangements such as schooling.

However, as we well know, groupings of similarity and difference do more than allow us to sort and sift. Through grouping together on what is invented as similarities and separating people based on what is constructed and seen as difference, similarity and difference offer both promise and danger, strength and power, as well as marginalization. Gay men, for example, know the sense of both marginalization and power one can live as gay.

In actuality, we create the lives, the differences, the similarities, as well as the obscurities, as we "do" the invention of men's lives. It strikes me more and more in my research with men and in my daily conversations that what you "get" in texting is, indeed, not what you get in life. 'Life in the field' of our own diverse, open-ended, contradictory subjectivities is not organized around

non-overlapping and mutually exclusive categories of difference or similarity or gender and sexuality.

However, once again, I am not suggesting that this problem is one of flawed method, or that men lie to researchers about their multi-faceted subject experience, or that the analysis is inappropriate, though those are always possibilities. I am not suggesting that there is a puzzle to be solved, a "truth" to be discovered by finding all the right pieces through a more thorough process of investigation: Rather, what I am suggesting is that we "read" men's lives, lift them into text, and then read them back as real. It is, indeed, not the search for the truth, but rather the construction of it that creates our "knowing", not only of men's lives but of all life. This textual hegemony — a composition written and fabricated, and saturated in and with its own historical and social context — gives a particular "take" on the social landscape of men's daily practice. "What is really happening, then, is itself a function of frames, which are a kind of fiction" (Hassan 1987:118). In order to avoid the narrowness of the representation of men, it is not only a matter of the inclusion of multiple points of view, it is the recognition that any point of view itself is historical, social and fluid, rather than yet another piece of the 'truth' to be discovered.

Men Studying Men: Re-Treading the Discourse

The move then is not to claim that if we just get the method right, work harder at the analysis, and be more inclusive of our subjects, we will be able to make visible the "truth" of men's lives and with this certainty know what to "do" about us. 'Re-treading' (itself an invention of modernity) the present discourse and theory-building surrounding men's practice simply adds to the theoretical layering of an already totalizing and universalizing 'cover', a cover, that as I have already suggested, has obscured the messiness of men's lives: the contradictions, tensions and confusions, complexities and ambiguities of their practice. With each new layer of theorizing, particularly with the more recent gay and pro-feminist theoretical work, the boundaries of men's gender and sexual practice have been expanded by *adding* to the layers: masculinity has now become "masculinities" and sexuality, "sexualities". Interestingly, and perhaps very telling, gender has not as easily and readily become 'genders' as perhaps sexuality has become sexualities, the boundaries of sexuality now include homosexuality, even in discussions within the military, whereas cross-dressing for men continues to be read as a pathology and in need of treatment. Even with this expansion from fixed dichotomous categories to a plurality of more fluid practice, the textual reading-back still allows for an authorial voice to continue to provide a fixity to the world of men. Often falling back into the binary frames that it attempts to dismiss (straight/gay; butch/femme;

jock/sissy), the 'progressive' re-treaded theorizing provides the monolithic meaning structure thought necessary for deliverance from the restrictive practices and structures of the world, but *not* from the textual practice, itself an intimate "structure" of the "grand narrative".

Language as Constitutive

In *Rediscovering Masculinity; Reason, Language and Sexuality* (1989), Victor Seidler writes:

> In thinking about the organization of our consciousness and our experience, it becomes crucial to understand the force of language in shaping and giving form to that experience. Language and available conceptual frameworks, partly in the form of our inherited cultural traditions, necessarily mediate our experience ... language or discourse is seen here to be prior to and constitutive of experience, so that language and experience at some level are conflated. Personal experience is undermined as a theoretical resource, as we are presented with the idea that the 'individual' is a category constructed through the workings of socially-grounded discourses which are essentially external to, and therefore in a sense independent of individual identity (p. 4-5).

As I have suggested, it is language itself that embodies and continues to hold in place much of the simplicity that is given to men's lives. Language becomes the carton that holds men's experience (Haraway 1990). However, language also sways the subject, defining subjectivities and constituting the social relations to which it is so tangled. Rather than language being simply the receptacle in which human practice takes place, it, too, is a process of composition, a social determinant which invents, structures and legitimizes particular subjectivities over others. So as we accomplish language to organize the world about us, language too organizes us, giving a particular form and shape to our lives (Seidler 1989). Hence, language then becomes not the reflection of a fixed reality 'out there' to be accounted for, but a way of giving meaning that produces a limited reality. The way in which men experience and respond in terms of conceptions of masculine self-image and sexuality can only be through and according to the discourses that are available to them at any given moment. This is particularly important in maintaining current relations of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity in schooling. Language acts to discredit and marginalize certain ways of giving meaning to experience which re-defines the hegemonic gender and sexual norms. Generally schools do not provide a language that allows the re-speaking and re-writing of oneself in the discourse as a gay student or teacher. Constantly being re-affirmed through the use of

language and textual representations, hegemonic masculinity is part of the organizing framework of men's lives.

Paradoxically, however, it is also the very plurality of language and the impossibility of fixing meaning that allows us to see how language both provides the mooring and embodies power, but at the same time is also temporary, shifting, and distinctive to the dynamics of power of the discourse in which it gets accomplished, and always open to interrogation and question (Weedon 1987). Hence, the language of gender and sexual relations of schools, for example, always offers the possibility for change, while it engages in the very oppressive relations that marginalizes gay and lesbians. As language infiltrates our lives, it, too, under certain circumstances, can become a site of struggle and resistance.

Sexuality/Sexualities

There has been much said on the fluidity of sexuality and the movement between categories. However, central to the framing of men's lives is not simply the dichotomizing of sexuality into heterosexuality and homosexuality, but rather the dichotomizing of gender and sexuality. The splitting apart of gender and sexuality, a historical process itself, has resulted in a particular organization of assumptions, ideas, and meanings, the consequences of which have, most importantly, a deep influence on medical, psychological, psychiatric and legal practice, and everyday attitudes and behaviour as to what is appropriate and what is not. This structuring of a gender/sexuality split has resulted in what Gayle Rubin (1984) calls "the charmed circle of sexuality" (p. 181): heterosexual, married, monogamous, reproductive, and considered "normal, natural, healthy, and holy" (p. 282). Arriving at school or at scholarly meetings to present a paper, biologically man but 'cross-dressed' and lesbian, creates an uncomfortability which would clearly demonstrate the difficulties with an anti-dichotomizing gender and sexuality. 'Gender Dysphoria', that transgender phenomena based on sexist assumptions that men and women have a 'correct' gender identity (i.e. normally adopted by their biological sex) is still seen as illness. The comfortability with deconstructing gender and sexuality and crossing the boundaries may well "function" most effectively as an institutionally articulated politics rather than as a fuller exploration of the practical possibilities of experiment and mutation of the texted order of our lives as men.

Kate Bornstein, an "activist transexual lesbian, queer and feminist" in speaking of those who are attempting to make changes in the gendered and sexed order of present-day relations, suggests that "Even if you win your revolution, I'm still an outlaw" (1992:39). For women and men who blend the

categories and who are challenging the conventional gender and sexuality rules meet with a fairly impenetrable wall of rigidly bi-polar gender and sexual systems. Managing and maintaining complex and unorthodox relationships against the iron-clad cultural assumption that gender and sexuality are biologically determined and immutable is not easy (Syms 1992:39). Even with the recognition that both gender and sexuality are socially created and saturated with politics at any given historical moment, there still remains a sex-gender essentialism which locates both gender and sexuality as the property of an individual's hormones or psyche, physiological or psychological, and with no history and no significant social consequences (Rubin 1984:276). De-constructing the borders of one's gender and sexuality steps outside the boundaries of the acceptable narrowness and rigidity of gender culture. In addition, in this fencing in of gender and sexual practice, we miss the irony, the parody and the playfulness of gender and sexuality, as well as of lives in general. We must remember that those who have not conformed to the gender and sexual borders have been crucial to mapping out the multiple subjective experiences of men and provides the field of possibilities. Gender and sexual 'outlaws' have always existed. However, the possibilities that they offer have not necessarily acted as an agent of change. It seems to only work well in the abstraction and in the theorizing. In a world of gender and sexual apartheid, demolishing the splits creates a 'category crisis' and often immense controversy, even among progressive theorists. Bypassed as interesting theatre, deviant or dangerous, we miss the opportunity to explore the concrete lived experience of those who collapse the polarized terms into which gender and sexuality are forced.

By both collapsing the splits and expanding the boundaries, we are provided with new glimpses into what we "knew" was already "there": a variability of gender and sexual forms, assumptions, beliefs, ideologies and practice, as well as a glimpse into the human agency which both constitutes and governs masculinity and sexuality. But the theorizing often stops short of providing the "shift" necessary to begin the interrogation of the very definite social practices of textualization which provide this cultural knowing of men's everyday/everynight gender-sexual practice. The practice of textualization, itself most often a practice of the privileged man, privileges some practice of the masculine/sexual regime over others. Until somewhat recently, very little work, for example, has been done on how the gender-sexual split continues to map some relations of the gender-sexual hierarchy at the centre, while placing others on the fringes, or rendering them invisible altogether.

An investigation of the composing of gender and sexuality as dualistic and discrete categories, separate from other practice, through textualization continues to move us to an exploration of the hegemony of categories and

concepts. As Dorothy Smith (1987) suggests, concepts and categories reflect social relations mediated and organized by concepts and categories. In order to avoid hardening of the categories (Elshtain 1987), we need to emphasize that which cannot be assimilated, grounded, and "known" and, therefore, allows people to acknowledge more diversity and pluralism and let go of the footholds which continue to bring us back to the gender-sexual lines of fault and the resulting privilege/oppressive split.

Privilege/Oppression

The analysis of men's privilege which has dominated some of the more recent writing on men, including my own (Frank 1987), has been problematic too. I want, as does Bat-Ami Bar On (1993) in her paper, "Marginality and Epistemic Privilege," to argue that our understanding and analysis of oppression and privilege has been far too simplistic, resulting in a theorizing of a single axis of oppression or privilege, rather than the multiple axes on which the relations of marginalization and centering exist in the daily relations of people's lives. Creating yet another dualistic conceptual framing of men's experience, it reduces a complex negotiated set of social relations among and between men, and with women, to a simple privilege/oppression split that cannot possibly capture the dynamics of men's expression and practice. In addition, it is not only that there is no one site of oppression or transgression or privilege: reducing any one man's experience, or the collective experience of all men, or groups of men, to one or two formulations, absents from the discourse more than it discovers or tells. This "modern dualistic ordering of reality" (Yeatman 1993:287) ignores the notion that one can be both privileged and oppressed at the very same time, like gay and straight, or macho and sissy, and ruptures the hygienic present packaging of men's lives.

Once again, some critical and pro-feminist theory on men's practice (Brod 1987; Kimmel & Messner 1992; Messner & Sabo 1990; Pronger 1990; Kaufman 1993; Clatterbaugh 1990) provides a less coercive conceptual organization of men and does attempt to dump the binary logic provided by the fathers of gender and sexual theorizing, expanding from stable and fixed dualistic categories to a continuum. Recognizing an increased awareness of human agency and the fragility of the categories, any man can fit more than one sexual category. However, once again the theorizing neglects the multiple manifestations of men's gender and sexuality by suggesting that the movement is from one category to another, without a full discussion of the fluidity of identity and how identity comes to be formed through the established definitions already provided. Moving men from one assumed category to the next along a linear path, pointing us to the utopian vision that, like the search

for truth, plagues much of our theorizing, does little to capture the messiness, or the struggle, of the individual or collective practice of men.

It is also a theorizing which continues, quite simply, the search for "the better man" with an overly optimistic view of human agency, a tendency to overlook the complexities of context and the theoretical pronouncement of discourses as "liberatory" (Gore 1992:63). The grand narrative of the recent men's movement, seeing men as trapped either in a body that has been robbed of the manly warrior that once lay within or victimized by patriarchal relations, does little to challenge the gender and sexual politics of masculinity at work in and through the discourse.

The hegemonic voice theorizing men's relations between and among themselves and with women within the oppressive/privilege split ignores, dismisses or denies the multiple identities and varied experience in certain locations and circumstances. The struggle of the oppressed and exploited allows us to become the privileged subject, giving us a place from which to speak with an authorial voice about our lives as gay men, for example. As a white gay man in the academy, I experience the oppression of being gay within institutionalized heterosexism at the same time that I experience a life of choices and possibilities because of my position. In addition, responding to the emergence of multiple gay experiences challenges the notion that there is only one legitimate gay experience or one form of gay oppression: Forcing the recognition of multiple gay experiences and enabling us to develop diverse agendas for unification, taking into account the specificity and diversity of who we are. (Hooks 1990).

As Mort (1987) argues, the carefully and selectively theorized gender and sexuality has acted in the best interest of most men. Not only does the composing and imposing of a monolithic meaning making structure make invisible the complexities and ambiguities of men's gender and sexual lives and perpetuate the widely held belief that sexuality is a single, basic, unified pattern ordained by nature, rather than a mesh of diverse practices carried out by men, it also continues to give some people more power than others. This overly deterministic explanatory mode masks the political nature of men's masculinity and sexuality (Kaufman 1987; Frank 1987; Brittan 1989; Messner 1990).

Conclusion

Surely the hallmark of men's lives is the complexities: the fluid and diverse meanings, changing perspectives, the meshing and unmeshing of connections, confusions and contradictions, and the tensions and the energies. Attempting to think through how we constitute and are constituted by the fictions that frame our lives as men in work and play opens up the exploration

of other possibilities: collapsing, redefining and transforming what is, while shaping what is not yet. As Daphne Patai in "The View From Elsewhere: Utopian Constructions of Difference" (1993) has said: "We need more thought experiments where the imagination can shape what is possible. Our statements about the future become active processes in shaping the future." According to bell hooks, when we talk of possibilities, "We are talking fundamentally about the meaning of life and the place of struggle" (1990:212).

As men investigate the lives of men, we must shift our role from being universalizing spokespersons to making a commitment to take away the barriers that prevent people from speaking for themselves (Apple 1991; xi in Lather). I am no longer interested in offering up another blueprint delineating new categories to congeal and cement the world of men. What I do want is for us to begin to find ways to have men investigate and reflect upon how their practice constitutes and is constituted by the text in and of their lives and how that results in certain pieces of power and privilege as well as oppression, often at the very same time. And in doing so, men can begin to struggle out of their role as masters of truth, justice, and knowing, while at the very same time struggle into being creators of space where all men (and women) can act and speak on their own behalf with honesty and openness, with fear and celebration, with hope and joy; territories where all men (and women) can move and sing and dance and cry, without romanticizing people and their experiences. Creating this territory will challenge us to re-think who speaks in what spaces. It will challenge those of us who have a history of both speaking and being heard, to be silent. It will challenge us to realize that who speaks is perhaps more important than what gets said (Said 1986:153).

Modernity has created numerous borders and erected boundaries in the lives of men: geographical, sexual, gendered, and so on, in an attempt to reduce the complexities of meaning and practice of men to "the universal man", and in so doing uses the hierarchical categories to define the self and designate territory. Essentially, postmodernism constitutes an attempt to not only erase the border lines, but to take apart the very space that gets defined by and within those borders and to call attention to the ever-shifting social and historical landscape of self and space.

Both in and out of the academy, giving voice to those who have not had the epistemic privilege is not enough. Men must do more than give voice to the multilayered experiences that they bring to classrooms, faculty meetings and kitchen tables. Looking to those who are not bounded by the inventions of modernity, the gender and sexual perverts and outlaws, will assist us in the process of transcending the boundaries, re-defining our lives, and re-shaping the territories of our world, for it is precisely in those ruptured moments, when the constructed boundaries are transgressed, that a glimpse of a different world

can be had. It is in those alternative spaces that our vulnerabilities and the contingent quality of our lives is exposed. Often threatening, transgressing the present boundaries is not without its dangers, for it is possible to create new boundaries, more rigid and with pain and destruction. However, in multiplying the ways in which we can understand the world of men, we interrupt dominant discourses and through asking as does Britzman (1989), "What kinds of practices are possible once vulnerability, ambiguity, and doubt are admitted" (p. 17).

Surely, as men we should *not* be thinking of new boundaries for the world. Rather, in collaboration with our men and women friends, we should seek new angles of vision informed by a lens that illuminates rather than frames the worlds in which we find ourselves. Multiple masculinities and sexualities are not limited to the hegemonic and progressive theoretical texted frameworks: those of us not in the text cannot be categorized out of existence. Rather masculinities and sexualities are what we are able to make, given the territory to do so. In speaking of theorizing lives, Lather (1991) suggests that "the goal should be to keep things in process, to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continuously demystify the realities we create, to fight the tendencies for our categories to congeal". Bell hooks suggests that it is the territory of marginality that can give us the space of radical possibility and hence the centre for the production of counterhegemonic discourse (1990). Men could do well to look to the men who operate outside the official discourse of the gender/sexual terrain and begin to recognize that the existing texts of men's lives have been partial and the result of epistemic privilege. Marusia Bociurkiw (1988) suggests that when you operate in the margins you are often able to speak in more radical and innovative ways than in the mainstream, "because when no one is listening, you can say what you want" (p. 28). I want to argue, as Adrienne Rich has, that it's time men began to listen. Through the listening men will be able to dismantle the sovereignty of the universal man and men's lives can be seen to be what they are: filled with joy and pain, privilege and oppression, and sadness and celebration, rather than continue the reductive understandings of self and social and the binary notions of gender and sexuality that have re-created restrictive assumptions about what properly belongs to both individual and collective masculinity. The creative potential of the postmodern masculinity allows for the possibility of transforming the everyday life of a specific local context by disorganizing the local levels of existing hegemonies created through discourse. As Lather (1991) suggests, postmodernism provides "a way to get 'unstuck'"(p. 162) through creating a category crisis. Men theorizing men could do well to spend some time taking apart the very theories that hold their lives together.

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