

**Is Masculinity in Crisis?
A Discourse Analytic Study of Men and Masculinities**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis employed semi-structured interviews to explore how a sample of Canadian men articulate their beliefs and experiences of masculine identity in the context of a contemporary crisis of hegemonic masculinity. Participants included four men from the conservative Christian organization, the Promise Keepers, with three other men as comparison. Participants discussed the traditional importance of men's roles as breadwinners and leaders in their families, and complementary roles for wives as homemakers and primary caregivers for children. They also acknowledged pressures for men to adapt in response to contemporary challenges to hegemonic masculinity. Responses included attempts to reinstate patriarchal forms of masculinity, to redefine masculinity, and to abandon it altogether in favour of more egalitarian gender roles. These findings support Connell's claim that hegemonic masculinity is threatened by changes in relations of production, power and cathexis, and show how men are seeking to adapt in response to these.

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1 Introduction

On the front cover of *Time* magazine, October 6, 1997, is a picture of a sports stadium with what appear to be hundreds of men, both standing on the ground level and in the first- and second-tier bleachers. The stadium looks like it is filled to capacity with men who have their hands raised in the air cheering and rejoicing. Closest to the camera are two middle-aged men, one black, one white; the latter with shoulder-length blond hair, his hands clasped in front of him in a motion of hope or gratitude, crying openly. The heading discusses a “new U.S. movement [that] is filling stadiums with men asserting their manhood” and questions whether these men should be cheered or feared. Anyone left wondering why men might need to assert their manhood can read the article inside to discover that the model of divine fatherhood has eroded and that North American men face a moral and spiritual crisis. The Promise Keepers organization, a US-based movement that claims to hold the prescription to cure this crisis, advocates the adoption of a new vision of masculinity – one that promises to return these men to a more Christ-like manliness where brotherhood, virtue, and wifely submission await.

The Promise Keepers do not constitute North America’s only call for men to stand up against challenges to masculinity; the last few decades have seen the emergence of several men-only organizations that seek to address issues of an ‘ailing’ masculinity in contemporary society – Robert Bly’s *Mythopoetic Men* and Louis Farrakhan’s *Million Men* movement are other examples where men are being taught to confront masculine passivity and become ‘real’ men again (Messner, 1997). In the wake of the emergence of social movements such as these, aimed at re-establishing manhood, a new body of social thought and sociological research has attempted to further understand and explain changing masculinities. Several authors in this area (Connell, 1995a; 1995b; Messner, 1995; 1997; Donovan, 1998; Kimmel, 1995; Kimmel & Kaufman, 1995; Brod, 1995; Clatterbaugh, 1995; and Schwalbe, 1995a; 1995b; 1996) suggest that masculinity may be in a state of ‘crisis’ resulting from challenges to the maintenance of hegemonic norms of masculinity. In the context of this so-called ‘crisis of masculinity,’ this thesis explores

some of the discourses used by a small group of Canadian men in articulating their experiences and beliefs regarding masculinity and the notion of a ‘crisis.’

1.1 DEFINING MASCULINITY AND THE CRISIS OF MASCULINITY

Throughout this project, I have drawn upon sociological theories of masculinity, the ‘crisis of masculinity,’ the history of the North American family, and the role of family in constructing masculine identity. One of the basic features of the current academic literature on masculinity is a critical questioning of the legitimation and perpetuation of dominant norms of North American *hegemonic masculinity*. Hegemonic masculinity is predicated on the longstanding notion that distinct gender differences exist between men and women (Connell, 1995a). Hegemonic norms are accepted because “mass culture generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the ebb and flow of daily life” (Connell, 1995a: 45), where men are expected to be strong, independent, competitive, risk-taking, aggressive, powerful, display sexual prowess, be emotionally distant, and be dominant over women in both the private and public spheres (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1995). Gender differences underpin an unequal system of power relations where “men, as a group, enjoy [access to certain] institutional privileges” not afforded to women (Messner, 1997: 5). Although this is not a recently constituted ideology, Connell holds that the dominance of hegemonic masculinity represents an endeavour to maintain this system of inequality through efforts to quell challenges to its institution. He states, “Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy” (1995a: 77). The social prescription for North American hegemonic masculinity, aimed at preserving the legitimacy of patriarchy, thus includes elements of heterosexism, homophobia, and male-dominant gender roles.

Connell stresses that hegemonic masculinity is a “historically mobile relation” noting that when “conditions for the defence of patriarchy change,” such as with recent economic or political pressures like the changing face of the North American workforce or the global movement for women’s emancipation, “the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded” (Connell, 1995a: 77; see also Bartkowski, 2004). In fact, the

institutional and cultural features that give rise to any one form of masculinity also create alternate versions of masculinity that support or conflict with core assumptions. For example, throughout this thesis, discussion will focus on the discursive construction of masculinity as embodied in the North American role of adult men as family breadwinners. Complementary discourses and practices that perpetuate this core assumption assert the desirability of a gender-based division of labour within the home even in cases where breadwinning men become temporarily unemployed. Contrasting discourses endorse a more egalitarian form of gender relations, within which it is acceptable for wives to maintain equal responsibility for income generation or even to consistently earn more than their husbands. There is, thus, no essential ‘masculinity’ (in the singular) that can be generalized and assumed to portray all men (Connell, 1995a; Donovan, 1998; Lorber, 1998; Brod & Kaufman, 1994): as Donovan points out, “masculinity is not a monolithic entity” (1998:818). However, Connell’s theory presents the notion of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ as an over-arching masculine principle which in itself incorporates many distinct versions of masculinity – or ‘masculinities’ – all of which in some way serve to differentiate men from women. For instance, hegemonic assumptions that men are stoic, physically tough, and competitive are pitted against impressions of women being emotional, soft, and supportive.

Brian Donovan, in his interpretation of Connell’s theory, notes that “multiple masculinities span the gender system and power relationships affect which masculinities are legitimated, arraying masculinities into dominant and subordinate categories” (1998:818). Popular North American examples of this hierarchy of masculinities may include images of successful businessmen or of men in sport, which often subordinate images of men struggling with unemployment or of those who are not interested in athletics. Connell reinforces this notion, stating that it is not sufficient simply to recognize differences among masculinities, but that “we must also recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance, and subordination” that are “constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate and exploit” (Connell, 1995a: 37). Thus, expressions of masculinity that

deviate from the dominant category are likely to be deemed acceptable insofar as they do not challenge or subordinate more popular definitions.

Theories of hegemonic masculinity show that “despite the range of masculinities... hegemonic masculinity forms a coherent structure because of the relatively stable collective interests of men... in maintaining the patriarchal status quo” (Donovan, 1998: 818). By assuming that *all* historical expressions of masculinity benefit from the ‘patriarchal dividend,’ Connell (1995a: 82) positions masculinity against femininity in both definition and action, stating that “a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change.” He states that even those ‘backbencher’ masculinities that have not experienced “the tensions and risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy” (1995a: 79) are allies in the defence of ‘traditional’¹ masculinity and the pursuit of maintaining the legitimacy of patriarchy. Even though relatively few men may strictly adhere to the hegemonic norm, the majority of men throughout history have benefited from patriarchal hegemony, which provides an overarching view of ideal masculinity from which other masculinities derive, or to which they can be compared. In other words, although the concept of a singular ‘masculinity’ is not sufficient to explain the variations of masculine identities existing at any point in time, *hegemonic masculinity*, as an overarching ideal that “guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995a: 77), provides a standpoint from which to define masculinities in general. According to Connell’s theory, then, the core tenet, or standpoint, of hegemonic masculinity is the differentiation from – and part of an attempt to control – definitions of femininity.

It is from this standpoint – a differentiation of hegemonic masculinity from all things feminine – that we can discuss the ‘crisis of masculinity’². Kimmel and Kaufman state

¹ I have drawn attention to the word ‘traditional’ to indicate that there is question as to the existence of this as an actual norm. See Coontz, 1992.

² Although the so-called ‘crisis of masculinity’ refers to a unified crisis of an essentialist masculinity, it is recognized that the potential for crisis may affect individual men in very different fashions, thus the singular mention ‘masculinity’ should be understood as the overarching notion of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ – not as a singular stereotype of men and masculinities.

that “in the past two decades, masculinity has been increasingly seen as in ‘crisis,’ [manifested in] a widespread confusion over the meaning of manhood” (1995:16; see also Bartkowski, 2004). The specific cultural format of gender practices that embody currently accepted strategies for displaying and maintaining masculine identity (for example, the predominance of the view that men should be the family breadwinners) has been challenged through recent “geo-political and economic relations, and in the changing dynamics and complexion of the workplace” (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1995:17). There has been both an economic and an ideological shift placing increased numbers of women in social positions ‘traditionally’ occupied by men, including paid labour, sports, academia, and politics. As well, according to Dash (1995) and Balswick (1992), increased exposure to homosexual relationships, alternatives to the nuclear family structure, interaction with racial minorities and people of diverse cultural origins, economic difficulties, fading religiosity and traditionalism, and the belief that rates of violent crime are on the upswing, all contribute to an increased anxiety and unsettled feelings among North American men. Although the economic and ideological shift has the potential to affect both men and women alike – regardless of racial or ethnic background – writers on masculinities argue that men, as an interest group concerned with defending the status quo, may be more directly threatened. Kimmel and Kaufman contend that men are “lost in a world in which the ideologies of individualism and manly virtue are out of sync with the realities of urban, industrialized, secular society” (1995:18).

Connell theorizes that challenges to the norms of hegemonic masculinity, or ‘crisis tendencies,’ come from a complex, dialectical interplay between various modern social, ideological, institutional, and economic changes which he categorizes into three main areas: relations of production, relations of power, and relations of cathexis, or sexuality. These crisis tendencies can be briefly summarized as “economic exploitation, political struggle, and emotional contradiction” (Connell, 1997:703).

First, as hegemonic masculinity is premised upon a gender-based division of labour and the dominance of men in both the private and public spheres, Connell holds that changes

to the relations of production have led to deviations in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, primarily as a result of the changing structure of the North American workforce. Increasing numbers of working women and racial minorities have created a more heterogeneous workplace; autonomy in work is lessened through expanded automation and mechanization, which, together with rising levels of unemployment and underemployment, have all presented challenges to the masculine 'breadwinner' identity (Hantover, 1978; Donovan, 1998; Messner, 1997). As Kimmel and Kaufman (1995:17) state,

“Our traditional definitions of masculinity had rested on economic autonomy: control over one’s labor, control over the product of that labor, and manly self-reliance in the workplace. The public arena, the space in which men habitually had demonstrated and proved their manhood, was racially and sexually homogenous, a homosocial world in which straight, white men could be themselves, without fear of the ‘other’... That world is gone now.”

Indeed, over the last two decades, Canada has seen a decline in the number of households where the husband is the sole earner. In the 1971 census, 50.9% of all husband and wife families across Canada reported the husband as the sole breadwinner. In 1981 this number had dropped to 31.2%, and by 1991 to 18.7%. In 2001, the percentage of all husband and wife families across Canada who reported the husband as the sole breadwinner has dropped to an all-time low of 15.3% (Statistics Canada, 1997; 2001). British Columbia has historically maintained slightly less than the national average, and in 2001 only 12.6% of all husband and wife families in BC relied on men as the sole breadwinner (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Second, Connell theorizes that the relations of power, the structural and personal power of men as a group over women as a group, no longer fully legitimate and perpetuate the construction of hegemonic masculinity. This erosion of male power is primarily represented by “a global movement for the emancipation of women” (Connell, 1995a: 84). Over the past 30 years, hegemonic masculinity has been confronted by women’s liberation movements on a number of fronts, both inside and outside of the home, as gendered divisions in both public life and care of households and children have been challenged (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1995; Donovan, 1998; Messner, 1997). Women are

increasingly participating in traditionally all-male organizations and activities, including higher-ranking occupational, religious, and governmental positions, and taking part in traditionally masculine social arenas, including manual labour, sports, and recreation. Such changes within the relations of power upset the gender-segregated balance of male-breadwinner and female-homemaker necessary to maintain masculine authority in the home (Messner, 1997; Wolf-Light, 1995; Beneke, 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is affected because women's participation in paid employment challenges men's entitlement to the head of household status on the basis of being the sole breadwinner, and at the same time, men are under pressure to participate more in the maintenance of the home.

Third, Connell holds that the changing relations of cathexis, or sexuality, have also created difficulties for the maintenance of hegemonic masculine identities. Increased acceptance of gay and lesbian sexuality along with other alternatives to mainstream Western heterosexuality, increased acknowledgement and acceptance of women's sexual desires, and women's demands for control over their own bodies have all served to open up discussion regarding the 'traditional' patriarchal order. Gay and lesbian sexuality also poses a threat to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity and homosocial, or all-male institutions because, as Connell states, this masculinity necessitates *male* control over *women* in both the public and familial spheres. Homosexual relationships challenge the male-female dialectic. Messner (1997:11) affirms that

“The very existence of gay and lesbian communities, public debates about gays in the military and gay and lesbian marriages tends to destabilize the previously taken-for-granted assumptions about the relationship between sexual orientation and cultural notions about gender, families, and masculine institutions.”

Together, these three arenas of crisis tendencies (the relations of production, the relations of power, and the relations of cathexis) have been theorized by Connell to contribute to a change in the maintenance and legitimation of a patriarchal, homosocial hegemonic masculinity. With declining structural support for the foundation of hegemonic masculinity, the patriarchal social order must find other means to maintain a heterosexual, gender-based division of labour in both the private and public spheres.

Havoc resulting from these crisis tendencies (tensions around workplace changes, women's liberation, and sexual freedoms) has produced a 'crisis of masculinity' that constitutes the collective uncertainty that abounds as men (and women) struggle to come to terms with such change. Connell holds that "the incapacity of the institutions of civil society, notably the family, to resolve this tension provokes broad but incoherent state action (from family law to population policy)" (Connell, 1995a: 85). In order to adjust to such change, "masculinities are reconfigured around [the crisis tendencies] both through conflict over strategies of legitimation, and through men's divergent responses to feminism" (1995a 85). Thus, the 'crisis of masculinity' exists in many forms and is experienced differently by men in relation to other aspects of social life that influence the construction of identity. Social positions such as race, class, physical ability, religiosity, and sexual orientation; and external influences of state and civil sanctions, popular culture, advertising, and environment all serve to alter men's reactions to the crisis (Connell, 1995b; Clatterbaugh, 1995; Messner, 1995; 1997; Gutterman, 1995; Iacovetta, 1999; Bartkowski, 2004). Donovan shows that "there is never a unitary crisis of masculinity because of the varied ways in which men respond to these structural transformations" (1998: 818). It is also important to note that a 'crisis of masculinity' does not necessarily mean that the patriarchal norm of hegemonic masculinity will be destroyed. Donovan holds that even "within hegemonic masculinities there is room for countless transformations, adjustments, and rescriptings. Collectively, men can redefine masculinity within a field of structural and discursive possibilities" (1998:819).

According to Connell, the 'crisis of masculinity' depicted by the above pressures and challenges should not be considered a complete breakdown of hegemonic masculinity so much as a challenge to the legitimacy of the 'traditional' gender order. He states that

"As a theoretical term 'crisis' presupposes a coherent system of some kind, which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis. Masculinity...is not a system in that sense. It is, rather, a configuration of practice *within* a system of gender relations. We cannot logically speak of its disruption or its transformation. We can, however, logically speak of the crisis of a gender order as a whole and of its tendencies towards crisis" (Connell, 1995a: 84).

Thus, “any one masculinity, as a configuration of practice, is simultaneously positioned in a number of structures of relationship, which may be following different historical trajectories. Accordingly, masculinity, like femininity, is always liable to internal contradiction and historical disruption” (Connell, 1995a: 73). The so-called ‘crisis of masculinity’ or crisis tendencies, then, can be understood as any contradiction or disruption to the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity and prescribed gender roles, either structural, behavioural, or ideological. Thus, if hegemonic masculinity inherently makes room for challenges to its legitimacy, “hegemony, then, does not mean total control. It is not automatic, and may be disrupted – or even disrupt itself” (Connell, 1995a: 37).

According to Connell, “the relationships constructing masculinity are dialectical; they do not correspond to the one-way causation of a socialization model” (1995a: 37). It only follows then, that responses to the ‘crisis of masculinity’ can be as divergent or conflictual as the definitions of masculinity themselves. Indeed, Connell outlines three potential responses to the ‘crisis’ that include restating hegemonic masculinity, redefining masculinity, and departing from definitions of masculinity altogether. First, Connell states that “crisis tendencies will always implicate masculinities, though not necessarily by disrupting them. Crisis tendencies may, for instance, provoke attempts to restore dominant masculinity” (1995a: 84). Hantover shows that “under the disconfirming impact of social change, men may at first be more likely to reassert the validity of traditional ends and seek new avenues for their accomplishment than to redefine their ends” (1978: 193). One example of this can be found in attempts to reinforce hegemonic masculinity by re-establishing patriarchal roles where men remain the dominant members of the family and women support their husbands’ endeavours. The second form of response includes attempts to alter the definitions of masculinity to encompass and absorb current challenges, rather than attempting to restore historical forms of masculinity: Donovan states that “the same cultural and material factors that challenge popularly understood gender roles also provide a space for hegemonic masculinity to readjust and repair” (1998: 819). For example, as a way of reframing masculine identity around the obligations and implications of modern society, men may place increasing emphasis on their roles as fathers, spiritual leaders, or dependable husbands (as opposed

to their role as breadwinners) in order to define their own masculinities. A third potential reaction to the 'crisis' can include abandoning the hegemonic project altogether in favour of a more egalitarian position, thus defining gendered identities more in terms of what seems right as an individual and not on the archetypes of hegemonic masculinity (Donovan, 1998; Connell, 1995a).

Amongst all historical challenges to established definitions of hegemonic masculinity, it is recent changes within family forms that have possibly had the most impact on the modern 'crisis of masculinity.' According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is typically maintained within the nuclear family form comprising a working man, a housewife, and their children. This model of the family has been deemed the 'basic unit' of society throughout most of the twentieth century, reaching its pre-eminence in North America in the 1950s, and has been idealized there ever since (Coontz, 1992). Family relations become significant when seeking to understand the 'crisis of masculinity', as family contributes greatly to the individual creation of a gendered self-identity. The structures and relationships found within family life have also been inextricably linked throughout history to the relations of economics, power, and sexuality outlined by Connell. One cannot fully comprehend the modern 'crisis of masculinity,' therefore, without looking at the recent history of family life in North America, and the significant role within families that men have played.

1.2 HISTORICAL SHIFTS OF MASCULINITY WITHIN THE NORTH AMERICAN FAMILY

Coltrane (1996) argues that, for centuries, our cultural images of masculinity in North America have been influenced by advances made by women's political movements, economic changes, and ensuing fatherhood practices. He states that, prior to the nineteenth century, most North American families maintained unity by working side-by-side in rural agricultural production, where men were seen as both the economic supervisor and moral authority in their families. However, with the nineteenth-century shift to commercial exchange and wage-based labour performed away from the home, notions of masculinity "also shifted in response to competition between men and women for jobs... men defended their privileged position by asserting their 'inherent' ruggedness

and suitability for ‘men’s work’” (Coltrane, 1996: 35). Men spent less and less time in the home, working long hours under the shift to industrialization, increasingly becoming absent from family relations (Bartkowski, 2001). Although many unmarried women occupied positions in the workforce, the concept of a family wage, payable only to men, was introduced along with protective legislation, which, although not universally accepted at first, eventually excluded women from competing for work with men (Connell, 1995a). Men were deemed responsible for providing financially for their wives and children, and thus were paid more, whereas women were relieved of this pressure, and their wages dropped drastically (Pleck, 1987). These rules promoted the notion that women, who had once worked alongside their husbands in the fields and cottage industry, should now remain at home in order to both protect and perpetuate their ‘more virtuous natures’ (Hackett, 1995; Coltrane, 1996). “Women were not only domestic; they were domesticators, expected to turn their sons into virtuous Christian gentlemen” (Kimmel, 1995:117). The home, as the location of this conversion, thus became a separate sphere, leading to the endorsement of an ideological shift toward the nuclear family as a ‘safe haven’ set apart from the outside world.

By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the domestic and social base for male roles began to fade ideologically as a marked influx of women entered the workforce in previously male service areas, such as typing, bookkeeping, and sales (Hantover, 1978; Pleck, 1987; Bartkowski, 2001). Supported by feminist and women’s rights groups, many women confronted the nineteenth century ideals discussed above and established a presence in education, paid labour, and political organizations (Bartkowski, 2001). Although many women relinquished their trades when they married, their experiences in paid employment and political activism, such as women’s suffrage, threw the ideology of ‘husband-breadwinner’ and ‘wife-homemaker’ into question – much more was required of husbands than simply providing the financial support (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994; Bartkowski, 2004). According to Bartkowski, “women became less dependent on men, marriage, and motherhood” because they had “more opportunities to support themselves in the workplace” which placed them in “a better bargaining position within the marriage relationship” and “further weakened the support of male domination and control of

family life” (2001: 25). As a result, a masculinist backlash aimed at reinforcing the notion of separate spheres emerged prior to the First World War (Messner, 1997). Widespread concerns arose regarding the potential feminization of young boys who spent most of their days largely within the domestic sphere (Pleck, 1987). Images of the ‘new’ father gained weight, where men were still expected to work and bring home the family wages, but their symbolic presence as ‘head of the household’ carried increasing importance. New fathers of the early twentieth century were encouraged to spend more time with their sons, teaching them ‘proper’ sex-role identifications and how to be ‘real men’ (Coltrane, 1996). In response to the social question, “could men be true men if women were no longer true women?” (DeBerg, 1990: 25; cited in Bartkowski, 2001: 27), men found ways to define their identities and celebrate ‘masculine’ activities away from their families to counterbalance the effects of ‘feminization’ through homosocial institutions where competition, violence, and displays of physical strength were valued. This, thought by many to be a sign of the first ‘crisis of masculinity’ (Clawson, 1989; Kimmel, 1995; Messner, 1997; Donovan, 1998), led to the emergence of men’s social organizations, sports teams, ‘Muscular Christian’ groups, and fraternal orders like Freemasons and Odd Fellows, which provided an opportunity for men to bond together in homosocial gatherings outside of the workplace (Hantover, 1978; Hackett, 1995; Kimmel, 1995; Coltrane, 1996; Messner, 1997; Bartkowski, 2004). Men could also cultivate a rugged masculinity in their sons by enrolling them in institutions such as the YMCA and Boy Scouts, which fed on cultural depictions of masculinity and manliness such as Western cowboys and Paul Bunyan-like independence³ (Hantover, 1978; Kimmel, 1995; Coltrane, 1996; Bartkowski, 2004).

Although World War II brought about changes to the accepted gender roles with women engaging in men’s work during wartime, the ideology of separate spheres was asserted with renewed vigour after the war. Soldiers came back from the war and were given jobs in the factories, assembly lines, and production plants. Working women were coaxed out

³ This 1940’s fictional character is depicted as an emblem of rugged masculinity, an independent hero for men of that day. Bunyan, a giant lumberjack, was smart, strong, fit, and determined. Legend has it that Bunyan mistakenly dragged his axe on the ground and inadvertently created the Great Lakes, the Rocky Mountains, and the Grand Canyon.

of their wartime factory positions and back into their homes with increased efforts to glorify the image of women as 'natural' wives, mothers, and homemakers. This image of 'natural' mother-child attachment was supported by social theorists such as Bowlby (1958, cited in Bowlby, 1969) who assumed that mother figures are essential for the first twelve months of a child's development. Thus, women were deemed responsible for the primary care-giving for children and for corresponding notions of familial piety, wholesome family values, and the creation of a sanctuary within the home (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994). The nuclear family ideal of working men and domestic women – though perhaps not the actual norm – reached an all-time high in the 1950s, creating the era now considered as the 'golden age' of the 'traditional family' (Conway, 1997; Coltrane, 1996; Coontz, 1992; Messner, 1997; Bartkowski, 2004). An ideological emphasis on stay-at-home mothers, along with a corresponding economic boom, reinforced the notion of masculine identity as derived from providing strong financial support to the family (Coontz, 1992). Men were increasingly absent from day-to-day interactions with family members, thus definitions of masculinity, less compatible with the domestic sphere, became firmly set in the role of good provider.

In the late 1960s, advances in household technology and birth control, along with increasing employment opportunities and the decline of the family wage, encouraged more women to enter the paid labour force (Hantover, 1978; Conway, 1997; Bartkowski, 2004). North American men were confronted by a widespread movement for women's equality which brought with it a new discourse criticizing the oppressed position of women in work, marriage, and family (Bartkowski, 2004). In Canada, as in many other western countries, laws were changed regarding divorce, the availability of birth control methods, abortion, and forbidding marital or sexual discrimination in hiring practices and wage payments. These legal and political changes, along with industrial expansion, increased the incentives and opportunities for women to work outside of the home (Coontz, 1992). Vast numbers of women sought to postpone marriage and family life in order to pursue educational and occupational interests and many women who were already married with children decided to return to the workforce for purposes of professionalism and to finance increasing consumerism, thus, altering the face of 'the'

North American family (Messner, 1997). During the 1960s there were dramatic increases in rates of divorce, working women, day-care participation, single-parent families, and singlehood as a way of life (Conway, 1997). The familial support base for 'traditional' male identity, with husband as provider and wife as homemaker, gradually eroded (Donovan, 1998).

Since the 1960s, the numbers of working women in North America have steadily increased, and, by the 1980s, the ideal of "the traditional family of breadwinner father, homemaker mother, and biological children had become... a statistical minority" (Coltrane, 1996: 44). At the same time that this decline in 'traditional' nuclear families occurred as a consequence of changes in women's roles, men continued to be exposed to much the same messages as had been around throughout previous decades. Men were still largely expected to have a steady job, a house, a wife and children (Townsend, 2002). These contradictory messages created a tension for men and, in response to this conflict, and to women's social movement activism, participation in various men's movements increased at a steady rate (Connell, 1995a). Men's responses to this prevailing crisis of masculine identity ranged from whole-hearted support of women's struggle for equality to a complete masculinist backlash (Messner, 1997). However, by the 1980s the attention of many men had turned away from supporting feminist activities and aimed specifically toward understanding the suffering of men (Messner, 1997; Shewey, 1995). Men's groups largely changed their focus to a distinctive anti-feminist orientation, which sought to counteract the economic and social policies that, two decades earlier, were considered a good step towards women's emancipation. Anti-feminist groups like the Mythopoetic Men and Men's Rights were supported by conservatives and Christian fundamentalists in their competition with radical and socialist feminist men's groups. These conservative, pro-'traditional' family movements sought to voice their opposition to social change in patriarchal politics surrounding work, children, family, sexuality, women's rights, and equality (Messner, 1997).

In the current era, the terrain of masculinity and family politics is still fraught with tension between the pro- and anti-feminist movements. The conservative side has been

joined by groups such as the evangelical Promise Keepers organization, who view men's roles as the heads of nuclear families as a divine prescription. These conservatives view recent changes to the family as constitutive of a 'new crisis' encompassing both the traditional family and hegemonic masculinity. Citing increasing unemployment and mechanization in the work world, gains that women have made in the struggle for equality, and advances that gay and lesbian groups have made, such groups contend that it has become increasingly difficult to maintain socially acceptable constructions of masculinity that perpetuate former widespread ideals of men as sole breadwinners, heads, and leaders within their families. It is in this context that men's social movements, such as the 'Promise Keepers' organization, have emerged, supporting modern men in their struggle to reconstruct definitions of manhood, and to cope with the apparent 'crisis of masculinity.' Men who are members of the Promise Keepers, with the group's specific attention to definitions of masculinity and the concept of crisis, constitute an ideal population from which to sample discursive perspectives on contemporary masculinities.

1.3 THE PROMISE KEEPERS

The Promise Keepers organization is an all-male evangelical Christian association made up of members who "support a biblical interpretation of gender roles with men as the natural heads of their households as the breadwinners, decision-makers, and rational thinkers within their family" (Balswick, 1992). The Promise Keepers movement was started in Denver, Colorado in 1990 by a former college football coach, Bill McCartney, and has spread across many North American cities and towns via small-group church meetings and large rallies in hockey and football stadiums from coast to coast. In the first seven years, the Promise Keepers grew from seventy to more than 2.1 million members across the United States (Stodghill, 1997; Donovan, 1998) and more than 18 thousand within Canada (Saskatoon Star Phoenix, May 12, 1997). According to Donovan, Promise Keeper rallies grew in size from 4,200 men in 1991 to 22,000 in 1992; 50,000 in 1993; 278,000 in 1994; and 725,000 in 1995. In 1997 the Promise Keepers organized stadium conferences in eighteen cities across North America, charging a sixty-dollar entrance fee at each event and boasting annual revenues of 87 million US dollars (Stodghill, 1997; Donovan, 1998). In October of that same year, more than 600,000 men

joined a Promise Keepers' rally at the National Mall in Washington in an organized effort to surpass the numbers involved in previous marches on the American capital by groups campaigning for social change (Bartkowski, 2004). As noted by one Promise Keeper attendee, "the homosexuals march in Washington. The feminists march in Washington. So, if there's a Christian march in Washington, I think that's where I ought to be" (Saskatoon Star Phoenix, October 4, 1997). Two years earlier Louis Farrakhan organized a Million Man March for the Nation of Islam, drawing more than 870,000 men to the Washington capital and setting a participation goal that Promise Keepers have sought to trump (Stodghill, 1997; Bartkowski, 2004).

The Promise Keepers pose an interesting case-study of an active and organized response to the so-called 'crisis of masculinity.' Leaders of the Promise Keepers organization (most notably, Bill McCartney and James Dobson) have responded to the challenges masculinities have faced in the last few decades by advocating a return to what they argue are the 'natural' male roles embodied within the traditional patriarchal nuclear family (McCartney, 1994; Dobson, 1994; Wagner & Gruen, 1994; Genet et al. 1999). In order to alleviate the pressures resulting from the incongruence of a 'traditional' identity in contemporary times, men in this group are told the only answer is to promise and commit themselves to church, to family, and to supporting fellow Promise Keepers and other men, while maintaining a disposition of 'pure and godly masculinity.' Promise Keepers propagate this alternative discourse through their affiliated churches and via publications and workshop materials which emphasize their particular Biblical interpretation and focus specifically on the definitions of masculinity and the changing roles for men within contemporary families. From the perspective of Connell's theory, the Promise Keepers' response to the 'crisis of masculinity' and their attempts to re-establish patriarchy might be understood as a project aimed at restoring hegemonic masculinity, one that seeks to return men and women to 'traditional' gender roles.

There has been very little academic research conducted on the Promise Keepers, in general, and even less on the discourses used by men in this group. Sociologist John P. Bartkowski (2001, 2004) has undertaken an exploration of discourses surrounding the

maintenance of 'traditional' nuclear families in contemporary society by conducting two studies on the topic, one with evangelical couples in general, and one specifically with men who participate in the Promise Keepers movement. Bartkowski's first examination, published in 2001, contains a review of textual materials common to, and analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with, husbands and wives from an evangelical church in Texas. His findings support the work of Connell (1995a) regarding theories of hegemonic masculinity and responses to crisis tendencies. He locates areas of tension, or 'crisis,' within attempts to maintain 'traditional' roles for men as breadwinners and heads of the households, and within a gendered division of labour in their homes. This research highlights discourses of gender difference, unequal power relations between husbands and wives, and tensions surrounding financial provision, housework, and childcare. His findings in this initial study have been useful throughout the analysis of discourses used by the men in this thesis.

Bartkowski's second study, published in 2004, focussed on analysis of Promise Keepers' books, his experience of attending a Promise Keepers rally, and of conducting twenty interviews regarding men's reasons for participating in the Promise Keepers. In this analysis, Bartkowski did not focus on locating crisis tendencies but instead he developed four discursive types of masculinity found to be available to men through Promise Keepers' books and at the rallies. These four consist of the following: Rational Patriarch, Expressive Egalitarian, Tender Warrior, and Multicultural Man. Bartkowski found, however, that the men he interviewed and the major Promise Keeper authors he reviewed wavered most often between two predominant discourses (Rational Patriarch and Expressive Egalitarian) when describing the roles and expectations for men in contemporary society. Bartkowski uses the sailing term "tacking" to describe the use of these two discursive models by individual men. Like a boat zigzagging across water to meet its target, tacking points to the often contradictory discursive selections utilized by any one person. Of the four discourses available to participants via Promise Keepers' literature and through rally speakers, Bartkowski notes that the last two discourses (Tender Warrior and Multicultural Man) were not utilized very much by individual men during their interviews. He concludes that despite Promise Keeper leaders' efforts to

encourage multiculturalism and economic diversity at an organizational level, participation in the movement remains predominantly white and middle class (see also Messner, 1997).

Brian Donovan (1998), in his earlier examination of discourses perpetuated through textual materials favoured among the Promise Keepers, found a more direct pattern of messages regarding controlling wives and families than what was available in Bartkowski's analysis. Donovan sees the Promise Keepers' endeavour, instead of putting forth discourses of egalitarianism, multiculturalism, and economic diversity, as more of an attempt to "alter the norms of masculinity" (1998: 817) in order to legitimate a more conventional form of patriarchy. He follows Connell's theories quite closely throughout his analysis, and concludes that the movement leaders make strategic use of modern social and economic pressures through their teachings, which admonish men to learn how to "control their families [more] effectively" (1998: 829). Donovan states:

"Promise Keepers collectively attempt to reconcile recent social change with a distinct conception of manhood. They do not simply react to these transformations, but they assume an entrepreneurial role in redefining masculinity... movement leaders attempt to adapt hegemonic masculinity to fit with demands for egalitarianism... thus reinvesting modern masculinity with renewed vigor" (Donovan, 1998: 819).

Although Bartkowski does not compare his 2004 study of the Promise Keepers to Connell's work (as he does with his previous 2001 analysis of widespread conservative texts), the Rational Patriarch and Expressive Egalitarian discourses can be mapped onto the range of possible reactions to the crisis tendencies predicted by Connell. The Rational Patriarch can be seen as an attempt to restore 'traditional' hegemonic masculinity; while the Expressive Egalitarian might consist of efforts to reformulate hegemonic masculinity in accordance with demands for gender equality. Although Donovan (1998) would hold that these two discursive structures are part and parcel of the Promise Keepers' agenda of men learning how to control families more effectively, more research needs to be conducted into the everyday use of discourse by individual men to determine the extent to which individual Promise Keeper members might shift between

conservative and egalitarian positions and whether these positions are being utilized by these men to achieve greater authority in their families.

Sociologists such as Connell (1995a), Donovan (1998), Messner (1997), and Kimmel (1995) have together presented a compelling case that traditional male roles are currently in jeopardy. In the context of movements such as the Promise Keepers, studies by Bartkowski (2004) and Donovan (1998) have shown that both patriarchal and egalitarian discourses are available to individual men for use in responding to the recent 'crisis of masculinity.' However, as pointed out by Wetherell and Edley (1999), there is insufficient evidence regarding how individual men are influenced by hegemonic masculinity and the extent to which they might identify with these discursive structures in their everyday lives. Understanding and identifying reactions to the so-called 'crisis of masculinity' is important in order to discover the ways, and the extent to which, individuals in our own communities are affected by the historical, economic, and political pressures outlined above. As discussed by Wetherell and Edley (1999), this lack of ethnographic evidence on how individual men respond to challenges to hegemonic masculinity limits a comprehensive understanding of masculine identity in practice. These authors criticize Connell's theories by stating,

“...the notion of hegemonic masculinity is not sufficient for understanding the nitty gritty of negotiating masculine identities and men's identity strategies. In effect, Connell leaves to one side the question of how the forms he identifies actually prescribe or regulate men's lives. Men might 'conform' to hegemonic masculinity, but we are left to wonder what this conformity might look like in practice” (1999: 336).

According to Wetherell and Edley, Connell does not discuss how the 'crisis tendencies' (economic, social, and ideological changes) actually affect the construction of hegemonically masculine identities, nor the extent to which this will impact individual men's lives. In order to gain insight into what conformity to hegemonic masculinity might look in practice, an empirical study of men's experiences needs to be conducted. This thesis thus aims to explore the question of hegemonic masculinity in practice by providing insight into how certain men who are troubled by the difficulties of

constructing and maintaining a masculine identity in modern times actually find ways to respond and articulate their reaction to this ‘crisis.’

To this end, I have based this thesis on the discourses utilized by some members of the Promise Keepers organization, as well as other men, during interview sessions regarding their individual positions and definitions of masculine identity and their responses to the ‘crisis.’ Definitions and discourses of masculinity and traditional male icons are examined, including, for example, the hegemonic ideal of men as breadwinners, women as homemakers, and the transfer of “the basis of authority from economic to spiritual grounds” (Donovan, 1998: 830). Emphasis is also placed on the relationships these men maintain with members of their families, and their views on the ‘traditional’ nuclear family as the formative location for masculine identity.

2 Research Methods

2.1 NUANCES OF DISCOURSE

For the purposes of collecting information on how individual men construct their experiences and opinions of masculinity, I chose to conduct interviews in a face-to-face semi-structured format. Qualitative interviews represent an ideal way to study discursive constructions of masculinity and complement the work of others who have studied Promise Keepers discourse via the movement's literature (e.g., Donovan, 1998) and through participant observation (e.g., Bartkowski, 2004). In his book on the Promise Keepers, Bartkowski criticizes academics who do not engage in 'hands on' approaches, citing the importance of "being there." He states that "qualitative accounts that overlook the *social practices* through which ...identities are accomplished and from which ...culture emerges are all missing something crucial" (Bartkowski, 2004: 148). What Bartkowski fails to acknowledge, however, is that the political nature of the Promise Keepers movement—as an all-male group that does not permit membership to women—limits the amount of contact a female researcher can have with informants, making participant observation, for example, a nonviable option.

However, this is not to say that I did not benefit from the work of Bartkowski (and others who engage in field work with difficult-to-reach populations). On the contrary, I would argue that my position as an outsider to the Promise Keepers movement provided an additional critical viewpoint from which to discern various nuances of the discourses used that may not be available to researchers like Bartkowski, as someone whose judgement may have been influenced by the excitement of participating in a rally with more than 50,000 other men (see Bartkowski, 2004:157 for further detail). Moreover, Bartkowski's research was conducted during and immediately after this large scale rally, a time when discourses utilized by his informants may have been more strongly influenced by the teachings of the Promise Keepers speakers and the hype of rally attendance. According to Messner, outcome research would need to be conducted with Promise Keeper members in order "to determine how much participants' lives and

relationships change after they leave Promise Keepers events. ...it may be that the effects are short-lived” (1997: 35). My study takes place three years after the Promise Keepers participants attended a large rally and—although some of both Bartkowski’s sample and the men involved in this study attended small men’s groups—facilitates the identification of discourses actually drawn upon by participants and employed on a more regular basis. My point is simply to state that the interview methods utilized in this research yielded an ancillary perspective of men and masculinities that complements the studies undertaken by Bartkowski and Donovan. My decision to conduct semi-structured interviews provided me with an opportunity to interact with respondents, probe for answers, and discover relevant information that was not included in the interview guide and would have also been missed through other qualitative methods, such as participant observation or textual analysis. As well, the face-to-face interviews enabled me to establish rapport with informants, necessary for disclosure of topics that could be considered controversial or personal in nature (Creswell, 1994; Babbie, 1995).

2.2 SELECTION OF INFORMANTS: THEORETICAL SAMPLING AND WORD OF MOUTH

For the purposes of this research, I aimed to collect a theoretical sample of the range of possible discourses of contemporary manhood using a grounded theory approach (Denzin, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). That is, I chose to examine discourses of masculinity employed in targeted interviews with men not as a practice of hypothesis testing, but as a method where theoretical insights and conclusions, albeit tentative, emerge from the empirical data. Since this research was designed to explore how individual men’s accounts draw upon culturally available discourses of masculine identity, rather than the incidence of certain forms of masculinity, I have not sought a random sample of participants for conventional generalizability. The majority of informants for this study were selected on the basis of their suitability in terms of their involvement in the Promise Keepers organization and their willingness to participate in this study.

The decision to focus on interviewing men involved in the Promise Keepers organization was made because, as mentioned above, this popular social movement directly confronts

the current state of masculinities, the apparent crisis, and the position of men within their familial sphere. I recruited participants for this research mainly via word of mouth and snowball methods. Initially, to begin contact with potential informants, I placed a memo on bulletin boards of six local churches supporting Promise Keepers and an advertisement in a local newspaper requesting volunteers (See Appendix I). These items contained a brief outline of my research, a request for informants, and information on how to contact me if individuals had questions about the study or were interested in participating.

Beginning in April 2000, three men participating in the Promise Keepers movement contacted me after seeing the memo in their churches and expressed a desire to participate. Interviews were conducted with two of these men, however, the other individual moved out of the Victoria area before an interview could take place. A third Promise Keeper informant found out about my research through a business-related conversation and volunteered to participate, offering the name of the fourth Promise Keeper after his interview. Although the original intent was to obtain interviews with approximately 15 men in the Promise Keepers movement, difficulties recruiting enough of such men limited the eventual number of participants to four⁴. Thus, after conducting interviews with each of these men and making repeated attempts to follow-up with the individual churches, efforts to conduct additional interviews with men in the Promise Keepers were abandoned and the focus extended to include non-Promise Keeper men who would be able to offer a sample of additional discourses on men and masculinities as a basis for comparison. Three interviews were therefore conducted with men who do not belong to the Promise Keepers organization but who were identified as being able to complement the original sample in regard to their social circumstances (i.e., age, education, family type, employment status and field). Non-Promise Keeper men were selected through methods of convenience sampling; two were personal acquaintances to whom I had previously talked about my study on the ‘crisis’ of masculinity and

⁴ See Section 5.3, Methodological Reflexivity for discussion on the difficulty with recruiting Promise Keepers participants.

volunteered to participate, and the third heard of this study via word of mouth and passed his name along through mutual acquaintances.

The inclusion of non-Promise Keeper men in fact turned out to be a great benefit to the research, allowing for an interesting opportunity to include men with similar life circumstances to the Promise Keeper men, though without the experience in right-wing activism. Specifically, the inclusion of non-Promise Keeper men provided the opportunity to assess the extent to which discourses utilized within the Promise Keepers movement overlapped with or were similar to or different from those employed by the non-Promise Keepers. With the shared experiences and language learned via interviews with the non-Promise Keepers, I was able to better understand the influences of religion, social movement organization, and traditionalism apparent throughout analysis of the Promise Keeper interviews.

The seven men who participated in this study were all young or middle-aged (from age 27 to approximately 55), educated (grade 12 to post-graduate degrees), middle-class, able-bodied, white heterosexuals who live in Victoria or surrounding areas. All except one of the men included were married with children of varying ages, though they represented a broad scope of social positions, comprising

- ◆ Three fathers of young children, two fathers of adult children, one single-father of teenage children, and one married man without children;
- ◆ Men ranging in employment status from unemployed to company president in occupations including sales, administration, carpentry, engineering, and the military;
- ◆ Five of the men were religious, practicing three different right-wing evangelical Christian faiths and a left-wing Christianity, and the other two men were either non-religious or had a distinct anti-religious standpoint.

The men who participated in this study qualify as an appropriate sample in so far as the connections and interconnections posed by their social circumstances, their histories, and their current placement within a variety of family forms are broadly representative of the

range of known characteristics of Promise Keepers members (i.e., white, middle-class, etc.) found within descriptions provided by many journalists and academic authors (Stodghill 1997; Donovan 1998; Messner 1997; Bartkowski 2000, 2004; and the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* 1997 – 1998). Although I ended up with only a small sample for these interviews, the aim was to include enough men to provide a variety of different accounts and discursive themes within the interview transcripts. Discourses utilized by the Promise Keepers men throughout the interviews proved to be representative of discourses found in the sample of Promise Keepers writings promoted by the organization (Dobson 1994, Balswick 1992, Genet et al. 1999, and Lockhart 2000). In addition, the commonality and consistency found between different informant accounts addresses the issue of reliability within a small sample size. “What is important is that sufficient discourse is gathered in order to discern the variety of discourse forms that are commonly used when speaking of or writing about the research topics” (Coyle, 1995: 247). Thus, although the sample of men interviewed in this thesis may be small, the discourses they draw upon in the interviews constitute a valid theoretical sample of mainstream discourses currently available in Canadian society.

2.3 GATHERING THE DATA: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND BUILDING RAPPORT

As mentioned above, contact with the informants began when they volunteered to participate. When they called me to discuss the research, I briefly described the content of the interview questions, told each one that his interview would be tape-recorded, and asked them to select a pseudonym for identification purposes. Arrangements were made to meet with each individual at a mutually convenient time and location, most often being a local coffee shop or their place of employment. Interviews were conducted at these locations and lasted anywhere from one hour to just under three hours. Introductions were made at the start of each interview, the tape recording device was set up, and consent forms were signed. Informants were assured that information gained via interviews in this study would be held in the strictest confidence, that their identities would be fully protected, and that, if, at any point they wished to withdraw from the study they had full discretion to do so.

The types of questions asked during the interview sessions were open-ended and were framed around three major themes: (1) family and work life, (2) definitions of masculinity, and where relevant, (3) involvement in the Promise Keepers organization. The development of these questions was influenced by both academic and Promise Keepers' literature on masculinity and was designed to introduce discussion at a general level to make participants feel comfortable in the interview setting before asking more personal questions regarding their own experiences of masculinity. The Interview Guide, found in Appendix III, began with questions regarding past and present social characteristics of the men's family structures and work situations and touched on the descriptions of masculinity learned as a young child and the effects this may have had on their employment choices. This set of questions was designed to locate informants in regards to their general social positions and personal relationships, and provided insight into the responsibilities and privileges influencing the availability and personal relevance of specific discourses. After these general background questions, I turned the discussion more specifically to issues of masculinity, including informants' definitions of 'ideal' masculinity, impressions of social expectations for men, their own self-perceptions, their personal examples of masculine behaviour and identity construction, whether or not they found it easy to be a man in modern society, and comparisons of their own masculinity to what they thought their fathers may have experienced. In this section, questions were also asked regarding their thoughts on recent social changes to the North American workforce, expectations for fatherhood and the sexual division of labour, and views on feminism and homosexuality. These questions were intended to gain a more in-depth understanding of how these men construct masculine identities, the extent to which they endorse a type of hegemonic masculinity, their thoughts on supposed challenges to hegemonic masculinity, and whether they acknowledge any potential for a 'crisis' of masculinity. Finally, for respondents in the Promise Keepers, general questions surrounding the organization included queries of the experiences and expectations placed upon men involved in the movement, whether there are aspects of involvement that are not appreciated, and what benefits individual men may derive from taking part. The purpose of this line of questioning was to explore reasons men might join an organization such as this, how they expect to benefit, and why they chose to discuss masculinities in a

collective forum⁵. At the end of each interview, informants were thanked for their participation and provided with the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research.

The biggest limitation of using face-to-face interviews, apart from the cost and time invested, was the potential for reactivity regarding my sex, my presence, and the nature of the topic (Arendell, 1997). Potential difficulties in asking men to talk about controversial gender issues, in person, with a woman were kept in mind throughout the interview and analysis processes. To help informants feel more at ease discussing such matters in a research setting with me, I assured them prior to the interview that I had experience discussing gender issues, had thoroughly researched masculinities issues as well as the Promise Keepers and, specifically, had experience in interviewing other men about this same topic.

Another concern throughout the interview process was that some of the discussion on controversial issues could have evoked negative feelings (e.g., expressions of hostility regarding views toward feminists or homosexuals). Although many of the men who participated in the interviews confronted these issues on a regular basis in the men's groups, I attempted to make them feel comfortable discussing such topics with me by showing respect, openness, and sincerity. The length and open-endedness of the interview format provided an avenue for informants to work through potentially uncomfortable feelings by having freedom to discuss the full range of experiences and to reflect on this throughout the interview. The open dialogue between myself and my informants allowed them to speak freely, ask questions, and discuss any additional matters that I did not address.

I believe that both the potential for negative feelings and the influence of reactivity were diminished because, after the interviews, some of the men felt comfortable enough to share additional information about their families, business experiences, and future goals. As well, many expressed renewed interest in the thesis topic, thanked me for engaging in

⁵ Although questions regarding participants' experiences within the Promise Keepers were included in the relevant interviews, this material has been used to supplement discussion on men's experiences and definitions of masculinity but is not the focal point of this paper. For further explanation, see section 5.3, Methodological Reflexivity.

such discussion with them and for making them think about these issues, offered to share their own Promise Keeper books and materials with me, and mentioned that they would attempt to recruit additional volunteers to take part in the research. I believe that these interviews and the open-ended format permitted me access to very rich samples of how these particular men articulated their experiences and knowledge regarding masculinity and the changing definitions of manhood within the broader social and discursive context of North American society.

2.4 METHODS OF INQUIRY: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE STUDY OF MASCULINITIES

Discourse analysis is an ideal method to employ when exploring the variety of perspectives on hegemonic masculinity. Discourse can be defined as sets of “meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events... a particular way of representing [people or events] in a certain light” (Burr, 1995: 438). Discourse analysis is a practice of recognizing that these “set[s] of descriptive and referential terms” are purposely selected by individuals to “portray beliefs, actions and events in a specific way... for specific social settings” (Coyle, 1995: 245). Through analysis of people’s discursive selections, links can be traced between the ways in which they make sense of what happens in their everyday lives and the social structures and ideologies that surround them (Parker, 1992).

Identities are constructed through discourse, and as such, are constantly being established and re-established through the combination of shifts in the underlying culture, the discourses we encounter, and those we choose to adopt (Wetherell, 1993). From this perspective, identity is a dynamic project involving the influences of social, economic, political, and power relationships, continuously shaping and being shaped by the tides of such thought. Accordingly, an individual’s selection of discursive standpoints originates within (and is limited by) the number and variety of discourse regarding a given subject (Coyle, 1995). The concept of hegemonic masculinity, along with previous historical depictions of masculine identity, is represented and maintained through a system of discourses (e.g., that of male control over emotions, sustained through the use of

everyday talk such as the exhortation ‘boys don’t cry’); such discourses influence daily interactions and sustain patriarchal ideologies and gender stereotypes.

The discursive selections an individual utilizes are situationally dependent and, thus, may alter depending on the context. For example, discourse engaged when one is out with friends may not be appropriate for use in a work setting. Discursive selections can even conflict or be contradictory and, depending on shifts in the underlying culture, it is probable that an individual’s selection of discourses will gradually change over time with the introduction of new or alternative perspectives from which to draw their own accounts (Parker, 1992). The discursive selection an individual makes becomes particularly interesting when one asks why—of all the discourses available to them in that particular historical, political and geographical context—they choose to use any one in particular (Widdicombe, 1995). For instance, in this study I was interested in examining the discourse of masculinity employed by a sample of Canadian men in interviews with me in which they selected from all discourse available to them (both traditional and egalitarian). As discourses are purposely adopted and utilized by individuals, depending on their context, analysis of the discourses can illuminate conceptions of identity formation or personhood and allow insight into “how people use language to construct versions of their worlds and what they gain from these constructions” (Coyle, 1995: 244). By understanding the construction of personhood in masculine identities, we can “identify institutions which are reinforced when this or that discourse is used; and those that are attacked or subverted when this or that discourse appears” (Parker, 1992: 18). In other words, by analyzing the discursive statements used by men in this study, we can better determine the extent to which they are influenced by hegemonic masculinity and the so-called ‘crisis,’ and examine their perspectives on how such influences have affected their everyday lives. I believe that the methods of discourse analysis outlined here provided me with a suitable means by which to explore the relationship between individual men’s accounts of masculinity and the broader social context of current North American society, and, as discussed above, to gain insight into how hegemonic masculinity is perceived to influence the everyday lives of individual men.

2.5 ANALYTIC METHODS: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN PRACTICE

Discourse analysis was conducted on interview transcripts, whereby commonalities and differences across accounts were discerned through a careful reading of informant interviews. The basic analytic strategy for performing the discourse analysis was to read and reread each transcript, looking for discursive commonalities in word choice, metaphor, story, or illustrative representation of people or events (Parker, 1992). A re-examination of the transcripts was then conducted, keeping in mind the framework of relevant structural themes and their social functions. “The statements in a discourse [were] grouped, and given coherence, insofar as they refer[ed] to the same topic” or provided “recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena” (Parker, 1992: 11). Commonalities across accounts were compared to discourses utilized in the wider social context of current North American society, and the implications of these discourses discussed. A final examination across transcripts was then performed in order to discover if the recurrent themes were common to all individual accounts, or if significant differences appeared. In particular, I wanted to discover if differences existed between discourses of masculinity utilized by those who take part in the Promise Keepers movement and those who do not. Throughout the analysis and discussion, caution was used in examining and outlining the implications of discourses employed in the interviews in order to be aware of biases or prejudice on the part of the research analyst because “like the person whose discourse they are analysing, analysts draw upon available linguistic resources to construct a purposeful version of the discourse under analysis” (Coyle, 1995: 255).

This project was designed to examine how social structures and discourses frame the individual experience of masculinity, but this was not an attempt to generalize individual accounts to the wider society (Wetherell & Edley, 1999), nor was this intended to provide a summary of the views held by all of the men involved in the Promise Keepers organization. However, the discourses that emerged from my research interviews are argued to represent some of the various current cultural, political, and religious positions on men and masculinities that are currently available to Canadian men, as well as some more specific discourses, congruent with the published literature of the Promise Keepers

movement (i.e., as discussed by Donovan and Bartkowski). As such, they show the variety of societal discourses that are employed by individual men as a means of articulating their understanding of the meaning of and the issues surrounding being a man in contemporary Canadian society.

3 Findings and Discussion

As discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, Connell (1995a) has formulated a theory of crisis tendencies that western societies face with regard to the construction and maintenance of masculine identities. According to his theory, crisis tendencies constitute challenges to hegemonic masculinity within the realms of relations of production, relations of power, and relations of cathexis. He has postulated that men responding to these crisis tendencies may attempt any of three tactics, including efforts to (1) re-establish patriarchy, (2) modify hegemonic definitions, or (3) abandon the hegemonic project altogether. The intent of this study was to explore masculinity in practice, to provide insight into men's reactions to the crisis tendencies, and to show how certain men engage with discourses of *hegemonic masculinity* when developing and sustaining masculine identities in contemporary North American society.

Through discourse analysis of the seven interview transcripts, several themes surrounding ideals for masculinity and femininity, both historical and current, emerged. Embedded within the interviewees' talk regarding masculinity are discussions of pressures to comply with expectations for manhood in contemporary society, justifications for the gendered order, and the stated importance of family in maintaining masculine identity. In this chapter, I outline some of the ways the men in this study defined masculinities and discuss the implications of such definitions in contemporary North American society. I will use examples provided by study participants to examine how hegemonic masculinity is perceived to influence their lives, both through the discourses selected by participants and through the experiences they chose to share.

The sections in this chapter are ordered as follows; first (Section 3.1), I present an overview of general definitions of masculinity and femininity utilized by participants; second (Section 3.2), expectations for men to maintain the role of breadwinner; third (Section 3.3), men's views on practices of household labour; fourth (Section 3.4) men's roles as heads of their households; and finally (Section 3.5), men's views regarding emotional intimacy and sexuality. In order to best outline discourses utilized by study

participants, each of these five sections will be discussed in terms of whether the discourse supports ‘traditional’ notions of hegemonic masculinity, thus constituting an attempt to re-establish patriarchal notions, or whether other responses to the crisis tendencies are attempted, such as reformulating definitions of masculinity or abandoning hegemonic notions of masculinity altogether. Examination of the extent to which differences exist between the Promise Keepers and non-Promise Keepers in my sample is also discussed.

3.1 DEFINITIONS OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

Analysis of descriptions of masculinity utilized by the men in this study suggests a predominantly hegemonic view of manhood that conforms to depictions provided by masculinities theorists in which men are represented as independent, powerful, risk-taking, and unemotional. The men in this study discussed ideals of masculinity and society’s expectations, provided personal examples of masculine activities and interactions, and they discussed the impact of social pressures on men as individuals. Discourse found throughout interviews included in this research provided general support for Connell’s theory that masculinity is in crisis and showed the variety of ways in which men may recognize the problems of maintaining ‘traditional’ masculine roles and seek ways of accommodating to changing expectations.

However, when initially questioned about the definition of masculinity each of the men involved in this study found it difficult to talk about masculinity in concrete terms, noting particularly that defining masculinity is “a tough question” (John 8:23)⁶. Informants pointed to a lack of strong male role models in contemporary society as the main reason for confusion regarding the meaning of masculinity. For instance, one participant noted “I don’t think that society has any kind of stereotypical *good* male really... I don’t think

⁶ To identify whether transcript excerpts come from an interview with a Promise Keeper or non-Promise Keeper participant, the letters ‘PK’ are included in the case the former, along with the page and line number from which the extract was taken. For example, in the quote “masculinity is [a] distinction of roles ... a man’s role is different from a woman’s” (Bushy PK 10:16) the ‘PK’ is used to signify that the speaker, Bushy (a fictitious name) is a member of the Promise Keepers. This quote can be found on page 10 of the relevant transcript, starting on line 16. Where PK does not appear, the speaker is not a member of the Promise Keepers.

society portrays any overall picture of a good man.” (Johnboy 9:10). Similarly, another interviewee, thinking back to his childhood, recalled a fond image of “the ‘rough and ready’ frontiersmen” who once provided role models for young men, emphasizing manners and showing respect, but noted that “the world has changed [now]” (Bushy PK 7:5, 7:4). Consistent with the analyses of Kimmel and Kaufman, there seems to be a “widespread confusion over the meaning of manhood” (1995a: 16). Participants voiced the concern that roles are no longer as clearly defined and easy for men to follow, compared to their fathers’ generations, yet pressures still exist to conform to standards of hegemonic masculinity even though these may no longer be compatible with contemporary society. For example:

“There’s certainly more ambiguity today, you know then there was no ambiguity, everybody, the roles were well defined” (Bushy PK 9:11).

“It’s harder. There was better defined roles back then. And you have to work harder, there’s more expected of you. And you’re always looking over your shoulder at the young people coming along” (Mark PK 10:12).

As can be seen in these extracts, increased ambiguity, shifting expectations, and the complexities of daily life are believed to contribute to a situation where men now have to struggle and work harder to define their masculine identities. When pressed for a personal understanding of masculinity, the most common reaction for participants was to search for semantic differences between masculinity and femininity: thus, many of the men in this study defined masculinity with the notion that it is “not femininity.” For example, as discussed by one interviewee:

“Masculinity is [a] distinction of roles ... a man’s role is different from a woman’s. That’s the definition – if there’s no distinction, then there’s no role. That’s my definition. I think that’s why it’s harder to describe ‘what is masculinity today’ if you changed one of the roles... now it seems more confusing because men were the main financial providers, but now... there are situations where women are the superior financial providers” (Bushy PK 10:16).

Masculinities authors hold that this separation of masculinity from femininity is common throughout North American society (Kimmel, 1995; Connell, 2001; Bartkowski, 2004). According to these authors, the search for meaning in masculine identity has centred largely on a male self-distancing from actions, behaviours, attitudes, or beliefs that could

potentially resemble or be construed as feminine. Often partnered with this essentialist separation is discourse that denigrates feminine traits. As quoted by Bartkowski, “regardless of the beliefs that constitute it, hegemonic masculinity is always defined in opposition to emphasized femininity. ...the characteristics that constitute emphasized femininity are invariably devalued relative to hegemonic masculine traits” (2004: 74). Language perpetuating this notion of gender differences can be found in texts that are promoted by the Promise Keepers organization. For example, essentialist author Gary Oliver has written that “whatever women are, whatever strengths or attributes they have, whatever characteristics they possess, positive or negative, men aren’t. And if women are emotional, then real men aren’t” (Oliver 1993: 37; cited in Bartkowski, 2000:37).

The ‘traditional’ separation of gender roles has been thought by some conservative authors (both secular and non-secular; see Parsons and Bales, 1955, for example) to constitute a complementary split, one that promoted proper balance and harmony through perpetuation of a sharp contrast between what was “perceived as the masculine predilection for strength and aggression with the more subdued and naturally deferent feminine character” (Bartkowski, 2001: 28). Within Sociology, this functionalist paradigm placed a premium on the physical or biological differences believed to exist between men and women: women, who were designed to bear children, are thus thought to be caring, supportive, and emotional while men, who often have greater physical strength and size compared to women, are assumed to be aggressive, competitive, in control of their emotions, and suited to instrumental roles. This is consistent with visions of ideal masculinity outlined by men in this research, where the most commonly cited descriptions of ‘real men’ included representations of men as tough, athletic, good-looking, career-oriented, and principled.

3.1.1 Social Expectations for Masculinity

Each of the participants talked about expectations that exist, both in wider society and within individual relationships, for men to have strength in both physical and emotional terms. Descriptions of requirements for men’s emotional strength followed along the lines of being “consistent,” “steady,” and “strong,” displaying “stoicism,” and “not

[getting] too emotional about things.” Maintaining a ‘tough’ impression was cited as the model for masculinity in previous generations though participants said that this is still relevant and expected of men today. The following two extracts illustrate this notion:

“[Previous generations of men] certainly have very little emotion in them; I don’t recall ever seeing my dad cry or be upset. Once again, being a man [and] having no emotions were one and the same.... I don’t think that was that healthy but I adopted that to a fairly large degree” (Peter PK 9:17).

“To be strong, and to be consistent to me is important of [sic] being masculine. Being consistent in the way you act, you know, being fairly steady has always been a trait that I think males should have. ...trying not to get too emotional about things and trying to keep it on a steady, more of a logical, as opposed to getting too wrapped up in certain things... just trying to be steady” (Johnboy 5:22).

According to Kimmel and Kaufman (1995), because masculinity is defined in opposition to all things feminine, the emotional elements most often associated with femininity (i.e., compassion, nurturance, affection, and dependence) are depicted as inimical to the image of powerful masculinity. The authors hold that men do not lose their potential to be emotional, but that these elements are purposely set aside in favour of more commanding representations of “independence, aggression, competition, and the capacity to control and dominate” (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1995: 26). These authors state that “men remain emotionally distant, aggressively risk-taking, preoccupied with power, status, money, accumulating sexual partners, because these are all badges of manhood” (Kimmel & Kaufman 1995:27). Examples of this imagery were found throughout the current transcripts, where expressions used to denote male traditional stereotypes included the “‘take charge, in charge,’ hard driving, competitive, fierce leader” (Dave 13:9).

Informants noted that mainstream masculinity also embodies characteristics of physical toughness, citing athletic abilities and practice in ‘manly’ professions such as carpentry, engineering, and military work as examples of this. In particular, images of war, guns, fighting, and violence were used to denote both the strength and ability of men, with the assertion that an interest in such things develops naturally in boys during early childhood.

“A lot of guys are attracted to that ‘*He-man*, macho, violence, kill-them-all, *Terminator* type of thing” (Rob PK 9:19).

“I don’t specifically remember being told to play with a gun. It’s just as it happened that boys played with guns and the girls with dolls” (Mark PK 2:2).

Military imagery has been utilized in men’s movements and as a masculine ideal for centuries. According to Bartkowski, fundamentalist preachers in the early twentieth century used military metaphors to motivate men into ‘Muscular Christianity,’ calling men to be “warriors in God’s army” and “soldiers of Christ” (2001: 30; see also Messner, 1997). As the “contemporary heir to Muscular Christianity” (Bartkowski, 2004: 68), the Promise Keepers may also promote this type of military discourse, as heroism on the battlefield is still an important cultural reference point.

Akin to physical toughness, men’s athletic abilities were also cited as key to portraying ‘real’ masculinity in North America. Informants noted that expectations of masculinity include being “an ardent football fan” and engaging in activities like fishing, hunting, playing hockey, basketball or squash, lifting weights, hiking, camping, rowing, and sky diving. The connection between sport and masculine identity has been identified as a constructive atmosphere where men can develop close bonds in a ‘socially acceptable’ manner that does not necessitate intimacy (Beal, 1997; Messner, 1997; Bartkowski, 2004). According to Hantover (1978), Connell (1995a), and Bartkowski (2004), activities like rugby, football, and baseball have also provided a ‘bridging device’ between masculinist⁷ violence and social control, affording men an acceptable social outlet to express their energies.

Beginning as an ‘acceptable social outlet,’ organized sport has perhaps become a location for social control – informants in this study remarked that they have experienced pressure to conform to sports and athletic stereotypes of masculinity. For example, the following extract shows that inclusion into certain social groups is thought to be dependent on a man’s knowledge and ability regarding team sports.

⁷ According to Kimmel, “masculinism involves an effort to restore manly vigor and revitalize American men, by promoting separate homosocial preserves where men can be men without female interference. Some masculinist efforts involve the symbolic appropriation of women’s reproductive power, by developing distinctly masculine forms of ritual initiation and nurture – initiations that displaced maternal care for manly validation” (1995: 117).

“In many male environments, any male environment there is the expectation that if you’re not a football fan or a hockey [fan], or you didn’t catch the game last night, there’s a real expectation that you have to do this to be part of the group” (Mark PK 7:13).

According to each of the men interviewed in this research, society expects men to be interested in sports – the message seems to be that if you are not a competitive individual, if you do not play sports, discuss sports, and watch sports on television, then, as a man, something is wrong. Competition, being a key factor in the development and maintenance of hegemonically masculine identities (Bartkowski, 2001), is noted by participants as a particularly effective social motivator – pushing men to become the *best* man, the man who is “bigger, faster, stronger, smarter” (John 13:2). For instance, one interviewee stated that communication patterns between men always involve competition and social ranking:

“For men, there [are] issues of dominance – it’s a hierarchical versus whatever, it’s all about who you are and what you do... The first thing they do around here is to find out if I’m higher than he is, [it’s] the very first thing” (Mark PK 15:1).

Participants also talked about social expectations for men to be career-oriented, to be the primary income earners in their household, and to be able to excel in traditional ‘male’ occupations and activities such as construction, engineering, involvement in the military, or, as in the case of one informant in his own job, being a used car salesman.

“It’s like the ultimate show of masculinity. I don’t know, in some ways it’s very primitive – you’re out... hunting for money... it’s very masculine. Hunting out sales, like, instead of bringing home a buffalo you bring home some cash” (Rob PK 2:19).

‘Bringing home the cash’ was cited by study participants as one of the most important roles for men. Men who do not occupy primary breadwinner status in their families were described as less masculine, regardless of the acknowledgement of challenges to earning enough to meet the needs of a family in a consumerist society.

Similarly, participants noted expectations for men to be able to look after their families, not only through financial means, but also as the protectors, and ‘priests’ in their homes.

As noted by one interviewee:

“Being ‘the priest’ or being ‘the protector,’ being ‘the covering’ over my girls and my wife.... I feel that’s the main responsibility that all fathers and husbands have” (Peter PK 6:11).

Fuelled by media imagery, including ‘traditional’ depictions of the ideal ‘*Leave It to Beaver* family form’ (Messner, 1997), masculine success is portrayed not only in terms of being tough, athletic, and able to provide for and protect one’s family, but also as fitting a set of stereotypes regarding men’s physical appearance. Some of the men interviewed in this study expressed the view that popular magazines, movies, and television media perpetuate a standard for men that outlines expectations for behaviour, attitudes and even appearance, noting that the media promote “the picture of a 25-year old man, dressed in skin tight briefs, [who is] well-built” (Mark PK 6:2). For example, when asked if social pressures exist regarding ideal masculinity, one interviewee responded:

“Oh, absolutely. It’s peppered all through the television and advertisements. The ideal body, the ideal mannerisms, the type of clothes, sure, what is successful for men” (John 4:25).

Tanya: What is successful for men?

“Oh, to be good looking, trim, rich, drive a fast car, and have attractive women all around. That’s pretty stereotypical, isn’t it, of what you see on TV and billboards?” (John 4:28)

Based on this media portrayal, several interviewees referred to assumptions that the image of a young muscled man in tight clothing is regarded as the ideal for masculinity and suggested that women actually prefer men who conform to this depiction. This is similar to the findings of Gerschick and Miller (1994) who found that participants blamed the media for the notion that men must be strong and attractive to be noticed by women. This same point was made by another interviewee in this research, who noted:

“What attracts women to men a lot is a muscular build, so things that emphasize that would tend to attract them, so like tight shirts if you have the body to go with it” (Mark PK 21:13).

However, attempting to meet standards perpetuated throughout social relationships and popular media is noted as something that is difficult for men to achieve. One of the men in this study stated specifically that, “even back in the early days of cinema, they still had the ideal man. It’s tough for men to live up to that in the real world” (John 6:4). Other men discussed feeling pressured to achieve the stereotypes of masculinity throughout many aspects of social life, behaviour, and personal activities. For example:

“I would definitely say that a lot of men have hard times overcoming the stereotypes, and they do feel pressure to participate and excel at traditionally male dominated things: sports, business, things that traditionally they took part in”
Dave (6:23).

Regardless of the challenges men might experience in attempting to conform to social expectations for masculine identity, several of the study participants explained the necessity for men to at least attempt to meet these standards, believing that there is a ‘natural’ separation between what men and women are capable of achieving, and citing biological, biblical, and historical explanations as to why women would not be able to fulfill these essential roles. Sex traits based on biological differences were used as sufficient explanation for the common separation of men and women within certain career fields. For example, one interviewee pointed to an essentialist notion that men are better suited to specific fields such as engineering:

“[Engineering] is a traditionally masculine occupation. I think especially because... the engineering program is very difficult – surviving through it. One of my sisters has a PhD in engineering so maybe its male chauvinism but it is rare that you will find a female running an engineering company because the men tend to gravitate toward it. The reason for that, in my opinion, is men being more visually oriented. It suits them well for this field. Men are good with the physical aspects, women with relational aspects” (Mark PK 2:20).

According to Bartkowski (2001), biological essentialism is commonly utilized to explain potentially divergent interests between men and women. In addition to portraying natural differences between the sexes as the means for determining gender roles, some of the participants noted that the Bible can also be used as a resource for determining appropriate gender roles. As revealed by one interviewee:

“There is no strong definition of masculinity... what I do is I look at life and sometimes I look at the biblical model to see what is the man [sic] supposed to do” (Mark PK 10:27).

Using the ‘biblical model’ as a reference for masculinity was common throughout the Promise Keepers interviews; these men stated that biblical roles are what drive their marriages. Biblical essentialism is different from biological essentialism in that, rather than using scientific methods for justifying gendered divisions (which can be disproved), this essentialism appeals to a higher authority. According to Messner, use of biblical essentialism “allows Promise Keepers’ discourse about women to be couched in terms of ‘respect’ for women (in their proper places as mothers, wives, and emotional caretakers of the house and home” (1997: 30). Interpretations of the Bible were used by Promise Keeper participants to develop models for ideal family structure, justifying a role for men at the ‘head of the household,’ and holding the ultimate responsibility for decision making processes. Although perhaps originally derived from biblical notions, the practice of having a ‘patriarch’ as head of the household has also been a predominant idea in secular society throughout much of North American history (Bartkowski, 2001; Donovan, 1998). As well, many of these representations remain in use as a result of contemporary social expectations and pressures, and others have simply been carried on from their fathers’ generations.

3.1.2 Personal Expectations for Femininity

The complementary roles prescribed for women in contemporary North American society were cited by participants as generally pertaining to activities like housework and childcare. Some of the discourse used by men in this study highlighted wifely responsibility for domestic duty and justified exempting husbands from some household tasks. In discussing definitions of ideal femininity, some of the men in this study said that women, in general, are more communicative, expressive, co-operative, and lady-like compared to men. However, rather than stating that these characteristics are based on social expectations for women, interviewees talked about these qualities as personal expectations. For instance, one interviewee noted that he thought “women should be modest, co-operative, humble, acknowledge their mistakes... [and] not influence their communities like men do” (Peter PK 13:18). He went on to describe a type of “magic”

that women exude (when they choose not to hide it) and stated specifically: “I still expect them to be feminine, to be ladies” (Peter PK 23:29). When asked to clarify his definition for femininity, he replied:

“Respecting themselves and expecting men to respect them and honour them, not wanting to be one of the guys (laughing). It’s tougher on women because women don’t want to be seen as sex objects [so] sometimes to do that they take on male characteristics. To some degree I can’t blame them because it’s almost self-preservation, ‘cause otherwise they’re probably not seen as equal, they’re seen as different. I think women should be seen as different, but equal” (Peter PK 24:1).

Although this participant utilized a discourse of equality and acknowledged some of the challenges that women might face, he had earlier expressed negative views of women who do not portray these ‘feminine characteristics,’ stating that “some of the women who do ‘act like men,’ it is funny, but they look more like men in their appearance” (Peter PK 13:22). Separating characteristically ‘feminine’ women from women who might seem like ‘one of the guys’ is a common tactic employed in North American society as a mechanism of social control through assumptions of society’s approval of the more ‘feminine’ characteristics and behaviours and disapproval of less ‘feminine’ ones.

Feminine characteristics cited by other interviewees also included expectations for women’s clothing styles and appearance. Such behaviours as wearing skirts or wearing perfume were deemed quite feminine, though limits were placed on the level of acceptability. The participants who noted that women should take on ‘feminine’ characteristics were joined by another interviewee in citing that too much of this type of behaviour can be considered negative, especially for young girls. In one example, an interviewee noted that if his daughters became “too much [sic] involved in the whole glitter of being female” that he would “definitely say things about that, how it’s so shallow and that it’s not a real thing... [being] really pretty and skinny...just to attract males” (Johnboy 4:25). Another example where limits were placed on the level of femininity to be deemed appropriate appears in the following extract where the interviewee discussed implications of “inappropriate” clothing styles which some young women have adopted.

“A lot of women are clueless in how men feel about things. Like the trend that’s currently going on with women showing their bra straps under their shirts. Like, holy smokes! You know, ah, what has become public these days is something that’s just astounding! Would you walk around with your bra straps showing? ...I don’t believe these women. And they just don’t have a clue how, what kind of effect it has on men. Now if a man sees some young girl walking with her bra straps out, what is he going to think about? He’s going to think about removing that bra” (Mark PK 20:10).

This interviewee went on to note that the individual woman (or girl) should be concerned about the implications of how such a style might impact men and stated that this appearance may stand in the way of her being able to get a job.

“If you’re the boss, what are you going to do? Are you going to introduce one girl who has no problem but who is going to be a problem for all the rest of these guys? That becomes both people’s problems – it’s my staff’s problem and it’s this girl’s problem, because she’s not going to get a job. It’s just that I don’t think a lot of these ladies understand the significance of how this impacts men” (Mark PK 20:23).

Discussion on the expectations for femininity thus far has focussed on acceptable limits for women’s behaviour and appearance. An interesting parallel presents itself with regard to how interviewees talked about expectations for how men and women should look. Participants expressed feeling social pressure to conform to a particular image (i.e., “well-built” and “trim” with “a muscular build” wearing “skin tight briefs” and “tight shirts”) and stated that that is “tough for men to live up to.” However, interviewees *themselves* placed constraints on what was deemed suitable for women’s appearance. Instead of talking about what might constitute a desirable physique for a woman and stating that women should also wear tight clothing, participants advocated for women to cover up their bodies to avoid being construed as “sex objects” or having an “effect on men.” The regulation of women’s appearance corresponds with personal expectations for women to be “modest” and “humble” and can also be related back to the Victorian era where it was expected that women avoid engaging in certain behaviour and activities in order to maintain their ‘more virtuous natures’ and to avoid inflaming male desire (Coltrane, 1996).

Discourse representing women as either ‘sex objects’ or ‘virtuous ladies’ was further presented in participants’ discussions of women who are employed outside of their homes. For example, one interviewee drew a distinction between working women based on age – women over 40 were seen as suitable for working roles as “surrogate mothers” while women under 40 were condemned for bringing “sexual overtones” into the workplace:

“With women who are over 40 there is [sic] no sexual overtones. With younger women it causes problems, but with the older women it makes the guys feel safe because they’re like surrogate mothers, which is a wonderful thing. They definitely add a lot... to the company. But I wouldn’t want someone, someone in a short mini skirt up here distracting the men” (Mark PK 20:1).

This interviewee used a subjective dividing line (i.e., age 40) to place women in polarized categories. Akin to a whore/madonna dichotomy, regardless of which side a woman is placed, this means that she is objectified and defined in terms of whether her age makes her an archetypal mother or potential lover. Utilization of such binaries gives the impression that the interviewee believes that women who do not perform a caring and supportive role toward men must be temptresses, “someone in a short mini skirt... distracting the men.”

This same interviewee also depicted working women, on one side, as less feminine and having a “chip on [their] shoulder... looking to find faults with men” (Mark PK 8:15), while on the other side, as being too relational, ‘touchy-feely,’ detail oriented, and unable to understand how to work with men. These contrasting views can be seen in the following extract:

“What happens is, in many professions, you have to get on with the job, and men understand that. When women run a company... you don’t get that same drive, you get ‘well, let’s make sure everybody’s happy.’ You just don’t have that much activity. ...women are far more relationally oriented. And I’ve worked for female bosses, and the concern is always ‘how do you feel.’ Now I get a lot of very positive feedback as to how well I treat my employees.... If I could use the touchy-feely stuff, then I would push it. But that’s totally absent, I would do that if I had to, but that’s totally absent in a male dominant company... it’s rare to find a woman boss that knows how to operate in a men’s or a male environment. She doesn’t understand how men work, and that causes problems” (Mark PK 18:11).

This participant's assumptions that men and women work differently and that a woman will cause problems in a male environment are once again based on a biologically essentialist premise that "women are far more relationally oriented." Bartkowski (2001) notes that belief in 'natural differences' and assumptions that women are more relationally oriented (as stated in the above extract) are commonly used to denote a separation between a masculine proclivity toward rationality and reason and feminine traits of emotional sensitivity and interpersonal communication. In contrast, some of the other participants acknowledged that roles have changed, for both men and women, and stated that it is much more acceptable to see women performing what traditionally would have been considered masculine activities, even activities such as performing general car maintenance or "chopping firewood" (Johnboy 11:2). However, in general, participants seemed to hold expectations for women that correspond with the 'traditional' ideal of a happy humble housewife.

Overall, discourses utilized by the men in this study support the notion that firm differences exist between women and men. This separation does not necessarily imply a denigration of feminine traits, as discussed by Bartkowski (2004) and highlighted at the beginning of section 3.1. Instead, interviewees talked about the functionality of feminine characteristics as providing more of a supportive role for families and society, and stated that the assumed differences between women and men do not have negative implications but are simply matters to be cognizant of.

"I firmly believe that there are differences between men and women, physiologically, there are just differences. That's not a bad thing, it's just something you're aware of" (John 12:10).

Despite the difficulties of some interviewees in reaching beyond simplistic binary classifications for women (sex object vs. virtuous lady or surrogate mother vs. temptress) or perpetuating a 'damned if you do and damned if you don't' mentality (women must not be too feminine, nor must they look or act like men), many of the definitions of femininity provided throughout these interviews can be considered complementary to their definitions for masculinity. For example, interviewees described women as

emotional, while men were thought to be stoic. Women were identified as co-operative, while men were assumed to be competitive. Women were deemed better suited to housework and childcare, while men work best outside the home. Many of these differences were discussed by the men in this study in terms of biological or natural difference and religious or creationist casting. These findings are consistent with those of Bartkowski in his early analysis of conservative texts. He states that “advocates of gender essentialism argue that masculinity and femininity – and, by extension, men and women – are inherently different. Using biological and scriptural justifications for their views, these authors claim that men are naturally assertive, inherently logical, and motivated largely by instrumental concerns” (2001: 93) and, conversely, that women are humble and cooperative, and relationally-oriented.

3.1.3 New(er) Definitions of Masculinity

Alternative definitions of masculinity, where gender rules did not follow strict essentialism, were also apparent throughout the transcripts. Men, in general, were cited as having the increased potential to be sensitive, communicative, emotional, and even insecure at times – which might have been frowned upon by previous generations. Male bravado and machismo were viewed in negative terms, as was the image of the ‘Casanova’ or ‘Playboy’⁸ who is focussed on amassing sexual partners. Masculinities were also recognized as contextually-based with some of the more obvious forms of hegemonic masculinity (e.g., men as physically tough, sports-oriented, competitive, business-minded, or stern leaders) depicted as less compatible with academic or family settings.

Alternatives to the hegemonic image of the ‘real man’ described above included acknowledgment of additional forms or contexts for displaying masculinity. For example, one interviewee contrasted conversations about sports with men in the academic environment compared to other contexts, noting that intelligence and respect for one’s peers are more of a sign of masculinity than having watched the Sunday football game.

⁸ See Cole (1982) or Bartkowski (2004) for further discussion on masculine playboy image.

“What always astounded me about the efforts and expectations of masculinity, to me, is the correlation between academic inclinations and sports... Now I love some sports, I participate in some sports, but I’m not really, to tell you the truth, that much for watching sports, but in many male environments, any male environment, there is the expectation that if you’re not a football fan or hockey [fan], or you didn’t catch the game last night, there’s a real expectation that you have to do this to be part of the group. But in an academic environment, and I’m not saying I’m an academic, but if you try to talk to so-and-so about the football [game] on Sunday, they’re going to look at you like, ‘what are you talking about, why would I bother with such a thing?’ It’s totally irrelevant to practically anything. So, it’s interesting, this is something I’d be interested to find out about, why is there such a preoccupation with that kind of stuff, because it seems expected of guys” (Mark PK 7:9).

This particular extract was used above to illustrate the pressure that men feel in some contexts to excel at conforming to hegemonic definitions of masculinity. I quoted this informant at length here so as to show his recognition that expectations of masculinity can change depending on the context. This interviewee expressed concern with the hegemonic expectation that all men be interested in sports, participating in sports, and watching sports, noting pressure to engage in these activities to be accepted as “part of the group.” When asked to define masculinity in the academic context, this same interviewee replied that key features include mental aspects of intellect and respect – as opposed to the physical aspects associated with sports and hegemonic masculinity.

“Intellect. But I don’t exactly define that as manhood, but you know what you know, and that’s a status marker. Respect for your peers is another one. And you’ll find a lot more men in this field than you’ll find women. Especially the area of electronics, very few females have gone into it” (Mark PK 7:24).

A second example illustrating recognition of variations in masculinity depending on context is with regard to being a family man. The notion of being a husband and father is not incongruent with hegemonic definitions of masculinity, especially with regard to the emphasis on men as heads of their households, protectors, and moral overseers; however, what is unique about the following extract is the notion of the ongoing effort necessary to demonstrate varying masculinities in different settings. The interviewee uses phrases like “continually perplexing,” “always working at,” and “you can’t always anticipate” which suggest that the process of developing masculinity is not ever complete but something that men continually need to practise.

“It’s continually perplexing, always working at ‘what does it mean,’ ‘what are the expectations’? Um, and in different situations it seems to be different. You can’t always anticipate, when I’m with my family my expectations to be a man are different than when I’m at work for what it means to be a man” (Peter PK 5:8)

In addition to noting that masculinity is contextually based and continually practised, a notion consistent with the theories of Judith Butler (1993; see also West & Zimmerman, 1987; and Willott & Griffin, 1997), many of the interviewees described certain stereotypes of male behaviour that either did not work well for their own lives or that give a negative image to men in general. Images of men as competitive, sports-oriented and macho are discounted as “chauvinist concepts” and “power games” that “don’t...have anything to do with being male.” For example, the interviewee quoted in the following extract discounts competitive “power games” as having to do more with individual ego than with masculinity.

“I’m not a very competitive individual and also not very strongly sports oriented. When I was younger, I didn’t play a lot of sports. I’m not strongly competitive and I see some of my friends who I would say are more out there in those kinds of activities and they seem to be more sensitive about masculine issues. But again, it comes down to work environments and power games, and playing all that kind of stuff. In those situations I tend to cop out of playing power games. ...that may not have anything to do with masculinity, but it certainly has to do with ego” (Bushy PK 12:9).

This same interviewee also noted resentment for particular forms of hegemonic masculinity available within North America culture, stating images like “the Old Boys” are chauvinistic and negative.

“The ‘Old Boys,’ Southern, you know, American image, you know. And I’ve always been pretty negative about, you know, ‘Bubba and the boys from Mississippi.’ I’ve felt that a lot of that had to do with chauvinistic concepts of male conduct, which I didn’t agree with... you can slide in that direction pretty easily, there’s a lot of chauvinism around in our culture. I saw a lot of evidence of that kind of thing in the navy, and I guess it really does get my hackles up.” (Bushy PK25:7)

In both of the above extracts, the interviewee treats these examples of masculinity as negative actions that are carried out by men, noting that some men’s typecast behaviours are detrimental and chauvinist. In other examples, interviewees discussed the stereotypes

of masculinity as being incorrectly attributed to men. For instance, in the following extract the interviewee notes that imperceptive depictions used to denote typical masculinity in North America are not related to any actual display of masculinity.

“I don't think things like sitting around and watching a football game and drinking beer have anything to do with being male” (Rob PK 12:15).

These images of masculinity (e.g., engaging in power games, being chauvinistic, and drinking beer) are given as examples where men are either conforming to negative stereotypes or being incorrectly stereotyped. These images were discounted by several participants in favour of more positive examples of masculinity where sensitivity and emotion prevail.

“Men may have fear of being in a relationship; they would rather talk about sex than emotional things... They'll never be a man. That's part of the lie, is that men are only interested in superficial things. And we're bringing up our young men to think that immediate gratification, finding a sexual partner, right away... And it's dumb to think women don't matter” (Peter PK 18:11).

“If somebody becomes superficial and macho that's not what the Father intended. He wants you to go through that and become more sensitive, more discerning, more prudent, more, develop more character” (Peter PK 22:25).

Images of men as “superficial,” “macho,” and Playboys were noted as “part of the lie” and were stated to be in opposition to “what the Father intended,” which shows that some of the men in this study feel that the hegemonic portrayals of masculinity should not be considered the ideal of masculine identity. Alternatives to ‘traditional’ images of masculinity included notions of men as sensitive, communicative, and emotional both in exchange with wives or partners as well as with other men. Example of this discourse can be seen in the following extracts.

“I would say that I am much more communicative with my spouse about feelings and about things. I'm not the traditional stoic man of the house who does not talk about his feelings or emotions or admits fault or blame” (Dave 12:23).

“Men talk about relationships with women in a different way than they used to, in more of an emotional way, rather than... I think that has opened up, and it's probably because of women expecting men to deal with their, communicate more openly. And they're bringing up young boys to be able to communicate in a different way, whether it's communication between their mothers and fathers.... It's more open now” (Johnboy 11:20).

Communication patterns for men are said to have changed from traditional images of the “stoic man of the house who does not talk about his feelings” to a place where young boys are being influenced to communicate in a more open manner. This change can be viewed in comparison to the above discussion of ‘traditional’ definitions where it was assumed that men in general lack the ability to make connections and exchange in the same manner that women do. For example, one of the interviewees expressed envy of female relationships, stating that men are lonely and could benefit from being more open:

“Female relationships are better than male relationships in this regard. I’m jealous of female relationships” (Mark PK 17:24).

“I know that most men are lonely. We think that women are at a disadvantage in this society because of their relationships with men in a male-dominated society. But men are suffering too” (Mark PK 33:15).

Perhaps the examples of increased communication for men and boys cited in the previous set of extracts suggest that this is already underway. Certainly in Bartkowski’s (2004) study of the Promise Keepers, expressive forms of masculinity are apparent. Bartkowski notes that “Promise Keepers writers who subscribe to the Expressive Egalitarian model encourage men to get ‘in touch’ with their own emotions and to exhibit compassion and sensitivity toward the feelings of others” (2004: 50).

3.1.4 Discussion of Definitions Used

As discussed throughout this section, some of the men in this study have had to confront the reality of changing social concepts of masculinity and femininity. Participants discussed the necessity of redefining masculinity to fit the needs of individuals in contemporary society, including acceptance of varying forms of masculinity that are contextually based, and the recognition that not all men are competitive, chauvinist, and non-communicative. At the same time, however, the men in this study said that social pressures still exist for them to be strong, stoic, competitive, breadwinners with ‘masculine’ occupations, who are fit and trim. These findings are consistent with those of Townsend (2002), who has written extensively on the subject of the dual tensions men experience when attempting to meet social expectations of masculinity while, at the same

time, trying to be more present in their families. The definitions of masculinity and femininity provided by participants followed the largely functionalist perspective of roles within the ‘traditional’ nuclear family. Indeed, the ‘traditional’ nuclear family, made up of a husband, a wife, and their children was noted throughout all of the interviews as the ideal family form. Each of the men who participated in this study grew up within a nuclear framework, many of them with their fathers as the head of the household and their mothers as a stay-at-home wife who maintained the household and looked after the children. Although there was recognition of factors such as inequality in marriage and the rise of individualism, expectations still persisted that each of the men would maintain a nuclear family in their own relationships. For instance, in the following extract, the interviewee stated that, as a result of his upbringing, he carries expectations that a two-parent heterosexual family is the ideal situation in which to raise children.

“Having been brought up in a fairly consistent, I’m not saying it was a normal family but there was a mother and a father there all the time... my expectations are still that way, I think, to have that same kind of ‘family unit’ and stuff” (Johnboy 7:2).

This same interviewee is the only man in the sample who was divorced. He noted that although being a divorced single father is becoming more accepted in today’s society, it contradicts his image of what a family should look like, and stated particularly: “it made me think that this was not how it was supposed to be.... It’s very contradictory to the way I was brought up. It’s totally the opposite, really” (Johnboy 7:11). He discussed his desire to remarry in order to re-establish a two-parent family for his daughters, and noted that – although he recognizes the challenges surrounding maintenance of the traditional nuclear family – he would like to see a time when the ideal family can become the societal norm once again.

The interviews conducted for this research provide evidence of the centrality of men’s roles within the family to their development of a sense of masculinity. The next sections will explore in greater detail the contribution of familial roles to the creation and maintenance of masculine identity. Discussion will focus specifically on expectations surrounding men as breadwinners, their share in household duties, their roles as familial

leaders, and their relationships with their wives. I will begin this discussion with an examination of discourse surrounding men's roles as breadwinners because, as Townsend's research also shows: "holding a job and earning a living are so important for [North] American men's identity" (2002: 53).

3.2 BREADWINNER ROLES

One common theme discussed by men in this study is the predominance of a cultural attachment to the 'traditional' breadwinner role in creating and maintaining masculine identities. The 'male-as-Breadwinner' discourse was used by some of the interviewees as a way to normalize the gendered division of labour and the notion of maintaining separate spheres for men and women. In employing this discourse, participants justified the separation of roles in their own families on biological and biblical grounds, citing social pressures and pre-historic notions of men as hunters, making the responsibility for financial provision appear as 'naturally' shouldered by men.

3.2.1 Societal Expectations for Men as Breadwinners

The view of men as having primary responsibility in the family for bringing in an adequate income was clearly apparent in many of the interviews, and in some cases, interviewees explicitly stated that societal pressures reinforce the role of men as accountable for bringing home the money. One example of this theme can be found in the following extract.

"I think that men are still expected, for the most part, to get out there and work and make a living and stuff. I don't know if that's one of society's expectations, or just with what they're doing in their lives, but there seems to be a strain on men to work and to take pride in what they do" (Rob PK 10:21).

Societal expectations and the nature of 'pride' are such that men may come to internalize this pressure, assuming responsibility and investing identity and self-esteem in their abilities to maintain meaningful employment. Townsend discusses this potential for internalization in his study of American fathers, noting that "men's prestige, their value to others, and their self-worth are measured by their identity as workers and their earnings from their work" (2002: 117). Townsend labels this as a discourse of

responsibility for both the social expectations and men's internalization of wage earning and providing for their families.

This view of "society's expectations" for men to be the primary income earners was supported and legitimated by some informants with the notion that the role of men as breadwinners has been translated from the role of men as hunters that existed in historical times. This connection was alluded to directly by two informants, where they say that men's roles as providers go back to an era where men were hunters and gatherers killing sabre-toothed tigers for dinner.

"I think, ah, men as a whole, and taking it back to we're [sic] hunters and gatherers by nature, and look at the last five thousand years. I think technology has changed and society has changed, that men still, you know, their job is to get out and fish and hunt and gather food and provide for the members of their village or their family in that type of capacity. But now our society has changed, but I don't see it as that different, now we go out to hunt cash. We go out; we do whatever we're doing to gather money to go buy our food to take it home. It's not the same as it was five thousand years ago, but I think our primary goal is hunter/gatherers" (Rob PK 11:18)

"It is traditional. I'm sure it's some deep-seated, deep-rooted, gender-related adaptation from way back. You know, when the man went out and killed the sabre-tooth tiger and the woman cooked it and looked after the kids. That was what they did, and the men were physiologically built to be able to wrestle the sabre-tooth tiger, and women were suited more for the domestic side of it" (John 9:20).

The idea of segregated roles for men and women, with men traditionally having been responsible for providing income (or fish, game, and other food for their families) brings up an assumption that this role has existed, unquestioned, for thousands of years. Historical analogies are commonly used to justify and maintain 'traditional' gendered separation of roles and responsibilities. Use of these analogies presumes not only that this separation did, in fact, exist and is not part of some mythical past, but also that, due to this 'historical verification,' the establishment of men as breadwinners is to be understood as part of the natural order.

3.2.2 Difficulties with the Breadwinner Role

Regardless of whether or not men are natural breadwinners or hunters and gatherers, societal pressure to perform this role is noted as a “strain on men” (Rob PK 10:24) and discourse used throughout these interviews suggests that difficulties arise for men today when attempting to maintain ‘traditional’ roles. Expectations for men to be the sole breadwinners in their families may not be possible in contemporary society.

“I think it’s difficult for a man now, I think it’s more difficult now for a man to be the sole breadwinner and to have their family financially stable. The raw truth is that we want so much in life and we want to do things and in order to support that type of lifestyle you need to have two incomes” (John 7:6).

This extract highlights a tension between maintaining a sole breadwinner identity and ensuring financial stability for the family, with the informants citing pressures that may be linked to living in a consumerist society as the reason for needing a dual income. Indeed, the number of two-parent Canadian families with both husband and wife working has increased over the past few decades, growing from approximately 39% in 1971 to 65.7% in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 1997; 2001). When asked about the difficulties men might face in coming to terms with the incompatibility of breadwinner identities and maintaining a desired lifestyle, informants highlighted aspirations and pressures to conform to the traditional role but noted the everyday reality of needing more than one income.

“I’m not sure if it’s hard for them to come to terms with that, it’s more of a, you know, men want to be seen as being able to provide on their own. In my situation, it’s a little bit different because I have a wife who is a registered nurse and she wants to work because that’s what she does, regardless of whether we need the money or not, she would still do this, so. It’s a profession for her” (John 7:12).

“Again, it’s part of it again is the whole issue of survival. That’s just what you do. At a certain point, I can’t help the decisions we made, I guess not everybody is as, you know, some people just make this very determined decision that they still want to keep the wife in the home and suffer the economic consequences of that decision. And we sort of, because the nature of her career allowed her to work part time, she was able to supplement the income somewhat but still not have to be fully committed to work, you know, full time on a daily basis” (Bushy PK 8:18).

These extracts illustrate that, regardless of the desire and pressure to conform to traditional breadwinner roles, dual incomes may now be necessary for economic “survival.” Unlike Townsend’s (2002) discussion of the tensions brought about by the practicality of needing two incomes and the desire for men to maintain the sole breadwinner status, the men in this study framed the conflict of economic realities, as a ‘survival discourse’ that did not show fear of defeat, or feelings of being unworthy. Instead, interviewees depicted themselves as exceptions to the sole breadwinner rule by providing personal examples as to why their own wives were working. This positioning of themselves and their wives as exceptions allowed these men to “be seen as being able to provide on their own” while still maintaining an outward show of the traditional breadwinner role. Utilization of phrases such as “in my situation, it’s a little bit different” and pointing to their wives’ desire to work minimized the possibility of the participants being viewed as “unworthy, morally inferior, and failures *as men*” (Townsend, 2002: 117), while at the same time, participants can support or encourage their partner’s employment and reap the benefits of dual incomes.

Thus, in addition to being able to provide financially for one’s family (whether or not a man is the sole breadwinner), the *appearance* of being able to provide was discussed by participants as being extremely important. Participants talked about men who do not appear able to provide for their families as lazy, less masculine, and ‘real losers.’ Although perhaps common, such non-conformists are deemed abnormal. For example:

“Guys are relinquishing the breadwinner role. There’s a complacency there, an inherent laziness in some of these men. Its like ‘if someone else will do it, hey, great.’ They lack the drive and motivation, and are making women pick up the slack. I guess it might be now, as women come into the workforce maybe guys think that they can get a free ride, whereas they couldn’t get away with it before. These men are giving up that responsibility” (Rob PK 6:2).

“You see lots of situations where you have men who are poor economic providers and being supported by their wives. ...Some of these men, you’ve just gotta shake your head sometimes, you know, in some cases they are real losers. They are guys who just couldn’t cut it themselves” (Bushy PK 10:28)

These extracts show a separation and classification of those who do not fit the traditional breadwinner norm. Consistent with findings by Willott and Griffin (1997), Townsend

(2002) and Bartkowski (2004), this separation enables the use of discourse that disparages and makes assumptions about their “drive and motivation” and possible reasons for not conforming. For example, Townsend states that “men who cannot find jobs... [face] social judgement that their situation is a result of their personal inadequacy” (2002: 7). In this study, even though the second interviewee quoted above had noted earlier that his own wife worked throughout their marriage, enabling them to reap the benefits of two incomes, he still depicts other men who rely on their wives’ employment as ‘losers.’ Instead of empathizing with the variety of possibilities for un- or under-employment, discourse is used to dismiss these men as “guys who just couldn’t cut it themselves,” who are simply “giving up that responsibility.”

Both of these excerpts also link men’s inability to provide with women having to “pick up the slack” financially, raising the question as to whether these men are seen as “losers” because they do not earn an adequate income themselves or because their wives may earn more than they do. When asked how a man might feel if a woman was making more money than her male partner, one interviewee replied:

“I think that a man’s ego, ya, I think probably most guys... if their wife does make more money, their ego does have a hard time with it” (Rob PK 13:17).

In fact, the number of husband and wife families where women are either the sole income earner or earn more than their husbands has steadily increased across Canada in the last few decades. In 1971, only 6.8% of married women earned more than their husbands, while in 1981 the number increased to 11.4%, and in 1991 to 18.3%. In 2001, 21.9% of husband-wife families across Canada had women as the primary income earners (Statistics Canada, 1997; 2001). According to Donovan, this can be “emotionally catastrophic for the man whose identity rests on earning more than his wife” (1998:827).

3.2.3 Erosion of the Breadwinner Role

Acknowledging the possibility for women to be primary income earners seems to create challenge or confusion when trying to understand men’s roles in modern society. In the following extract, the interviewee stated that it has become more difficult to understand men’s roles *because* women have entered the workforce.

“There’s certainly more ambiguity today, you know then there was no ambiguity... the roles were well defined and it was all based on survival, economic survival” (Bushy PK 9:11).

Tanya: Why do you think that changed?

“Mainly because women started working outside of the home. And again, a lot of that is really about economics, well, and perhaps opportunity. Opportunities are there now that weren’t there before. It makes you wonder if there are any roles at all” (Bushy PK 9:15)

This interviewee expressed confusion regarding expectations of men’s roles in contemporary society, noting that “it’s harder to describe ‘what is masculinity today’ if you changed [sic] one of the roles” (Bushy PK 10:19). Consistent with Connell’s (1995a) discussion of crisis tendencies, this interviewee commented that the primary structural supports for hegemonic masculinity (i.e. the establishment of identity through breadwinner roles and homosocial work environments) have been challenged by increasing numbers of working women and women who are earning salaries that match or exceed their husband’s. For example:

“Now it seems more confusing because men were the main financial providers, but now women are main, there are situations where women are the superior financial providers” (Bushy PK 10:22).

On top of the views of working women discussed in section 3.1.2, where these women were depicted as less feminine, too relational, and liable to distract men from their task work, a degree of backlash was noted when men discussed equal opportunity hiring situations, suggesting that some of the challenges men experience in maintaining breadwinner roles are attributed to women’s participation in the labour force. For example, although sounding somewhat egalitarian, participants’ discussions of the need for “equal opportunity” and eliminating “glass ceilings” were accompanied by examples of unfair treatment of men when applying for work.

“There should be equal opportunity; there should be no glass ceilings. But again, I get really disturbed by some of the artificial things I see happening, like certainly, in government hiring there is discrimination. Even in the RCMP, you almost have to be female” (Bushy PK 19:22).

“I think a lot of men don’t feel that the process is level with the affirmative action programs and quotas that sort of thing. So, I think there definitely is a tendency that there will continue to be a backlash against that” (Dave 23:30).

Although these two interviewees may promote the notion of equal opportunity employment, both have pointed to the notion that affirmative action programs may be inequitable for men. They use discourse generally found within a masculinist backlash that calls for the abolishment of preferential hiring. For example, Bartkowski states that the Promise Keepers movement is “an ally to those who wish to usher in America’s ‘post-Civil Rights’ era by dismantling Affirmative Action” (2004: 147). Messner (1997) has found this type of discourse common among anti-feminist men’s movements and states that this view results from the taken-for-granted institutional privileges that men as a group have compared to women as a group. For some men, this may only become an issue when their advantage begins to erode.

In conjunction with the thought that male economic privilege may be fading in contemporary North American society, another participant stated his belief that the ‘traditional’ path for manhood – men as breadwinners – simply does not exist anymore. An example of this notion can be found in the statement, “seeing a man as being a provider and a man as the head of a household – that has changed and [has been] pretty much all but eliminated” (Dave 7:28). This statement was provided by the youngest interviewee, who also noted that this movement away from the stereotypical breadwinner status began in his father’s generation and that the provider role has become almost nonexistent now.

“If we go back to what I said earlier, I was talking about the male stereotypes that still exist for my generation of men, what I do not include is ‘provider, father, husband.’ Those are not, those stereotypes don’t exist, I shouldn’t say don’t exist, but are significantly less than they were in the past, and that men don’t see the need to perform as a husband or a father, the pressure has been removed from that, husbands that are the providers” (Dave 9:5).

This interviewee is not saying that men do not provide for their families and do not become fathers or husbands, only that the *expectation* that men perform these roles appears to have lessened insofar as men are largely no longer deemed solely responsible

for the financial support of the family. Not unlike the discussion above regarding men's roles being harder to define because women have entered the workforce, this discursive alternative to 'traditional' roles suggests that the breadwinner ideal has less relevance and importance in today's society as a direct result of both men and women working and the struggle for equality.

This same interviewee goes on to state that, as a result of his family background and his relationship with his wife, that his ego would not "have a hard time" if his wife earned more money than him as other interviewees have pointed out above.

"When my mother started to make more than my father, my mother thought that that would be a problem. But my father didn't even bat an eye because for him, even though he'd grown up where the man is the provider, the man is the head of the household, by the time he reached middle age and his wife was making more than him, that stereotype had all been pretty much erased from him. It didn't make him any less of a man, it didn't affect or diminish his masculinity, it simply increased the family's wealth, and that's all he saw. So, I think that, you see couples today where the woman is much more successful than the husband, and you're starting to see slowly, and it's not that pervasive and I don't think it will be, but you're starting to see men staying home with kids. ... today that's very much an option. If my wife says to me 'I can make more than you, why don't you stay home with the kids, then ya, I would consider that'" (Dave 10:15).

Rather than attempt to restore 'traditional' notions of men as breadwinners, or being confused about the roles for men now that women are established in the workforce, this interviewee utilized discourse where the erosion of the breadwinner role has created positive alternatives for men to develop masculine identity.

3.2.4 Discussion of Discourse on the Breadwinner Role

The above discussion of discourse utilized by men in this study has outlined a variety of ways in which they speak about masculinities and their thoughts on the 'traditional' breadwinner role. Societal pressures to conform to this role are such that some men still strive to maintain the appearance of breadwinner status rather than openly come to acknowledge the decline of the breadwinner role in modern times. As seen earlier, this pressure was apparent in discourse used by men who claim to be breadwinners when discussing men who do not publicly show their compliance to the 'traditional' role. Instead of engaging in discourse that recognizes the difficulties some men may face in

attempting to actualize this role, men who do not conform were discounted as “losers.” Some interviewees also noted the risk of “ego problems” for those whose wives earn higher incomes, and mentioned that the simple fact of women working causes some men to feel that masculine roles can no longer be defined and others to feel like the male-as-Breadwinner stereotype may no longer be relevant.

The range of discourses used by men in this study did not appear to be greatly influenced by their religious affiliation. Both groups of men, Promise Keepers and non-Promise Keepers, used similar discourse to discuss their impressions of gender relationships in the past, to give reasons for deviation from the ‘traditional’ norms, and to discuss the pressure that most mentioned still exists for men to conform and to achieve the breadwinner role. However, one of the non-Promise Keeper participants made a point of stating that this pressure and the stereotypes surrounding the male-as-Breadwinner role have lessened significantly from previous generations. Other differences emerged between the two groups: most notably, the Promise Keeper men expressed negative opinions of men who do not live up to traditional standards and suggested that men’s egos may suffer if wives earn more income; more generally, they stated that men’s roles are more confusing and harder to define now that women are engaged in the workforce. On these topics, the non-Promise Keeper men were either silent or stated precisely the opposite, noting, like Dave, that they might expect their wives to work and would not be ashamed if their wives earned a higher income.

These differences carry forward into the realm of sharing responsibility for household tasks. Promise Keeper men were more likely to note that their roles as breadwinners within the family should correspond with their wives having responsibility for domestic duties. According to Bartkowski (2001), familial debates regarding household duties go hand-in-hand with issues of financial provision. In the next section, discussion will turn to discourse surrounding men’s willingness to engage in household chores and the extent to which they were prepared to take personal responsibility for ensuring cooking, cleaning, childcare, and household repairs are performed.

3.3 HOUSEHOLD TASKS

The parallel between the breadwinner identity for men and the assumed responsibility of household tasks for women can be summed up by an old adage: *if the cupboard is full and the plate is empty, that's a woman's problem. If the cupboard is empty and the plate is full, that's a man's problem.* Men have traditionally been deemed responsible for providing the goods to fill a cupboard, women to prepare and serve them, and men to eat them so they can continue providing additional goods. When it comes down to responsibility for specific tasks, the most recent data available from the General Social Survey (Statistics Canada, 1998) shows that 85% of men performed less than 40% of household work and related activities, including cooking and cleaning, general housework, maintenance and repair, shopping for goods and services, and childcare. Men in that survey reported spending more hours on maintenance and repair than any other household tasks (2.7 hours per day, on average). Conversely, women reported that child care demanded the majority of their at-home hours (2.4 hours per day, on average) followed by an almost equivalent portion on household maintenance and repair (2.0 hours). Canadian Census data from 2001 shows consistent trends, with 45.3% of women spending more than 15 hours per week on unpaid labour while only 23.2% of men reported the same (Statistics Canada, 2003). All in all, the ratio of women's work to men's work is 2:1; women are still performing twice as many hours of domestic duty compared to their male counterparts. This suggests that it is still the case that, regardless of the increasing numbers of women in paid employment outside of the home, there "has not been a reciprocal increase in men's involvement in housework and childcare" (Thomas, 1990).

The Statistics Canada findings on the types of household activities men and women engage in are consistent with the findings of the classic study by Hochschild and Machung (1989) and the more recent research done by Bartkowski (2001), Townsend (2002), and Kroska (2003). In each of these studies the types of tasks that men perform in and around the home were found to encompass an inside/outside split where 'men's work' traditionally consisted of activities that take place outside of the home. For example, in the Hochschild and Machung study, men were found to take responsibility

for mowing the lawn, fixing the cars, building a fence, or painting the house, and anything generally requiring heavy lifting, power tools, and repairs, whereas women performed duties that take place inside. In addition to these responsibilities, Bartkowski found that “husbands are generally charged with implementing the family’s budget, paying bills, and overseeing financial records” (2001: 73) while “wives are portrayed as exercising primary responsibility for... shopping... laundry, food preparation and cleaning up after meals; and indoor cleaning and housekeeping” (2001:74). The men interviewed in this research reported participating in a similar division of household activities, where their tasks included activities like “fixing things, building things, designing things” (Mark PK 12:5), “heavy lifting... repair work, renovations... automobiles” (John 9:7). Some of the men did indicate that they take part in less ‘traditional’ activities and mentioned tasks such as vacuuming or grocery shopping though they added justifications for this behaviour that made it more consistent with hegemonic masculinity (see Section 3.3.4). Nevertheless, discourse utilized in the interviews regarding responsibility for household tasks is largely constructed around expectations that wives take responsibility for and perform the majority of household and family maintenance.

3.3.1 Wives are Responsible for the Household

Preference for a gendered division of labour within the home became a common theme brought up by interview participants when asked about differences between masculinity and femininity. Examples of responsibility for household tasks were often utilized by participants to provide concrete illustrations of their distinctions between men and women. Maintenance of the household was identified as the primary responsibility of their wives. Some reports of participants contributing to household duties themselves were presented but essentially their wives were named as having the ultimate responsibility, as can be seen in the following examples:

“I do what my wife asks me to as far as housework... I expect her to keep the house organized... there are not too many jobs that are specifically mine. There are ones that we share and then there are ones that are hers. I think that my wife

should cook the supper and do the dishes, although she would probably like me to do it more” (Peter PK 14:1*⁹)

“She is the organizer in the home, I’m very much of a helper but I’m not the dominant person in the home” (Bushy PK 11:15)

“From my point of view, she does have discretion in what she does, but she does have to do the housework and the laundry and all that kind of stuff, cooking” (Mark PK 11:13)

These particular quotes show directly that these interviewees expect their wives to be responsible for household tasks. In some cases the men mentioned that they do contribute as “a helper,” doing what their wives ask them to do, but noted that they take direction from their wives as the primary “organizer in the home.” Two separate issues emerge from these extracts: one is a question of the task being accomplished; two is a question of who is responsible for the task being accomplished. Regardless of whether an individual may complete a given task, the one who is *responsible* for that task has the burden of ensuring it gets done. These participants stated that they will ‘help’ around the house when asked; however, as they are only helpers, their wives bear the responsibility and burden. As Ann Oakley (1974) first observed, interviewees’ use of the word ‘help’ signifies that when these men do conduct household duties, they do so to benefit their wives as opposed to taking it upon themselves to ensure that their household is maintained. For example, she states that when “housewives discuss their husbands’ performance of domestic tasks, they always use the word ‘help’.... The *responsibility* for seeing that the tasks are completed rests with the housewife, not her husband; shared or interchangeable task-performance is one thing, but shared or interchangeable responsibility is quite another” (1974: 159). In addition to being responsible for household duties, wives have the obligation to observe which tasks need to be performed and have to make the effort to *ask* for help when needed. This can be seen in the first extract above, where the interviewee notes that he does “what [his] wife asks [him] to as far as housework.” These findings are also consistent with those of Coltrane (1996) and Townsend (2002).

⁹ A portion of the interview with Peter that was not captured on tape has been recreated from notes. In situations where these notes are used an asterisk (*) will appear beside the page reference.

The third extract shows more explicitly the expectation that wives perform household duties and points to certain ‘core’ duties such as “housework,” “laundry,” and “cooking.” This is again consistent with the findings of other researchers, such as Bartkowski (2001) and Hochschild and Machung (1989). In the following extract an interviewee elaborated on this concept by pointing to household tasks (i.e., doing the dishes) as “women’s jobs.” To the list of wifely responsibilities, though, he added anything to do with children, including driving children to violin or hockey lessons.

“I think women’s jobs have gotten less complicated, or less arduous, because men have been helping. Maybe men don’t do the dishes, but they help to get the driving over with you know, if there’s violin lessons in one part of town, and hockey lessons in another part of town, when does it stop? It never slows down” (Peter PK 16:14).

Even though this interviewee noted that ‘women’s jobs’ are “complicated” and “arduous” and recognized that “it never slows down,” he resisted the idea that men should fully share this burden: while he commented that men may be willing to “help to get the driving over with,” he admitted the likelihood that “men don’t do the dishes.” Showing that men may be willing to participate in certain household tasks but not others indicates that men have the ability to choose or select the tasks they will help with. Similar findings have been reported in Charlie Lewis’ (1986) research on fathering, Pat and Hugh Armstrong’s (1994) look at women’s paid and unpaid work, and in Bartkowski’s (2001) study of evangelical families. In addition, Bartkowski points out that men’s help in particular situations implies that “task sharing [is] a temporary and voluntary act of compassion on the part of husbands” (2001: 74). Women, on the other hand, continue to bear the burden of responsibility.

3.3.2 Wives are Responsible for the Children

In line with discussion of women’s responsibility for household tasks generally, five out of the six participants in this study who had children noted that their wives had the primary responsibility for child care in their families. This was again explained by participants with reference to the importance of the role of mothers in children’s nurturing and early development. For instance, one interviewee noted:

“When kids are young I think that they, their mother should be there. I think there is a nurturing role that mothers have that’s better for young kids, than what fathers can give out” (Bushy PK 9:24).

Due to assumptions made by these interviewees regarding women’s capacity for nurturing and caring and men’s position as tough and stoic, mothers were described as ‘naturally’ better at raising young children compared to fathers, giving the impression that there is a biological basis for this prescribed responsibility. In his review of conservative texts, Bartkowski notes that “several of these authors claim or imply that mothers should attend to the lion’s share of childcare responsibilities... women are thought to be characteristically equipped for this task, not only biologically but psychologically” (2001: 75). Recent discourse regarding the innate connection between mothers and children can be traced back to the prominence in the 1950s of psychological theories of attachment found in the works of Bowlby (1958, cited in Bowlby, 1969). According to Pat and Hugh Armstrong (1994), discourse on the assumed biological and psychological connection between mothers and their children is prevalent within and across Canada as well as the United States.

Fatherhood, on the other hand, was seldom discussed by the men in this study in relation to defining masculinity. When they did talk about their contributions as fathers, participants made no reference to a biological or psychological basis for their parenting. Although fatherhood is widely believed to be central to developing manhood in North American society, and has even been linked with the “health of the nation” by some men’s movements (Donovan, 1998:832; see also Coltrane, 1996; Rutherford, 1996; Dobson, 1994, and LaRossa et al., 1991), the men in this study spoke about fathers as largely absent disciplinarians who relied on their wives to ensure that children were being brought up in a decent manner. Interviewees did not assume the disciplinary role to be their own responsibility as men, though instead noted that the partner who has greater skills and abilities in that regard “will emerge as the one to deal with that” (John 10:23). For example, one interviewee noted that, as a child, his mother “ruled the house” but that his father stepped in as a disciplinarian when things became serious. In his relationship

with his own children, he too has taken on that responsibility. He noted that his wife looks to him to solve problems in regard to this aspect of parenthood, stating that:

“Quite a few dilemmas arise with the children and disciplining the children. So, I’m presented with, you know, ‘here’s what so-and-so did and here’s what I did’ so what are you going to do.... I’m probably a little more analytical when it comes to things like that. ...I think it just goes back to the partnership, you look at the skills and abilities that some people have, so it’s a matter of whether they have it or don’t have it, but whoever does will emerge as the one to deal with that” (John 10:13).

Another interviewee shared this sentiment, noting he was the primary disciplinarian but that hard distinctions were not made between male and female roles with regard to children.

“I don’t remember a lot of distinctions between the male and the female roles. The role was parenting and we both did what we felt we should as parents. I think maybe the only thing that I was fairly strict on was that you show respect to your mother... if not, there was a little discipline...I would be the primary disciplinarian” (Bushy PK 12:20).

It is interesting to note that discourse surrounding the roles and responsibilities for mothers involved a biological basis where mothers were discussed as being naturally gifted in performing the task of childrearing, though when discussion turned to fatherhood, participants indicated that although they may have emerged as disciplinarians, this was not related to gender but to individual skills and abilities. This discussion has shown a contrast with regard to the assumed roles of parents – women’s abilities are reduced to an internal biological basis, while men’s abilities exist through the learning and development of external skills, thus implying that men should be acknowledged for their efforts while for women this all comes naturally.

3.3.3 Respect for and Recognition of Women’s Contributions

The assumption that responsibilities attributed to women through the gendered division of labour reflect their natural internal abilities brings into question the extent to which women will be recognized or respected for the effort exerted in maintaining a household and looking after the children. According to Ann Oakley (1974) and other researchers, duties required for household maintenance and childcare may be more difficult to

recognize than other types of work because there is no distinct product being created and no real endpoint on which to focus. The nature of these duties is such that work is necessary in order to sustain a certain level of cleanliness or nourishment, for example, but the same tasks need to be performed repetitively on an ongoing basis. In other words, cleaning is not conducted for an endpoint of having the house clean, but is continuous so the house does not become even dirtier.

Recognition of wives' contributions to household and family maintenance is voiced only a few times by the men in this study, as in the following example:

“I think probably still it's a little one-sided, where women do a lot of the shitty jobs, personally. ...I'm amazed at how much my wife does just with stuff like, there's just so much done. If it was left to me, nothing would get done” (Rob PK 15:24).

This interviewee recognizes some of the effort required in maintaining the household by saying that he is “amazed at how much [his] wife does” but adds that he would not participate as fully were it left to him. It is interesting to note that, although inequality in the gendered division of labour may be recognized, the discourse used here does not explore potential solutions to this inequality and the interviewee does not express a desire to ‘help out.’ A similar situation where the inequalities of the gendered division of labour are recognized but not altered is as follows:

“If women are going to [work], then... men will have to find, they're going to have to find ways to pick up the slack.... it's unfair to expect these women to be ‘superwomen,’ to do it at work, and then do it all at home” (Bushy PK 33:21).

This interviewee states that “it's unfair to expect these women to be ‘superwomen’,” reflecting a catch phrase coined in the late 1980s to denote a stressful stratagem used by working women to cope with demands of maintaining both households and outside employment. This sentiment is not unlike conservative discourse regarding women's labour force participation being deemed “legitimate provided that employed women do not allow their work commitments to compromise their family obligations” (Bartkowski, 2001: 72). Again, in this extract, there is no mention of attempts to counterbalance this inequality though the interviewee talked about activities that men, in general, will have to

perform in the future (i.e., “men *will* have to” and “they’re *going to* have to”; emphasis added).

Justifications participants used for not ‘helping’ with household maintenance and childcare duties included opinions that a) their wives are good at these activities, b) their wives enjoy this role, and c) children or hired helpers should be contracted to assist wives to perform domestic duties if needed. For example, the following extracts show that interviewees think that their wives excel at such activities while they themselves lack competence.

“I think that my wife should cook the supper and do the dishes, although she would probably like me to do it more. I encourage her to because she is so good at it” (Peter PK 14:14*).

“She does all the laundry and does most of the cooking – I’m not a good cook – so she still organizes most of the meals” (Bushy PK 11:26).

Statements such as “she would probably like me to do it more” highlight participants’ awareness of the *possibility* that they could contribute more to the household environment, though focus is turned toward wives’ superior abilities. Similar to the discussion in section 3.3.2 where women are assumed to have natural child-rearing abilities, these husbands appeal to their own inadequacy and women’s apparent prowess to determine role responsibility. These men excuse themselves from accountability by asserting their wives’ superior skills in this domain. Similar findings have been highlighted by Townsend, where he states that “men often develop a learned or deliberate incompetence in certain areas. It is a running joke among both men and women that after a man has once... fixed a meal and turned the kitchen into a disaster area... it is easier for women to do these things themselves” (2002: 112).

The second theme found within justifications for gender segregated roles in the home included the notion that wives enjoy the separated roles. For instance, in the following extracts, participants express the view that their wives ‘like the home environment’ and note that there are “perks” to taking on this responsibility.

“My wife likes the home environment. She’s got a degree in biology and in nursing also, and she would rather be at home, caring for the family and working in a compassionate role” (Rob PK 6:9).

“[My wife] hates housework with a passion, but she loves the garden, she loves her horses, and she has friends coming over, so the perks are there for her” (Mark PK 11:11).

These informants dismiss the challenges and potential disadvantages that likely accompany their wives’ decisions to remain at home. Although the first interviewee recognizes that his wife is educated (and likely had a lucrative job prior to having children), he does not mention the sacrifices she has made. Likewise, the second interviewee noted elsewhere that his wife has a master’s degree in business and that she had to give up her job to raise the children; however, he does not appear to appreciate the implications of her decision. This is not to say that these wives might not prefer staying at home, nor is it the case that there are no benefits to such a move, the point is that recognition of the challenge, effort, and sacrifice made is minimized by simply stating that their wives enjoy the role.

A third manner in which low participation in housework and an accompanying lack of recognition for their wives’ efforts is justified by the men in this study is through talk of having others help with household activities. One of the men in this study noted that he helps *less* around the home because his children are “being made to do more.” For example:

“Up until relatively recently I helped more than I do now. The reason is now we have two kids, and one is a 16-year old, and they must start doing stuff around the home. ... So, what I’m trying to do now is I’m working less around the home because the kids are being made to do more around the home. In fact, it’s for their own benefit... we’re trying to teach our kids these skills” (Mark PK 11:18).

This interviewee states that his not helping is a benefit to his children so they can learn household maintenance skills before moving out on their own. Thus, rather than each household member taking responsibility for domestic chores, he admits to passing his duties off onto his children. During the interview we did not discuss the possibility that his children may be more influenced to perpetuate gender stereotypes witnessed in their

family (i.e., husband not helping) than by their increased responsibility for household tasks.

Another example of having others help with household activities includes the contemporary notion that working women should be able to hire someone to assist in maintaining the house and home. For example, as stated by one interviewee:

“I don’t think the guys are stepping up and picking up the slack, and if their ladies are working, then I guess theoretically you should be able to hire someone to do all that, but that’s another thing” (Rob PK 16:5).

As with discourse regarding ‘superwomen’ noted above, women’s labour force participation is deemed acceptable insofar as family obligations are still met. However, this particular interviewee’s choice of words (i.e., “theoretically,” “should be able to,” and “but that’s another thing”) point to the improbability of that actually occurring.

The tendency for informants to endorse divergent gender roles and to hold women accountable for looking after the house and the children was apparent throughout these interviews. The men in this study pointed to biological as well as social bases for this separation, noting both that wives are naturally gifted in this domain and that they actually prefer their roles as homemakers. This echoes Bartkowski’s findings regarding evangelical couples, where “men’s physical capacity for hard work is contrasted with women’s maternal instinct... such divergent capabilities are seen to justify gendered household responsibilities” (2001: 70).

3.3.4 Men’s Reasons for Helping

Despite subscribing to a gender based division of labour and holding wives ultimately accountable for domestic duties, these participants have indicated that – in some cases – they are willing to ‘help out.’ Noting that they must be asked for their assistance and that they would not simply volunteer to undertake household chores, participants can escape potential scrutiny from others who adhere to a strict separation of roles by providing justifications for their activities that are more closely aligned with hegemonic norms. A practice used by the interviewees to justify engagement in ‘counter-traditional’ tasks is to

modify their impression of the activity in order to fit with more masculine stereotypes, such as strength and chivalry. This effort can be seen in the following two extracts:

“I do the vacuuming because the vacuum is heavy” (Peter PK 13:26*).

“A few years ago she fell ill for about six weeks and was off work for about a month or so and wasn’t really feeling that well, so I sort of started in doing the grocery shopping. Well, that’s not stopped now, I do most of the grocery shopping” (Bushy PK 11:19).

Such extracts give the impression that these husbands are appealing to ‘traditional’ masculine notions of strength and willingness to help a damsel in distress. Justifications for performing ‘women’s work’ also depicted assistance with parenting and household duties as “a matter of survival.”

“My wife and I sort of have a mingled role in parenting and managing the household. And it’s just because things were different, you know, with the whole business of careers, and she’s working and I’m, it’s a matter of survival” (Bushy PK 8:13).

By justifying their participation in activities like vacuuming, grocery shopping, and parenting with hegemonic notions and survival discourse (used also to explain the necessity of dual incomes), these men minimize the potential to be seen as compromising their masculine images. By altering their perspective on gendered responsibilities, these men are able to maintain a semblance of the hegemonic standards for masculinity. Rather than admitting that gender roles should perhaps be changed, their understanding of the external world is reconstructed to fit with notions of ‘traditional’ masculinity.

3.3.5 Men Taking Responsibility

Altering perceptions of the external world to maintain ‘traditional’ identities brings up the question of whether hegemonic masculinity is sustainable in the context of contemporary households. As was discussed in section 3.2.3, perhaps the ‘traditional’ roles are losing significance and influence for men today. Discourse used by one interviewee regarding responsibility for household maintenance included attempts to remove the gendered basis for domestic activities altogether. The following extract shows an example where the interviewee is obviously familiar with the hegemonic norm, but stated that his life has

been constructed differently and instead of subscribing to ‘tradition,’ he assumes individual responsibility for the performance of household tasks.

“As I go through life, I don’t think ‘well, I’m a man so I should be doing this.’ I just think ‘I should be doing this or I should be doing that’ because that’s what’s right or that’s what needs to be done. I don’t think things like a ‘a man doesn’t wash dishes or a man doesn’t grow flowers’ or whatever” (Dave 5:13).

Although this interviewee has access to discourse on ‘traditionally’ masculine roles (as is evident from his assertion that “a man doesn’t wash dishes or a man doesn’t grow flowers”), he elects instead to take responsibility for household tasks “because that’s what needs to be done.” He later normalized this behaviour for himself by citing his experience with ‘non-traditional’ parenting models.

“My father did the dishes every night. He did the housework. And not once did I hear him say ‘ah, that’s women’s work.’ Other people certainly said it to him... but I grew up with it” (Dave 23:10).

Normalization of shared housework allows this interviewee to ignore the potential that he might be seen as compromising his masculine image. Noting his father’s defiance of stereotypical norms, this opposition has become the norm for him.

Some of the men in this study mentioned that increasing expectations exist for fathers to take more responsibility for raising children as well. The examples of fathers as absent disciplinarians in section 3.3.2 were noted as detrimental for children because of a lack of positive male role models for both boys and girls. The men in this study noted that it is becoming more socially acceptable, and even expected, for men to participate more in their children’s lives.

“There’s more expectation... for the men to be more caregivers, more compassionate, more nurturing than there was in my dad’s generation” (Peter PK 25:27).

“It’s much more accepted and much more preferred if fathers take a more active role in bringing up their children” (John 13:6).

Supporting Townsend's (2002) claim that contemporary men face pressure to both devote time to paid employment and spend time with their children, the interviewees in this study pointed to the social expectations for fathering. One interviewee even stated active parenting can change one's "definition of what you do as a man," noting that he learned "that it's ok to be more involved with kids" (Mark PK 19:16). He earlier stated that raising his children makes him feel masculine because of the "influence [he has] in their lives" (Mark PK 16:3), which corresponds with Bartkowski's research with evangelical couples where "paternal involvement [was] deemed crucial... because of the special 'masculine' personality characteristics (e.g., decisive leadership) fathers alone are expected to bring to the process of child development" (2001: 76). Bartkowski found that evangelical discourse on fathering stipulates men spending time with young children in order to influence sons and daughters in a gender-specific fashion. This was evident in the current research as well: participants in this study talked about differences in what they teach their sons and daughters, noting that it is important to teach young girls "what 16 year old boys are like... and the difference between love and lust" (Mark PK 4:1), and about respecting themselves, practicing sexual restraint, and about not getting caught up "in the whole glitter of being female" (Johnboy 4:26). For sons, on the other hand, interviewees noted that "male children need to be nurtured and cared for and looked after and directed, because they are the heads of the next generations of households" (Peter PK 28:1). As in Bartkowski's research, conservative discourse was used by men to "instil in our young sons the vision of providing financial security for a wife" (2001: 76).

3.3.6 Discussion of Household Tasks Discourse

All of the men who participated in this study, whether Promise Keepers or not, discussed performing a variety of stereotypically masculine household tasks as well as other, less 'traditional' activities. One difference between these two groups of men, as is evidenced here, lay in their views on responsibility for household maintenance. For the men in the Promise Keepers group, taking care of the household was deemed the primary responsibility of their wives and biological justifications were provided for the gendered division of labour, where it was claimed that women are naturally more nurturing and capable of looking after children and the home. When the Promise Keeper men

discussed reasons why they might be reluctant to help their wives, they pointed to their wives' superior abilities in household maintenance and childcare, to their beliefs that their wives enjoy the separated roles, and stated that assistance from children or outsiders should be contracted if extra help is required.

In contrast, all of the non-Promise Keeper men attempted to remove the gendered basis for domestic activities altogether, stating that they see household work as their own obligation and taking responsibility for tasks for practical reasons (i.e., "that's what needs to be done," or looking at the skills and abilities of each partner). Similarly, these men specifically refuted the hegemonic stance in favour of a more egalitarian approach to household tasks and discourse surrounding division of labour, citing 'non-traditional' parenting models as their guide. Most of the Promise Keeper interviewees, however, did indicate that they would 'help' around the home, if asked, and noted that the types of activities they will perform include tasks that require masculine traits such as strength. In this sense, the Promise Keeper participants were able to alter their perspective of masculinity in order to maintain a semblance of the hegemonic identity. Bartkowski declares that this notion of helping has become somewhat normalized within Promise Keeper discourse, stating that written manuals urge "husbands to be attentive to an array of domestic chores, including shopping for various household items, doing the laundry, cooking meals, and cleaning the house" (Bartkowski, 2001: 79). Both groups of men noted increasing expectations to take part in fathering, and cited differences in what they teach their sons and daughters.

3.4 HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Discussion so far has uncovered the use of discourses perpetuating hegemonic masculinity in terms of men's roles as breadwinners outside the home, responsible for ensuring the economic survival of their families, and the contrasting lack of engagement in household maintenance with expectations for wives to remain within the home performing as homemakers. Alternatives to the hegemonic norms show that the men who participated in this research occupy varying, and at times contradictory, positions when attempting to respond to challenges they experience within these relations of production.

Examples have shown where participants utilized tactics of redefining norms and making attempts to develop a more egalitarian arrangement in the home. In an attempt to further gauge the roles men occupy within their families, I will now discuss the relations of power where, as noted by Bartkowski (2001), hegemonic stereotypes imply asymmetrical gender relations characterized by patriarchal dominance.

Participants in this study identified three responsibilities a man must assume to fulfill the role of head of the household: protecting, leading, and making decisions. The premise of men's roles as heads of their households is again built upon the views that masculinity and femininity are inherently dichotomous. According to Bartkowski, hegemonically masculine traits that are said to "uniquely qualify men for familial leadership and the burden of responsibility that accompanies this superordinate position" include such things as "logic, strength, assertiveness, and instrumentalism" (1997: 400). Common to discourse promoted by the Promise Keepers movement, many of the sentiments expressed throughout this section are provided by those within the organization, as can be seen in the following extract:

"Promise Keepers just makes it really clear, you know, that being a male is very important for the community, to understand what it is to be male, to understand what it means to be in the community protecting your, what it means to protect your family, what it means to be the head of your family, what it means to be the priest and the, ah, what your male roles are and can do for your family"
(Peter PK 29:13).

According to Bartkowski, Promise Keeper writer Edwin Louis Cole (1982) promotes a "vision of traditional masculinity [which] also leads him to defend a patriarchal family structure in which the husband is the undisputed leader – in his terms, the 'priest' or 'head' – of the family" (2004: 48).

3.4.1 Protecting and Leading

Responsibility for protecting and leading wives and children is presented as the most important aspect of the headship role, being one of the "primary contributions" that a man can make within his family. Protectiveness and leadership are noted as particularly masculine traits, and in one interviewee's opinion, "guys like to be protective of their

wife” (Rob PK 5:16). As noted in the following extracts, the roles of protector and leader encompass issues of physical safety as well as images of an abstract type of omnipresent power, a “covering” or a shield, which is said to exist just by the nature of a man’s responsibility.

“I think men take a stronger role in protection, safety... of themselves and of their family. If it’s just the two of them, a man and wife, then of the wife. Um, we still have certain roles, I make sure the house is secure and everything’s locked up” (John 9:1).

“The ‘Southern roles’ of the 50s... still do exist and they still do creep into it, especially movies and television, where the man is the hero and the woman is the one to be taken care of” (Dave 2:1).

“I would say one of the primary contributions that I, as a man in my family, have made is the sense of being ‘the priest’ or being ‘the protector,’ being the covering over my girls, and my wife, wherever they are, whatever they’re doing. Just a spiritual covering that I offer almost always, without me doing anything about it, just by who I am, and what my responsibility is. And I feel that’s the main responsibility that all fathers and husbands have” (Peter PK 6:10).

Specific task work involved with men’s role as protectors is noted throughout these three extracts as ensuring household security, locking up, and taking care of wives and children. This is consistent with Bartkowski’s findings that, in addition to providing financially for one’s family, “patriarchy [also] meant protection of one’s family from physical harm” (Bartkowski, 2004: 33). The third extract above, though, points to providing a feeling of security rather than the physical presence of the husband. This interviewee noted that regardless of what his children and wife are doing, he offers a “spiritual covering” that apparently protects them. This interviewee combined the notions of men’s roles as protectors and leaders, naming these tasks as the “main responsibility” that all family men occupy. Within the realm of leadership, he pointed to an expectation that men assume the position of a value teacher for women and children. Often talked about in regards to being “the priest” or ‘the spiritual leader,’ this role constitutes an important aspect of being head of the household (Bartkowski, 1997; 2000; 2001; Iacovetta, 1999). This premise is supported by another interviewee, who stated “I think that being the head of the home is mainly talking about spiritual leadership” (Bushy PK 27:26). As discussed in section 3.6.2 below, there appears to be renewed emphasis

on this role as challenges to men's ability to be the sole breadwinners in their families increase.

3.4.2 Making Decisions

Another element in being the head of the household is maintaining a degree of dominance or authority in decision-making. Bartkowski states that evangelical authors “argue that husbands – not wives – are ultimately responsible for making decisions that will affect the welfare of the family and its members” (1997: 397, see also Bartkowski, 2001). He goes on to add that input from the wives is requested when making decisions for the family, though ultimately, husbands do have the final say. This view of husbands as heads of their households and wives being asked for input can be seen in the following extract:

“If I’m wanting to go in a certain direction, I’ll suggest the direction, and then my wife gives her input on what she thinks of that, and we, ultimately I make the decision about what direction we’re going. I appreciate her input; I need it to make the decision, because she thinks differently than I do. And ultimately she accepts whatever direction or decision I make. She doesn’t always agree with me, but she knows I appreciate her input, and that I will listen to it” (Peter PK 26:24).

According to Promise Keeper author Cole, husbands are said to be the undisputed leaders of their homes, occupying the position of leader or head of the family, and “decision-making is one of the marks of a man” (1982, cited in Bartkowski, 2004: 48). Specific biblical scripture is often referred to when discussing the role of husbands in headship. From the book of Ephesians, it is noted “wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church” (KJV Ephesians 5:22/3). Promise Keepers within this study recall receiving this message of masculine authority. One interviewee noted that the Promise Keepers organization promotes the notion of husbands as the ultimate decision makers in the family, stating:

“There is an emphasis, to be clear, of what is the best method, and the message is basically based on the teachings. It talks about the issue of ‘women submitting to their husbands.’ It talks about ‘Ephesians’ the scripture it was founded upon. It talks about ‘what does it mean’ and ‘what does it not mean.’ It does talk about it a lot. Then there’s also the second part – ‘men love your wives.’ It talks about that too. I think there is an effort, certainly, to not have that scripture abused. There is

an attempt to communicate the message that ‘this is not an excuse to beat your wife,’ or to be domineering over your wife. The message is to exercise your roles as spiritual head of the family, or spiritual leader... It means men don’t shirk their roles of spiritual leadership of their wives. They have a responsibility that they may not be fulfilling. Because they have a responsibility, before God, that they will be held accountable for advocating their spirituality” (Bushy PK 27:4).

This interviewee speaks directly about the biblical passage from which Promise Keeper leaders derive the roles for male-headship and authority in decision-making processes. The appeal to biblical interpretations for male authority is cited by Bartkowski as an “order-of-creation argument” where women are intended to follow a man’s decision “because they were created after men, [thus] women ranked below them in a divinely instituted hierarchy” (Bartkowski, 2001: 32). Some latter-day Promise Keeper apologists interpret the passage from Ephesians to mean that wives are included in the decision-making processes, communication with wives being an element that is promoted in such texts as the 1994 *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*. This can be seen in the above extract where the interviewee notes that in the second portion of Ephesians, men are instructed to love their wives and not be domineering. In the Promise Keeper manual *Go the Distance*, the author, John Trent, tells men that “‘getting her feedback, insight, and encouragement on each aspect of your personal plan isn’t abdicating your leadership in the home; it demonstrates it’” (cited in Donovan, 1998: 829). However, critics of the movement are wary of discourse around the so-called ‘inclusion’ of wives in decision-making processes. Donovan (1998) argues that the message for communication and inclusion on behalf of Promise Keepers is actually intended to provide husbands with a more effective means of controlling their families through transforming overt control into a more latent authority.

3.4.3 Questioning the Headship Role

Although discussion in this thesis regarding being head of the household has centred on protecting, leading, and making decisions in the family, some of the men in this study also noted that a tangible definition of what constitutes headship is difficult to provide. The following extract reinforces the discourse surrounding this ‘traditional’ role, but the interviewee states that there is no specific direction that men as heads of their households are supposed to take.

“To say that men are the head of their household, yes, and without that headship the woman couldn’t be the person and do the things that she’s doing. But what exactly, what shape does the headship take? I don’t know; that’s not so clear in the scripture. I don’t think that’s so clear” (Peter PK 26:13).

According to this participant, evangelical teachings from his church and the Bible, and from the Promise Keepers movement, have not provided adequate advice as to how husbands should fulfil the headship role. This lack of direction is perhaps a criticism of the Promise Keepers’ focus, as much of the literature and speaking regarding the question of household authority has talked about men abdicating their roles, and fears that wives are being left to ‘pick up the slack,’ though it does not actually state how men should achieve headship. Families of men who do not assert their leadership are depicted as drifting aimlessly or becoming lost without a dominant male force, as can be seen in the following extracts:

“I think men have lost a lot of their, I feel so much with people, I think men have given up a lot of their (pause), I think the word I would say is the protective side.... And I find that a lot of the women are stepping up and making the decisions, especially major decisions, guys really don’t make a lot of the major decisions anymore.... women are making most of the decisions and men have to go along and are not stepping into the role at all. So, I think they’re losing something there. I see it all the time. Not that it’s got to be a guy thing, you know, dominance over his wife or whatever, but I just think that men are a lot more passive than maybe they were 50 years ago” (Rob PK 5:14).

“A lot of the struggle in the family is in men not taking their roles and responsibilities in leadership of the home. They are abdicating their roles and the family is left to drift” (Bushy PK 31:9).

“Some of us understand and perceive it in different ways, but many men in the community, I think, ignore it. They don’t know what to do with it, they don’t know what it means to be a covering, or a priest, or a leader in their family” (Peter PK 6:18)

The image of men as the head of their households is thought to be in jeopardy with husbands, whether willingly or not, relinquishing the leadership role. Michael Messner, in his research on men’s social movements, notes that this relinquishing of leadership roles is a dominant discursive theme found at Promise Keepers meetings. He states that “Promise Keepers argues that men’s problems today result largely from *departures* from

men's natural roles" (Messner, 1997:27). This is consistent with the above interview extracts, where participants in this study have said that husbands may be losing the headship role because "women are making most of the decisions" and men are "abdicating their roles." These extracts reflect the collective uncertainty that is said to exist regarding men's roles, suggesting evidence for Connell's notion of a 'crisis of masculinity.' However, as there is very limited direction provided to men who seek specific answers with regards to the practice of leadership, the 'loss' that men are said to be facing is not connected with any personal examples of declining headship either.

3.4.4 Mutual Submission and Egalitarianism

This questioning of the direction for men to take in order to be the heads of their households was continued by some participants, who also queried the matrices of headship further by noting that advice garnered from the Bible needs to be a) understood in the context it was written, and b) questioned for relevance to current family practices:

"I personally feel that you certainly have to interpret that scripture very much in the context of the culture of the day. Ah, I think there is a message there for men to take spiritual leadership, but I also feel that it's coming out of a culture where women were chattel. And so, you'd also have to look at the rest of the scripture which says 'men love your wife as your own body,' which in the light of that culture was actually very radical – to actually give women that sort of status. That would be my interpretation of the scripture, and I would think that, and it's been misused, and you know, the Bible is conducive to misuse, but I think that men's role is for spiritual leadership, there is a role for men and it relates to an understanding of the superior roles of priests, he's the intermediary between a lot of the men and their sisters which talked about the role of the husband – he's a priest in the home. But, ah, why can't the woman be the priest? (Laughs). That's the question I would have to have answered, why can't women have the role of priests in the home. And yet, there are many, many situations where the woman is the dominant spiritual leader in the home, and mainly because men have abdicated it, if the man is not there he's somewhere else and can't [perform] the leadership role. Many women do take the spiritual leadership role"
(Bushy PK 13:23).

This interviewee holds that direction gained through interpretation of the Christian scripture surrounding headship roles advocates men to be the leaders in their homes, fulfilling "the superior role of priests." He questions, however, the potential for the Bible to be misinterpreted and points to situations where women have provided leadership for their families, recognizing the abilities of both genders to perform the duties of headship.

According to Bartkowski (1997; 2001), alternatives to a strictly ordained role for men as leaders and decision makers can be found throughout reviews of evangelical literatures, including documents supported by the Promise Keepers organization. Bartkowski, citing a more egalitarian Promise Keeper author, Gary Oliver, points to several methods promoted by the organization for husbands and wives to utilize in developing a model of “mutual submission” within their families. Five arrangements are discussed, including:

- ◆ Discussion and compromise by all family members affected by a decision,
- ◆ An understanding not to act until an agreement is derived,
- ◆ Deferring authority on a contextual basis to the spouse who has either the most knowledge or is the most at risk,
- ◆ Alternating “duty periods,” and/or
- ◆ A “this-for-that” trade of favours when minor disagreements occur (Bartkowski, 1997: 399-400).

One of the non-Promise Keeper men interviewed in this study discussed utilizing the third arrangement – contextual-based authority – as an alternative to a strict male authority within his family. In this extract the participant describes sharing situational leadership as an opposition to patriarchal dominance, looking to his wife’s skills, knowledge, or expertise to provide direction in decision-making processes.

“I think in any relationship there’s always one or the other that emerges as more dominant. I would like to think that we strive to have more of a situational leadership over dominance. There are times when I want my wife to come forth and be dominant because she’d probably have better skills, knowledge, or expertise to be able to deal with certain issues, whereas I think I could do that—be the dominant one—in other situations” (John 10:1).

The interviewee has shown that he is not only aware of the ‘traditional’ nature of male authority but has specifically chosen an alternative method, noting that situational leadership presides *over* dominance within his family. This same interviewee goes on to add that contextual based authority is the ideal arrangement whereas male dominance in decision making can have negative consequences: “I’ve also seen relationships where the man is in charge, is dominant, making stupid decisions, but he just forces his decisions on the people around” (John 10:25).

Rather than simply selecting an alternative method for making decisions in the family, another interviewee noted that the predominance and utility of male headship are incompatible with and virtually non-existent in contemporary society. He stated that “seeing a man as ...the head of a household, that has changed and [has been] pretty much all but eliminated” (Dave 7:28), adding that male leadership roles are not relevant for use within his family or, generally, among the ‘younger generation’ of families and will continue to be ineffective in future years. He instead chooses a model of egalitarianism in both leadership and in taking responsibility. In speaking of the incompatibility of ‘traditional’ male headship roles with contemporary expectations, he noted:

“The roles have changed... for the family, with the barriers to the gender roles coming down within the context of the family, certainly, the man’s role has changed in that men are supposed to and are expected to share equally in all paths. There is nothing that a man specifically does as opposed to a woman.... The man wants to share in all the responsibilities and duties equally. Whereas, if you were able to miraculously turn back the clock, if you looked at my father compared to my relationship with my wife now, well, there would be quite a bit of friction there because he would expect to continue to perform the way he did 30 years ago. Generally speaking, the norms are no longer true today” (Dave 16:8).

In his comparison of his father’s relationship and his own, this interviewee points to the transition of gender role expectations, and noted that former generations of men may not be comfortable with modern expectations for sharing duties and responsibilities equally.

3.4.5 Discussion of Head of the Household Discourse

Discourse highlighted throughout this section has focussed on the establishment and maintenance of men’s roles as patriarchal leaders in their households. Promise Keeper interviewees drew upon essential differences between men and women to justify men’s location in the position of authority. This notion is supported by interpretations of select biblical scripture and by reference to Promise Keepers texts, though it is problematized by participants because of a lack of tangible definitions and specific direction for husbands to follow. A resulting insecurity ensues, where the interviewees have pointed to notions of crisis in masculinity and in family relations, however corresponding examples of how this “drift” materializes in lived experiences were not mentioned. Alternatives to placing men at the head of the household included notions of mutual

submission, contextual authority, and outright egalitarianism; and reinforced the incompatibility of 'traditional' definitions for masculinity in modern times. The practice of such alternatives is indicative of men responding to the challenges to masculinity through rejection of hegemonic ideology, however, extracts from participants within the Promise Keepers organization show that these men still attempt to conform to the notions of male leadership in the family.

3.5 SEXUALITY AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

So far in this chapter I have shown how the experiences of my informants relate to the first two of the three domains of hegemonic masculinity that Connell (1995a) identifies as 'in crisis.' In this section I propose to explore the third of these, namely the crisis Connell identifies in 'relations of cathexis.' As stated in the introduction chapter of this thesis, relations of cathexis include issues of sexual desire, both heterosexual and homosexual, and the question of control over one's own body. Examples of challenges to masculinity that fall within the realm of the relations of cathexis include recognition of women's sexual needs, women's demands for control over reproductive technologies, and the increased awareness of alternatives to heterosexual relationships. Although Connell's theory has informed the interview guide, only one question was directed toward issues of sexuality: the influence of homosexuality on hegemonic definitions of masculinity. Two participants, however, returned to topics of sexuality repeatedly during their interviews and opened separate discussions of sexual needs and reproductive technologies without being prompted. This suggests that sexuality may have been an important issue for them in relation to their own experience of masculinity.

Discourse utilized by the interviewees when talking about men's and women's sexuality included themes similar to those found by Wendy Hollway (1984) in her research on male and female sexuality, specifically use of a 'have and hold' discourse versus a 'male sex drive' discourse. Participants discussed the importance of confining sexuality to the realm of marital relationships, though discourse on sexual purity overlapped with and was somewhat contradicted by discourse participants used regarding men having sexual needs that women apparently do not understand.

3.5.1 Purity in Marital Relationships – To Have and to Hold

Practicing ‘sexual purity’ (defined by my informants as sex only within the confines of marriage) was identified by two of the Promise Keepers participants as the ideal for men’s and women’s relationships. Exercising sexual purity was said to create special bonds between a husband and wife that reinforce the marriage relationship and strengthen involved partners, helping to sustain marriages should difficult times occur. For example:

“You’re always looking back when things don’t go as well as they should—and being married, let me tell you, that’s a heck of a lot of work—and there’s always going to be moments where ‘here is this woman I’m married to and always the best sex has always been with her.’ I think that’s special” (Mark PK 25:3).

Participants talked about having positive experiences and encountering “great blessings and joy” as a result of their decisions to practise sexual purity, and noted that men who do not follow suit will miss out on these opportunities. According to Bartkowski, Promise Keepers view “sexual purity [as] a core component of living a life of ‘personal integrity’” (2004: 108) and put forward the notion that “any sexual contact outside of marriage [is] sinful” (2004: 80). These views were evident among the Promise Keepers participants in this study. As can be seen in the following extracts, men who do not practice sexual purity are depicted as “strange,” “afraid to establish a relationship,” and “missing out.” Playboy types of masculinity were frowned upon, and several participants remarked that men who feel that they “don’t need women” and who “use them and leave them” are not real men.

“I’ve known lots of guys like that, too. ‘I don’t need women,’ ‘women are terrible,’ ‘I use them and I leave them.’ The good guys aren’t that blind, to me that’s not a man. That’s a guy who’s afraid to establish a relationship... He’s also missing out on the great blessings and joy of what it means to be male, what it means to go through the ups and downs of a relationship with a woman... a guy I work with right now, he left his wife, he hates her, he goes out with different women every two nights, and he says he’s happy. He says ‘I’m happy without women.’ But I wonder why does he have to talk about them all the time? He’s just trying to figure out how many of them he can get into bed, which is really strange” (Peter PK 17:25).

“I have talked to men about it, and um, they say ‘you know, the best sex I’ve ever had was with blah blah blah blah. And it’s never been their wife. Never ever has it ever been their wife. It’s always been with some aggressive female who just

loves sex, and they are there, but it's never your wife. And that's bad, because you're never sharing that experience with the person you're married to" (Mark PK 24:27).

As seen in these extracts, the interviewees dismiss claims that men do not need women and point to the way other men talk about women as proof that these Playboys are missing the potential to build intimate and lasting relationships. Promise Keepers author Cole has coined the term "playboy problem" to denote the mistake of misinterpreting "men's hypersexuality as a license to engage in promiscuous sex" and even though he describes men's sexual appetite as "far eclipsing that of their female counterparts" he "argues that the 'playboy' is not genuinely manly" (cited in Bartkowski, 2004: 54).

The same push for sexual purity held true in participants' discussions of women's 'pre-marital' relationships. Postponing sexual relationships until marriage was deemed essential for women to be able to respect themselves and to have men respect them as well. This corresponds to what Hollway (1984) identified as the 'have/hold' discourse, whereby sexual relationships are seen as a means to express an intimate emotional connection, and should be maintained only within the confines of marriage. This ideology of restraint was carried forward into interviewees' concerns about their own daughters, many of whom said that they talk to their daughters about being cautious regarding the intentions of young men, citing gender role expectations that "teenage boys are after one thing" but hoping that girls will have their libidos "a little more in check" (Johnboy 5:17). Thus, when asked about the messages a father should teach his daughter about being a girl in contemporary society, one interviewee replied that he tells his daughter:

"To be wary of young little guys [because] they have one thing on their mind. And, it's 'ok to say no' and 'it's ok to let us know you're being pestered by some boyfriend to do things you don't want to do'.... If you don't give your daughter your attention, she's going to go and get it from someone else" (Rob PK 4:1).

Thus, in addition to promoting sexual purity, participants expressed fear that teenage boys would adopt a Playboy mentality, and hoped that their daughters would not be persuaded by such an approach.

Influences such as the feminist movement and the increased access to birth control measures were discussed as having potentially negative impacts for women, lowering the likelihood that they will practice sexual purity. One interviewee stated that these influences created an increase in cohabitation without marriage, noting that when a man “shacks up” with a woman “it’s not because he wants to marry her, it’s just free sex, and that’s it. Period. That-is-it” (Mark PK 23:21). He continued, noting that women “still have this mistaken notion that ‘he loves me’” and added “well he doesn’t love you, sister, he’s just in it for the sex” (Mark PK 24:2). This topic touches on discourse surrounding male sexual needs, overlapping issues regarding the benefits of sexual purity with the contrasting demand of sexual gratification for men. Here we see examples of both the ‘have/hold’ discourse and the ‘male sexual drive’ discourse employed to explain differences between men’s and women’s sexual needs. Part of the ‘have and hold’ discourse included reactions to men who avoid commitment in relationships and who are “just in it for the sex.” One interviewee noted, similar to his impression of Playboys, that a man who fears relationships will “never be a man,” noting that “it’s dumb to think that women don’t matter.”

“Men may have fear of being in a relationship; they would rather talk about sex than emotional things, things that are significant, things that are eternal. They’ll never be a man. That’s part of the lie... that men are only interested in superficial things. And we’re brining up our young men to think [about] immediate gratification, finding a sexual partner, right away, anytime after age 12. And it’s dumb to think women don’t matter” (Peter PK 18:11).

This same interviewee introduced the notion that men need women earlier in his interview, noting that men will be at a loss without a committed relationship. His discussion contradicts images of ‘real men’ discussed in the beginning of section 3.1.1 who strive to be the stern logical independent leaders that hegemonic archetypes imply. However, he does implicate the notion of ‘traditional’ complementary roles, noting that men need women “to exercise their maleness.”

“I don’t think women need men as much as men need women. And if men aren’t encouraged to be men... they won’t know what to do, they feel incompetent, they feel ‘what else can I do?’ Men need women to not just encourage them and to

exercise their maleness, but to embrace it... I think men are really handicapped, as a general rule” (Peter PK 17:1).

In contrast to hegemonic archetypes, men are depicted as needing women more than women need men. This opinion defies the traditional idea of the heterosexual couple, within which it is women who have been portrayed as the ‘weaker sex,’ dependent on their husbands for direction and protection.

3.5.2 Male Sexual Needs

Sexual purity was specifically noted as a choice for men, even though the interviewees who discussed it claimed to practice it staunchly. One interviewee made a point of mentioning that he had encountered opportunities for extramarital relations, allowing him to retain the hegemonic ideal discussed in 3.1.1 of having attractive women all around. He stated: “my wife has been my only sexual partner, although there’s been many opportunities, it’s by choice” (Mark PK 13:1). In keeping with male sexual needs discourse, his addition of “many opportunities” allows him to portray himself as ‘just as attractive as the next guy’ but maintains an image of self-sacrificing loyalty.

This same interviewee suggested that men and women have a different focus with regard to intimate relationships. As included above, he talked about men ‘shacking up’ with women for the explicit purpose of obtaining “free sex” and added that women are likely to erroneously think that love and marriage will be involved. Conservative author James Dobson (1975; cited in Bartkowski, 2001), notes specifically that men and women view intimate relationships differently, women on an emotional level and men on a physical one and explains these differences in terms of a strict biological determinism. Bartkowski has also written on the subject, noting that Promise Keepers leaders commonly “contrast women’s need for meaningful sexual intimacy ...to men’s hypersexuality” adding that “men’s desire is portrayed as the product of an indiscriminate and insatiable appetite for sex” (2001: 40). One of the participants in this study mentioned that men in non-marital relationships are likely to focus on issues of “how many times did you do it last night?” (Mark PK 23:24). In fact, although a “free sex”

relationship was seen as detrimental to women's reputation, women's willingness to enter a non-marital cohabiting relationship was seen as tempting for men:

“A great thing for men. If I wasn't a Christian, 'hey, sounds good to me' (laughs). It really does. A surrogate mother and a free sexual partner, what more could you want? I'm serious, what more could you want, it's perfect!” (Mark PK 24:7).

This interviewee objectified women into two categories: “surrogate mother” and “free sexual partner,” reminiscent of the whore/madonna opposition used in section 3.1.2. However, in this extract he has combined the images, noting an advantage for men in having someone who will both care for and support them *and* who will act as their lover without asking for commitment.

When the comment “if I wasn't a Christian, 'hey, sounds good to me'” is taken in conjunction with his above mention of the availability of numerous extramarital opportunities, it appears as if this interviewee may be grappling with competing standards of hegemonic masculinity and religious convictions, as he was eager to assert in the context of his interview that ‘sexual purity’ is a *deliberate* choice to avoid temptation. He continued his discussion of sexual relations, though turned to the issue of sexual assertiveness, making a point of noting that men love sexually aggressive women.

“The first thing that I'll do when I die is ask why He made women so much different than men, it would be a lot easier for men if women were a lot more like them... Do you know what most men love? It's sexually aggressive women... because they think, 'at last, a woman who understands how I feel about this'...if a women is aggressive, men have nothing to fear” (Mark PK 13:4).

Consistent with Hollway's description of male sexual needs discourse, this interviewee identified differences between men and women with regard to sexual assertiveness. His attribution of sexual aggression to a natural masculine trait can be compared with common North American assumptions that men are ‘the instigators’ of sex while women are more often ‘the receivers’ (LaHaye, 1968; cited in Bartkowski, 2001). This interviewee also touched on the potential for uncertainty that men may feel in relationships with women, commenting that men might have something to fear as a result of assumed differences between men and women. This touches back on the notion that

men may need women more than women need men and suggests that men may fear rejection, even within their marital relationships. Another interviewee talked briefly about this subject, combining rejection with the notion of men's sexual needs, stating only that he would prefer his wife "to be more responsive, sexually responsive and interesting, and [that] often, she is not" (Peter PK 14:3). This desire for wives to be more active regarding sexual relations is consistent with the findings of Armstrong and Armstrong (1994) and Bartkowski (2001). Bartkowski has written that women's sexual passivity with husbands is often seen as difficult for men to tolerate and, citing participants in his study on conservative couples, that "men have very delicate egos" (2001: 102). Indeed, the interviewee quoted in the above extract also stated that a man can feel totally rejected as a person if his wife isn't sexually responsive to him.

"[Saint] Paul actually talked about this directly. And I forget exactly what he says to women 'don't hold off from sexual relationships with your husband' And it's a problem when this happens. . . . It challenges masculinity because . . . if they say no without understanding the full implications, the man is rejected totally, he feels rejected as a person, and women just don't get this" (Mark PK 13:29).

Again, appealing to biblical roles and the assumption that sexual impulses 'naturally' inhere in men, this participant expressed his belief that sexual relationships are an element of the marital obligation noted in the Bible, and mentioned that non-compliance on the part of wives challenges men's masculinity. Women are depicted as not understanding the implications of their decision and are seen as being unaware of men's physiological urges and emotional needs. Indeed, this interviewee later noted that "women are clueless in how men feel about things" (Mark PK 20:10) and that women "just don't have a clue how, what kind of effect [they have] on men" (Mark PK 20:18).

The use of these two discourses regarding sexual purity and men's sexual needs shown throughout this section highlights the absence here of the third discourse identified by Hollway (1984, 1995) in her research: that of sexual permissiveness for women as well as men. Essentially, these men completely ignored the possibility that women may have sexual needs of their own or that women can derive any benefit from sexual relations except reinforcing their marital relationship. This absence of discussion on this topic

may be the result of the interviewees quoted throughout this section having the impression that women are naturally influenced by relational aspects – looking for love (i.e., ‘have/hold’ discourse) as opposed to being just in it for the sex (i.e., ‘men’s sexual needs’ discourse). Nonetheless, women’s ability to say ‘no’ and take control of their sexuality in that respect at least is noted as a challenge for men, and is said to directly impact relationships, because men now have to “shift away from the more physical aspects to the relational aspects with women” (Mark PK 14:22). Women’s increased control of their own bodies is seen as a challenge for men who now have to think more carefully about their partner’s feelings because the direct implications of not doing so means that she may reject him.

3.5.3 Control over Women’s Bodies

Women’s increased ability to control their own sexuality was deemed a detriment to society when discussion turned to contraception and reproductive technologies.

Although this was a topic that was not in the interview guide, one interviewee brought up the issue of abortion, voicing his belief that early feminists who initially helped women create “a sense of decision making in [their] sexual lives” ultimately went too far into a “full-blown support of abortion” (Peter PK 34:6).

This is a topic that the interviewee obviously feels very strongly about, since he earlier mentioned his involvement with the pro-life movement; it is also a common view amongst Promise Keepers, as noted by another interviewee and by Bartkowski (2004). This interviewee stated that he has learned to respond to people who challenge anti-abortion statements and tries “to respond in a way to get people’s attention” (Peter PK 4:5). He utilized portions of feminist discourse to establish a sense of credibility in his argument by showing that he has awareness of some of the issues and social conditions that gave rise to women’s need to take control of their own bodies, acknowledging that “too many children oppress the woman’s ability to do something besides being in the household for 30 years” (34:18). He also indicated awareness of patriarchal control where women needed to take responsibility from the “males that were making those decisions” (34:25).

However, his support of women's efforts quickly turned to a paternalistic discounting of women's choice. He gave the impression that women who supported the feminist argument were misguided and uninformed by stating – as if women were unaware – that “controlling conception is different from aborting your children.” (Peter PK 34:20). Without offering explanation for his belief, he demonized feminists (a tactic which, according to Bartkowski, is common among traditionalist Promise Keepers) by stating that “they had those things in mind from the beginning [and] really want women to abort their children” (34:12). He did not discuss why feminists might have ulterior motives in promoting choice, nor did he discuss the implications of abortion for the individual women who make that decision. Instead, he utilized extreme positions to illustrate his belief that the feminist argument has gone too far by comparing it to “taking something which is honourable, our need to make decisions about our bodies, and turning it into something dishonourable, which is the right to kill our children” (34:8). His choice of words “the right to kill our children” appeals to a notion that any individual would be hard-pressed to condone. In the end, his summary of women's efforts for control over their own contraception and reproductive technologies is depicted as: “the need for women to be more responsible and to take control, et cetera, turns into something that is negative” (Peter PK 34:31).

Academic analysis of men's views regarding abortion and implications of the pro-life rhetoric are largely absent from the writings of masculinities theorists discussed throughout this thesis. Only Connell (1995a) discusses the abortion debate and his coverage of this is quite minimal, simply citing the murders of abortion service providers as an example of violence members of a privileged group may use to sustain their domination, believing that “they are authorized by an ideology of supremacy” (Connell, 1995a: 83).

Although this discussion on reproductive technologies and the above discussion on sexuality largely centre on two key interviewees, I have attempted to illustrate the variety of discourses used by the men in this study to talk about their experiences of being men

and practicing masculinities in contemporary society. Inclusion of participants' use of discourse regarding the promotion of sexual purity, male sexual needs, and pro-life political ideology is important to be able to more fully understand the spectrum of responses to crisis tendencies. Although what is summarized here does not encompass the entire range of societal discourses regarding sexuality, these opinions do correspond closely to the beliefs identified by Bartkowski in Promise Keepers literature.

3.5.4 Views on Homosexuality

Given the importance of increased societal acceptance of homosexuality for hegemonic masculinity, all participants were asked for their opinions on whether this has affected masculine identities. Not surprisingly, in light of the messages from the "Promise Keepers organization [which] reinforces hegemonic masculinity through an explicitly stated opposition to homosexuality" (Bartkowski, 2004: 80), the bulk of discussion regarding this topic centred on perpetuating staunch anti-gay rhetoric and homophobic attitudes. Discourse used by the men in this study included overt anti-homosexual sentiment, views of homosexuality as affecting straight men's ability to build friendships, depictions of homosexual men as less masculine, and expressions of sympathy for gay men who 'quit the lifestyle.'

According to my informants, the existence of homosexuality represents a threat to masculine identity. Homosexuals were viewed with "revulsion" and were thought to be "flaunting their sexuality with other males" (Peter PK 19:11). As summarized in the words of one interviewee:

"Being a man has become tougher because of homosexuals, cause men can't show affection for fear of, and it is a fear, let me tell you it is a fear, of being perceived as being gay. The gay lifestyle is SO unnatural as to be abhorrent" (Mark PK 28:16).

This view suggests that the interviewee regards homosexuality as a direct challenge to his own portrayal of masculinity; having to limit displays of affection in order to not be perceived as gay. According to Messner, the awareness of gay lifestyles challenges hegemonic masculinity because "the very existence of 'homosexual masculinity' is a destabilizing 'subversion' in patriarchal society" (1997:88). Anti-homosexual views like

these were quite strong amongst the Promise Keepers participants in this study; these interviewees cited the Bible to support their view that “men shouldn’t be sleeping together” (Rob PK 22:1), and stated that there is “a natural inclination to be prejudiced against gays” (Mark PK 25:21). As stated by Bartkowski antigay attitudes are condoned within society because “these practices are legitimated on the grounds that same-sex relationships are ‘against nature’ (2000:45). An example of this type of discourse can be seen in the following extract where limits are placed on what is appropriate for homosocial relationships:

“Man-to-man relationships or woman-to-woman relationships form part of our society, but getting sexually active with each other it’s just, it’s evil” (Peter PK 19:28).

A discursive separation of the individual from the act, a type of ‘love the sinner but hate the sin’ discourse was also used by some informants, who specifically stated that although homosexual relationships are unnatural, abhorrent, and even evil, they would nevertheless “support the person.”

“I want to make it very clear that I do not support the lifestyle at all, I support the person, but I do not like the lifestyle. I think that it is a completely unnatural relationship” (Mark PK 25:25).

Part of this ‘love the sinner discourse’ included sympathy for homosexuals who try to “correct” their behaviour: one participant stated that he knew “guys that have been homosexuals” and he acknowledged that when they ‘became straight’ they were still able to contribute to their communities as strong leaders:

“I know guys that have been homosexuals, and I knew them when they were homosexuals and when they changed out of that lifestyle. And um, their appearance was the same, they still look [sic] feminine, but now they’re accepted, because that, strangely enough, people that are homosexual aren’t brain dead. And these guys I knew were very strong leaders in their community. And their leadership didn’t change when they, their community changed, their leadership didn’t” (Peter PK 21:9).

He continued his sympathy for these ‘ex-homosexuals,’ and acknowledged that quitting homosexuality is “probably tougher than quitting smoking” (Peter PK 21:23).

According to Bartkowski, this ‘love the sinner, hate the sin’ discourse is utilized with the Promise Keepers movement in order to facilitate the creation of boundaries that increase the potential for men to feel ‘safer’ amongst other Promise Keepers members.

Bartkowski states that Promise Keepers leaders strategically use a discourse critical of homosexuality so that “once questions of homosexuality are off the table, men can feel free to weep together, hug one another, hold hands, and engage in other public displays of man-to-man affection that might be difficult if questions about homosexual desire loomed over them” (2004: 83). Informants claimed that homosexual relationships constrain straight men’s abilities to build relationships with other men because of an increased effort not to have their actions confused with homosexual behaviour. One interviewee commented that hugging other men on the ball field, or in any sports-related venue was something that he felt uncomfortable doing, not because he had a problem with touching men but because “guys just don’t like to hug other guys. That’s just not the way it is, no matter how safe” (Mark PK 30:30).

“I don’t have a problem touching guys—I will give one of my employees a pat on the shoulder, ‘ata boy,’ no problem. Shake their hands, no problem. I will hug my kid, and my father... that’s not a problem. As far as hugging a total stranger ‘Ehn’ (makes buzzer sound) that’s where I stop. I think hugging is reserved for someone that you have a relationship established with. And hugging total strangers... is artificial” (Mark PK 28:27).

In contrast to this, other participants (non-Promise Keepers) stated that social expectations and stereotypes regarding homosexuality have changed over the last few decades, and that behaviours such as hugging between male friends are *more* socially acceptable now as a direct result of increased awareness and acceptance of homosexuality. For example:

“Male affection, or affection between males has increased because... the traditional stereotypes or roles have been changed a little bit, now it’s ok for men to hug. Previously, if men hugged, well ‘what are you gay?’ but that is accepted now” (Dave 18:5).

“I think that men who can hug other men are, they’re more confident in their masculinity and their heterosexuality and they’re not afraid to be branded as a

homosexual. Otherwise, if they were [afraid], they wouldn't do it. It seems to be, in society, much more accepted" (John 15:24)

In these extracts, homosexuality is not seen as a hindrance to building friendships with other men, and is not considered a challenge to masculine identity. Instead of trying to avoid at all costs the possibility of being construed as gay, these interviewees noted that, as a result of being comfortable with their own sexuality and masculine identity, they can build even stronger relationships and can show affection more openly. They relate this change to the increased acceptance of same-sex relationships. This discourse outlines the possibility for straight men to benefit from the existence of alternative identities that challenge hegemonic norms.

Some participants also used a discourse of 'feminized homosexuality,' which does not pose a direct challenge to hegemonic masculinity.

"Homosexual males are traditionally not viewed as being very masculine"
(Dave 17:15).

"I think there's a view out there that maybe [society is] a lot more tolerant because homosexuality is less masculine. I think [society is] a lot more tolerant today of the kind of people that are gay" (Rob PK 21:8).

This concept is consistent with Bartkowski's findings where "social practices that stigmatize or marginalize gay men often do so by feminizing them" (2004: 75). The potential for some homosexual men to 'pass under the radar' of criticism as a result of being viewed as less masculine can also be used to explain the more tolerant views participants have of lesbian sexuality. Since this represents less of an affront to hegemonic masculinity, lesbian lifestyles are considered "different," although paternalist justifications provided by one interviewee point to 'understanding' the mistreatment of women by men.

"Men tend to be a lot more accepting of lesbian relationships than they are of homosexual relationships. And why that is, I don't really know. The reason I'm more soft on that point is that women are more, have been mistreated by men a lot more, so I can understand that that might be a reason for it. And I think, with the way that some men treat women, I don't blame the women, quite frankly, but

I can't understand the men. I think in a perfect world though, there would be no need for lesbian or homosexual relationships" (Mark PK 35:1).

As much as tolerance for lesbian sexuality can be seen as progressive, the notion that women might initiate homosexual relationships as a result of being "mistreated by men" discounts the possibility that these women make their own informed decisions on the matter.

3.5.5 Discussion of Sexuality

Discussion of sexuality throughout this section has highlighted some important aspects of the discourses used by men in this study. Traditionalist ideals for married men included endorsements of sexual purity and the belief that intimacy can best be obtained within the confines of marital relationships. However, male sexual needs were depicted as such that men's egos become dependent on women's willingness to be sexually responsive. The anti-abortion debate was discussed, with the major proponent arguing that the feminist movement misled women into making "dishonourable" decisions. Anti-homosexual discourse depicted homosexuality (though not homosexuals themselves) as an affront to masculinity, noting that the existence of such relationships limited the potential for heterosexual men to build intimate man-to-man friendships. In contrast, non-Promise Keeper men discussed the possibility that men who are comfortable in their own sexuality will instead be able to build stronger relationships because angst regarding intimate connections between men has been removed as the result of increased awareness and acceptance of homosexuality in contemporary society. In addition, discourse of homosexuals as 'feminized men' was also used to avoid conflict between homosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. These discourses provide evidence to support Bartkowski's notion that "despite some significant changes in social attitudes toward gays, hegemonic masculinity remains a staunchly heterosexual ideology" (2000:45; 2004: 75).

3.6 CHANGING GENDER ROLES(?)

In the Introduction chapter of this thesis, I outlined Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and the 'crisis tendencies' that challenge its dominance in contemporary Western societies. According to Connell, changes in the relations of production, power,

and cathexis have created a situation where those who subscribe to basic tenets of hegemonic masculinity (i.e., identities based on heterosexual, male-dominant, homophobic discourse) need to find new ways to ensure the legitimacy of the patriarchal social order. Men's responses to these changes can involve attempts to restore 'traditional' masculinity, to re-align masculinity with contemporary demands, or to dismiss the practice of identifying 'masculinity' altogether. Other theorists have questioned the merits of Connell's theories, noting that there has been limited empirical examination of whether, and in what ways, individual men actually experience hegemonic masculinity or a crisis. The findings presented throughout this chapter provide evidence that supports Connell's theories; the men interviewed for this research identified experiencing tension resulting from societal pressure to perform as 'real men' (i.e., in hegemonically masculine ways) while struggling to meet the often competing demands of work, family, and social relationships in contemporary society.

3.6.1 The 'Crisis of Masculinity'

Awareness of the 'crisis' was clearly identifiable within the discussion of masculinity provided by the participants in this study. From their perspective, challenges for contemporary men arise in terms of continuing expectations for men to occupy breadwinner roles within their families, a corresponding allocation of household duties to wives, the obligation of men as heads of their households, and in the views of women's and men's sexuality. Examples of the 'crisis' as it pertains to study participants included widespread confusion over the meaning of manhood, the difficulties men experience in attempting to achieve archetypes of masculinity reinforced through social interactions and displayed by the media, and the ongoing pressures for men to assume 'traditional' heterosexual breadwinner and headship roles. Participants noted that archetypal notions of hegemonic masculinity are not always compatible with surviving in a consumerist society. Participants in this study discussed how men are struggling to define, attain, and preserve the 'prerequisites' of manhood in contemporary North American culture and the implications of not being able to do so. Fear and anxiety that families will be left to drift ensue.

These men pointed to the increased numbers of women working, and the corresponding political and ideological changes that have resulted, as the major reason for the instability of ‘traditional’ roles. As noted by one interviewee:

“My feeling is that the greatest influence is the changing career opportunities of women. Women are working outside the home, and so men, that has had an effect on men’s view of masculinity and what their role is” (Bushy PK 17:10).

As the breadwinner role has been the main plank of North American hegemonic masculinity for many years, such challenges to the legitimacy of patriarchy and the expressions of anxiety voiced by participants in this regard provide evidence for Connell’s claim that hegemonic masculinity is in crisis. To determine the extent to which men, in general, experience this same notion of crisis, more research would of course need to be conducted with a larger population. To borrow a line from Bartkowski, “the perspectives that emerge from these interviews are not intended to be exhaustive of all possible perspectives of men in [North America, nor men in the Promise Keepers] movement. Such is not the goal of qualitative interviewing” (2004: 158). However, this thesis has set out to provide insight into some of the discourses available to men regarding challenges to their definitions of masculinity, and the discourse they select when discussing these, and has uncovered a variety of discursive responses to the crisis.

3.6.2 Questioning the ‘Crisis’ – Natural Uncertainty

When questioning the nature of the contemporary ‘crisis of masculinity’ reported in this study, sociologists must take into account the potential that insecurity exists as a natural reaction to economic and ideological changes. Arguing against a model of ‘crisis,’ it is possible that the fluidity of masculine identity is such that uncertainty is an essential element of the process. Perhaps it is not that masculinity is in ‘crisis’ but that the model for masculine identities is continuously in a state of change; and the nature of uncharted territories is such that, until they become commonplace, insecurity and complexity are inevitable. Indeed, masculinities authors have pointed to the cyclical nature of hegemonic masculinity; claiming that the archetype has been continuously confronted by social pressures that challenge patriarchal gender roles and give rise to insecurity (Connell, 1995a; Kimmel, 1995; Messner, 1997; Bartkowski, 2004). As can be seen with

the early twentieth century 'crisis of masculinity,' as soon as men were able to settle in with new definitions of fatherhood and masculinity that could accommodate the pressures of increased industrialization, the First World War threw the 'natural' roles into question again.

According to complex systems theory, as discussed by Martin (1994), Rogers (1999), and Bauman (2000), one of the central attributes of such systems is that they "are never in equilibrium. Everything is in flux, continuously adjusting to change" (Martin, 1994: 143). If the gender order as a whole can be understood as a complex system, which would not contradict Connell's theories, then complex systems theory may explain the continual fluctuations and crisis tendencies experienced within individual masculinities which are part of that system. According to Emily Martin, "such systems contain randomness and disorder within order... they carry the ready possibility of catastrophic collapse. What order there is, is local, transient, emergent" (1994: 130). The tighter the definitions of masculinity, and the more dependent they are on particular social structures, the more they may be at risk for collapse. Hegemonic masculinity, as a configuration of practice within the system of gender relations, allows for disruption, adjustment, and repair of its key elements, thus allowing the overall system – the gender order – to mould and transform accordingly without ever reaching that catastrophic collapse. According to Martin, "because complex systems can be resilient in the face of change, they are closely associated with the dampening of conflict. Thus, ...complex systems can handle discord (say, illness) in one part by making adjustments in another to return to a steady state of harmony (health)" (Martin, 1994: 125).

Even within hegemonic masculinity, individual men may attempt to adjust the form of their masculine identity in order to accommodate contemporary pressures, without separating themselves from the patriarchal paradigm of the current gender order altogether. For example, this notion of fluidity in hegemonic masculinity allows for the potential that when conditions for the legitimation of patriarchy change, individuals who assume those characteristics will adapt their personal identities to fit with the portions of 'traditional' masculinity that still remain. Thus, if a man can no longer define his

masculine identity within the relations of production, for example, as Breadwinner in his family, then he may rely more firmly on the relations of power or cathexis to substantiate his sense of self. This was found to be the case in two separate studies, the first conducted by Gerschick and Millar (1994), who found that men who become disabled may shift the importance of physical relations with a partner to emotional ones. Second, in a study by Willott and Griffin (1997), unemployed working-class men from England were found attempting to maintain their masculine identities by ‘shoring up’ hegemonic masculinity through discursive separations of masculinity from femininity and through pursuing traditionally masculine leisure activities.

One example of this transition between the different roles for men within hegemonic masculinity found in the research for this thesis includes the use of a ‘values versus money’ discourse by a participant who had been unemployed for approximately two years at the time of the interview. Instead of stating that his masculinity has been threatened by his unemployment, this participant cited the importance of having more time to spend with his family, teaching his children community values, and acting as the spiritual leader within the home. For example:

“When on the death bed, men will look back on their lives and wish they spent more time caring and loving, rather than spending so much time at their office” (Peter PK 13:15*).

“All the jobs, all the money you can earn in the world aren’t going to be there when you go but your children are, so what kind of values are you going to leave them with and how are they going to be teaching your grandchildren, and what’s going to be the values that you are contributing to the community through your offspring?” (Peter PK 4:26).

This interviewee depicts himself in a similar manner to Bartkowski’s notion of “the fundamentalist husband” who is “no longer the economic warrior for his family” but who maintains status within his family by becoming “a soldier of Christ” (Bartkowski, 2001: 31). This finding is also consistent with research by Donovan, who states that the Promise Keepers movement has attempted to re-establish and legitimate the notion of men as spiritual leaders and value teachers by “changing the basis of authority from economic to spiritual contingencies” (1998:827) in order to fit with recent social demands

for men to be sensitive. Donovan also quotes Promise Keeper author Fred Hartley in refocusing the source of men's self esteem. Hartley states "our masculinity is not determined according to the size of our biceps. Instead, our masculinity is determined in part by how effectively we can embrace our wife and draw her close to our side" (1994; cited in Donovan, 1998: 831). However, despite finding an alternative to continually combating difficulties inherent in a breadwinner identity, this interviewee stated that he does nevertheless experience pressure to conform to that hegemonic norm. He noted that when a man realizes that he is no longer "king of the hill" (i.e. referring to when he lost his job) "your character obviously needs a lot of refining" (22:20). This comment suggests that the transition from breadwinner to 'values teacher' may not be a voluntary move at the time it occurs, but may be one which will eventually provide a new foundation for identity or "character" building.

3.6.3 Differences between Promise Keepers and Non-Promise Keepers

In analyzing the differences between Promise Keepers and non-Promise Keepers for the men who participated in this research, I found that the Promise Keeper men appeared more likely to respond to the crisis tendencies with attempts to re-establish patriarchal notions of gendered roles, to alter interpretations of the social world to fit with hegemonic definitions of masculinity, and, less often, to reformulate their definitions of masculinity to make them more congruent with their practical experiences. Non-Promise Keepers, on the other hand, were more often found to advocate redefining masculinity and abandoning the hegemonic project altogether for a more egalitarian paradigm. However, when discussing actual definitions of masculinity and femininity, non-Promise Keepers appeared just as likely as the Promise Keepers in this study to acknowledge the pressure of 'traditional' expectations on men's behaviour. Although the non-Promise Keepers who participated in this study were more likely to employ egalitarian discourse, in general, when compared to the Promise Keepers sample, this reference to 'traditional' expectations may be indicative of the limitations of discourse available to men in North American society, or may be the result of some men not wanting to challenge the norms of hegemonic masculinity which, although creating the pressure of social expectations, serve to benefit them as well (Thomas, 1990). To determine the full range of discourses

available, however, would necessitate further study with a larger sample of the population.

The extent to which the Promise Keeper men who took part in this research espouse conservative notions of gender roles and the various ways in which they respond to the ‘crisis of masculinity’ may be explained, in part, by the range of discourse commonly utilized within the Promise Keeper teachings, their religious affiliation, and the networks of associates they interact with. The Promise Keepers participants noted specifically that the major motivations for joining such a group were the potential to gain a firmer understanding of contemporary masculinity, to identify what men’s priorities should be, and to encourage men to take responsibility for their families. Resulting benefits include a reframing of the struggle and ensuing insecurities so that individual men can see that they are not alone and that “it’s OK to struggle with those things.” For example:

“I think men are looking for the answers.... If I know what I’m supposed to be, then I don’t have to worry about, then I don’t have to be insecure about who I am” (Mark PK 31:27).

“Promise Keepers just makes it really clear, you know, that being a male is very important for the community, to understand what it is to be male, to understand what it means to be in the community protecting your, what it means to protect your family, what it means to be the head of your family, what it means to be the priest and the, ah, what your male roles are and can do for your family, things that I struggle with. But they say it’s OK to struggle with those things. There is some hope and encouragement in your maleness” (Peter PK 29:13).

According to Messner (1997) in his comparative analysis of men’s social movements, one of the elements that draws men to the movement is that “Promise Keepers offers these men a clear set of principles and practices through which they may deal with their pain, doubts, and anxieties in ways that are less self-destructive” (1997: 34). Promise Keepers claim to offer men ‘The’ answer in regards to defining masculinity and coping with the difficulties of being a man in contemporary North America.

From this perspective, the Promise Keepers’ response to the ‘crisis of masculinity’ and the uncertainties that participants face could be understood as a project in restoring confidence and aiding men to be able to meet their obligations in daily life. However, as

pointed out in the introduction chapter, Donovan notes that the result of involvement in the Promise Keepers organization, instead of simply promoting increased sensitivity and communication with their wives, may instead be teaching men about “forfeiting outward control for greater latent authority” (1998:828).

Direct evidence that the Promise Keepers men who participated in this research are attempting to gain greater control over their wives and families was not found in this research, nor was the question asked. Evidence does suggest, however, that discourse is available to, and utilized by, these men which advocates hegemonic definitions of masculinity where men assume positions of household authority through processes of financial control, a gendered division of labour, spiritual leadership, and decision making power. To say that these discourses are made available to them solely as a result of their participation in the Promise Keepers movement, however, would be completely erroneous. The discourses discussed throughout this thesis and the ideologies supported by these participants may be advanced by the Promise Keepers movement, although these interviewees are likely to have been greatly influenced by their points of entry into the movement as well. The existence of discourses consistent with ‘traditional’ hegemonic masculinity are evident throughout many factions of both secular and non-secular North American society and such discourses are thus likely to have influenced the men who participated in this research throughout their lives, and not just via the Promise Keepers movement over the last decade.

The non-Promise Keeper men who participated in this research were less likely to voice concern about how to respond to the difficulties of meeting modern-day requirements of masculinity. They acknowledged that pressure exists to conform to ‘traditional’ roles, but noted that they found it relatively easy to be a man in today’s society, depending on the context and whom they choose to associate with. For example:

“Well, I mean, you put yourself in a position where there’s competition and there’s some situations where you might be competing with other men, social events, perhaps, but generally I think in this day and age, and depending on the circles that you move around in, I don’t particularly find it difficult” (John 6:16).

“I think it’s fairly easy. I find it fairly easy. It gets, you know, right now, but sometimes it can be difficult. But that’s within myself, you know, sometimes there are other things that come into my life, then it sometimes can be hard to be a male, but usually it’s pretty easy” (Johnboy 10:8).

In addition, discourse that abandons the notion of defining oneself in terms of one’s masculinity was used by a non-Promise Keeper interviewee. He stated that he does not seek to define himself as a man but rather regards himself as a “person in society first and a man second.”

“I don’t consider myself, well; I don’t define myself as a ‘man.’ I don’t, I rarely think about my own masculinity. (Pause) What it means to be a man in today’s society, I can’t necessarily answer that because, well I see myself as a person in society first and a man second. I shouldn’t say a man second, because sex certainly enters into the equation, but it’s not a thought process. As I go through life, I don’t think ‘well, I’m a man so I should be doing this.’ I just think ‘I should be doing this or I should be doing that’ because that’s what’s right or that’s what needs to be done. I don’t think things like ‘a man doesn’t wash dishes or a man doesn’t grow flowers’ or whatever.” (Dave 5:9).

This notion represents a paradigm shift from the traditionalist definitions and functions of masculinity and femininity to defining oneself as a member of society with the rights and obligations that accompany such a position, regardless of one’s sex. Gerschick and Miller (1994) have found similar ‘person rather than man’ discourse in their study of men who are coping with disabilities. These authors state that this discourse is common among those in the disability rights movement and those who hold that disability is socially constructed. Although the physical presence of a disability might be real, the manner in which society sees those persons as disadvantaged is socially constructed. This notion is similar to the sentiments offered by the interviewee quoted above. He regards the different statuses attributed to men and women, and thereby to masculinity and femininity, as a social construction. Although he acknowledged, as is shown below, that real physical differences may exist between the genders, he noted that this biological separation need not define whether one is to be a “secretary versus the CEO:”

“Because of the anatomical difference between men and women, masculinity will never go away, and neither will femininity. ...these are things that always, as we come closer and closer together as a society, they will continue to keep us apart and they will continue to allow us to define ourselves as men and women. Not as

better or worse, or not as the breadwinner versus the knitter, or the secretary versus the CEO, but they will define us as simply men and women” (Dave 20:7).

In summary, the varieties of discourse shown throughout this chapter provide insight as to the pressures that some men feel to conform to what is depicted as society’s standards for masculinity. Although each of the men in this thesis have admitted that they feel somewhat constrained by expectations for hegemonic masculinity and the difficulties of maintaining ‘traditional’ roles in contemporary times, three distinct patterns of response have been noted whereby these men have attempted to reinstate hegemonic notions of masculinity, to redefine masculinity in light of contemporary challenges, and, as above, have attempted to reject hegemonic practices in order to remove the unequal status commonly associated with visions of masculinity and femininity. In the following chapter, I will discuss the implications of these discourses for the sociological study of men and masculinities and show how the findings from this research can be used to provide insight, from a Canadian perspective, into the notions of hegemonic masculinity and the ‘crisis.’

4 Conclusion

In this thesis I set out to explore how men talk about their experiences of masculinity in contemporary society. Specifically, I sought to gain insight via interviews into the extent to which men may feel pressure to conform to hegemonic notions of masculinity; whether there is, in fact, a ‘crisis of masculinity;’ potential responses to that crisis; and in general, how men may construct and maintain masculine identity in contemporary society. Empirical examination of the extent to which men might identify with discursive structures of hegemonic masculinity in their everyday lives has been largely absent from sociological study, especially as it pertains to men in social movements such as the Promise Keepers organization. This project has thus made a useful contribution to masculinities research by exploring the relationship between individual men’s accounts of masculinity and the broader societal discourses that are to be found in current North American society.

4.1 HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND THE ‘CRISIS’

The findings reported in this thesis support Connell’s theories of hegemonic masculinity, crisis tendencies, and men’s responses to the crisis. These findings also support conclusions drawn in other masculinities research on the Promise Keepers organization, such as the various studies by Donovan (1998) and Bartkowski (2004). Men in this study noted that much of their masculine identity is rooted in their ability to be breadwinners and leaders in their families, and discussed corresponding roles for their wives as the primary caregivers for children and taking responsibility for the home. This corresponds with Connell’s account of crisis tendencies because these men talked about the experiences and challenges they faced within the roles of breadwinner, homemaker, and head of the household. As outlined by Bartkowski, Connell’s notion of the relations of production is derived from “the interface between gender and the allocation of practical responsibilities within social settings. Gender can be produced by dichotomous divisions of labor within the family as well as within gender segregated occupations” (2001: 10). In my study, participants’ discussions of challenges faced through their employment situations and in deciding responsibility for household chores provided evidence of the

extent to which these men experience a sense of crisis in this area of their lives. In terms of the relations of power, Bartkowski describes these as “the production and negotiation of asymmetrical gender relations... within the home, gender can be produced through a husband’s attempt to exercise authority as the head of the household – e.g., via his self-designation as the family’s leader or through the practice of autocratic decision making” (2001: 9-10). Discursive themes found throughout the interview transcripts highlighted examples of conflict or tension surrounding household authority and men’s roles as family leaders, which correspond to Connell’s theoretical identification of this as the second area of hegemonic masculinity within which crisis tendencies are apparent.

Discourse relating to Connell’s third crisis tendency – the relations of cathexis – was also apparent in the transcripts. As defined by Bartkowski, “*Cathexis* highlights the way gender is produced through emotional ties, sexual desire, and experiences of embodiment – often hinging on the question of gender difference (i.e., are men and women inherently different from one another?)” (2001: 9). The question of gender difference was a key factor in the interviews I conducted. For the men in this study, the negotiation of masculine identity was closely linked with the question of femininity, or more often, with what is *not* femininity. Bartkowski adds to this definition of cathexis by stating “it is within the configurations of cathexis that issues of gender identity, emotional attachment, and sexuality interface most visibly” (2001: 9). Gender differences in emotional attachment and sexuality were topics that interviewees felt strongly about and brought up spontaneously.

Consistent with Connell’s hypothesis regarding reactions to the crisis, discourses used by men in this study demonstrated the three styles of response he identifies. That is, firstly, the men in this study referred to making efforts to re-establish patriarchal patterns of masculine identity; second, they discussed redefining their expectations of masculinity to comply with the exigencies of contemporary North American society, and third, talked about efforts to establish more progressive paradigms, rejecting the principles of hegemonic masculinity in favour of an egalitarian philosophy. As with Bartkowski’s

notion of ‘tacking’ between patriarchal and egalitarian viewpoints, some of the men in this study switched between these different discourses throughout their interviews.

With regard to the first of these responses, examples of discourse surrounding efforts to re-establish patriarchal patterns included staunch rhetoric pointing to natural, biological, historical, and biblically-ordained differences between men and women. Men were commonly depicted as emotionally and physically tough, athletic and sports-oriented, interested in ‘traditional’ masculine careers, and suited to be the protectors and moral overseers of their wives and children. Bartkowski points to Promise Keepers writers, such as Cole (1982), when he states that “purveyors of strict essentialism engage in such boundary work because they are anxious about a cultural devaluation of masculinity” (2004: 49). In keeping with an emphasis on segregated, complementary roles for men and women, activities like housework and childcare were identified by some of the men in this study as women’s responsibilities, and females were expected to conform to modest styles of clothing and dress and to perform as communicative, modest, co-operative and humble ‘ladies.’ In efforts to maintain the complementarity of gender roles implicit in the nuclear family structure, constraints were placed on the parameters of sexual relationships, including sexual orientation, reproductive technologies, and men’s sexual needs, while feminists were blamed for misleading women with anti-conservative doctrines.

A common approach participants used when attempting to re-instate patriarchal patterns included changing their understanding of the social world in order to fit with their existing definitions of hegemonic masculinity. This requires that men alter the way they think about certain activities and behaviours to conform to the patriarchal paradigm. Examples of this response to the ‘crisis’ included notions of helping around the home because “the vacuum is heavy” or because their wives were sick, thus appealing to hegemonic definitions to condone such activities, bypassing the potential for incongruence or dissonance in their self-identifications.

As an example of the second kind of response Connell identifies, participants also utilized discourses that serve to redefine masculinity, based on present-day cultural, economic, and political requirements: these included recognition of competition between displays of masculinity in multiple contexts, involving the inclusion of elements such as intelligence, respect, sensitivity, and emotional attachment in the male repertoire. The move toward increased communication and emotional awareness apparent throughout these interviews is consistent with discourse found in Bartkowski's (2004) analysis of Promise Keeper texts regarding 'Expressive Egalitarian' roles. The promotion, by interviewees, of men's roles in parenting and efforts to maintain a contextual-based authority in decision-making practices, as well as propositions that values are more important than money and that stereotypical attitudes surrounding male intimacy are changing, all serve to open a space for these men to meet the needs of their daily lives without having to experience the dissonance and impracticality of attempting to achieve 'traditional' stereotypes. Some of the men in this study pointed to the inaccurate stereotyping of male behaviours, and noted that previous hegemonic and 'traditional' images of masculinity were chauvinistic, based on biblical misinterpretations, and unnecessarily harmful to men.

The third form of response Connell identifies involves the wholesale rejection of 'hegemonic masculinity.' Although this was utilized less frequently (which may be the result of the small size and conservative nature of much of the sample), some examples of discourse on paradigm shifts to egalitarian practices were presented by non-Promise Keepers as well as one Promise Keeper member. Images of men as breadwinners and as heads of their households were claimed by some participants to be irrelevant and were traded for notions of equality in decision-making, the provision of family income, and in taking responsibility for domestic chores. These liberal ideologies were normalized through a vision of prioritising the expectations of personhood in society over the experience of being a man. According to Bartkowski, this discourse would not be supported by Promise Keepers leaders who would likely refuse these notions of equality, viewing such practices as androgynous and gender blending as opposed to making reference to an individual's own sense of responsibility.

4.2 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Understanding and identifying responses to ‘crises’ in the gender order is important for discovering the ways, and the extent to which, individuals in our own communities are affected by cultural, economic, and political pressures, as outlined throughout this thesis. The construction and maintenance of gendered identities, and the influences of hegemonic masculinity, are policed through our social interactions at work, in the home, and within individual relationships. As North American culture continues to adapt to the conditions of contemporary society, understanding the production of gendered identities becomes crucial. This thesis has provided insight into some of the discourses surrounding pressures for men to conform to hegemonic norms, and the options available for the transformation of identities, critical to understanding power relationships that exist in our gendered identities. More specifically, this thesis has provided insight into some of the pressures, constraints, and influences affecting gendered identities, masculinity in particular. According to Connell, not many men would hope to attain hegemonic masculinity in its entirety. However, as evidenced in this thesis, individual men do support its various elements and use it to judge and control the behaviour of other men, and women, regardless of the recognition of limitations and often negative influence hegemonic notions have introduced to their own lives. For this purpose, it is useful to develop knowledge regarding which elements of the archetype are most closely adhered to and which tend to be commonly rejected. As Wetherell and Edley state, “perhaps what is most hegemonic is to be non-hegemonic” (1999: 351). Take, for example, the depiction of ‘playboys’ by study participants – although recognized as a socially desirable trait, and one that has been categorized as part of the ‘real man’ image, the men in this study have noted the disadvantages and have attempted to distance themselves from that portrayal. Though, as found within this research, even those who reject hegemonic norms for themselves, still define their identities (and judge others) by the relative proximity to, or distance from, the masculine archetype.

This project has been timely, utilizing the rise of men’s social movement activism to explore and gather insight into men’s collective subjectivities. The use of informants from the Promise Keepers movement, as well as the non-Promise Keepers men, proved

helpful as a way of aiding understanding of the range and variety of collective responses to the crisis tendencies identified by Connell, and the construction of contemporary masculine identities. The prominence of the Promise Keepers organization, as well as other men's movements (including essentialist retreats such as the Mythopoetic Men's movement, racialized masculinity as found within Farrakhan's Million Men movement, and political movements like Men's Rights or Men's Liberation) that existed throughout the 1990s was indicative of a widespread discourse of anxiety regarding the maintenance of prescribed gender roles, particularly relating to definitions for contemporary masculinity. This project has also been useful insofar as it explores certain aspects of the Promise Keepers movement from a Canadian perspective. All of the published research on Promise Keepers, and much of the literature regarding men's social movements, thus far has been conducted within the United States. The focus on redefining masculinity, concerns regarding breakdown of the nuclear family structure, and the recent celebration of men's social movements have not been as prevalent in Canada. Although a recorded 18 thousand men attended Canadian Promise Keeper events in 1997, the movement never attained the same degree of popularity or prominence in this country than it did in the United States. Cultural differences and varying rates of participation in evangelical Christian churches may explain, in part, the variation in social emphasis regarding such initiatives. Across both countries, however, participation in the Promise Keepers organization has steadily declined since the 1990s (Bartkowski, 2004).

Bartkowski (2004), in his analysis of the movement, claims that since the peak of popularity of the Promise Keepers in 1997, the movement's annual budget has fallen from \$117 million to \$34 million in 2001 and memberships have declined to the point where the organization claimed financial ruin and had to close offices and lay off its staff. Bartkowski holds that the strongest indication that Promise Keepers have "fallen stock" is the lack of protesters outside the now much smaller rallies, stating that "a movement would seem to be on the ropes when even its most dogged critics abandon it as unworthy of their protest" (Bartkowski, 2004: 4). Reasons provided for the movement's decline, according to Bartkowski and the Promise Keepers representatives he has spoken with, are various, and include a combination of the financial expenses individuals faced when

travelling to attend rallies, a devaluing of the conferences when organization leaders dropped entrance fees to appeal to a more diverse group of men, criticism from other conservative Christian groups of Promise Keepers' alleged lack of selectivity in recruiting diverse groups, and a general attitude of *been there, done that* among men who had already attended one or more of the Promise Keeper events. Bartkowski also points to the rapid pace at which North American culture tends to move onto the latest fads, noting that "the movement's selective appropriation of mainstream American culture (sport, gender, family, religion, and multiculturalism) gave the movement an air of flexibility that undoubtedly contributed to its broad appeal. Yet, given the ephemeral quality of contemporary American culture, paradox and flexibility within the movement likely contributed to its demise" (Bartkowski, 2004: 143).

In its focus on an in-depth view of the discourses used by men who participate in the Promise Keepers movement, this thesis can make a distinct contribution. Very few academics have reached beyond a study of Promise Keepers' textual materials to directly engage with individuals from the movement. In doing so, this thesis has offered insight into the impact of this socially controversial men's movement on the lived realities of individual men, as shown through the discourses they used to talk about their social relations of work, family, and individual relationships. The discourses used by these men, and highlighted throughout this thesis, can offer insight into the practical nature of how power relations are structured, renegotiated, and exerted in society, both between men and between the genders. This study can also make a useful contribution to the relatively young body of research and theory surrounding the sociological study of men and masculinities. This thesis offers empirical evidence of the influence of hegemonic masculinity and the experience of crisis tendencies in the day-to-day lives of individual men. As shown through their discursive practices, these theoretical constructs are never simple and straightforward but are replete with complexity and intricacy when examined more closely.

4.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

Further study on the impact of social movements, such as the Promise Keepers, on the lived realities of individual men and women would offer additional insight into the relations of power practiced in North American society. The Promise Keepers organization, as an example, has been criticized for denying the political implications of a collective men's movement structured to address gender relations in the absence of women. Research into discourses used by a larger sample of the Promise Keepers population might offer additional knowledge of the extent to which individual men involved with this movement are actually learning, as Donovan (1998) suggests, ways to control their wives more effectively. Another interesting approach, even with the small group number who participated in this thesis, would be to conduct focus groups with men from the Promise Keepers to see if the power relations inherent in hegemonic masculinity are evident in group interaction. As discourses of masculinity are generated and develop their meaning through social interaction and communication, it would be interesting to see the extent to which the discursive practices of individual men change when they are in a group setting and how they might be influenced by the presence of other men. This approach would also be useful in relation to understanding the Promise Keepers' insistence on men-only gatherings and might offer additional information on the nature of men's social movements in general. It would also be insightful to engage in discourse analysis of interviews with men from other social movements, such as gay liberation movements or pro-feminist men's groups, for example, to gain insight into other collective responses to the crisis of masculinity. Finally, it would also be advantageous to include women into the discussion, not just as researchers or as those implicated through power relations but as active participants in the construction of the gender order. Speaking with the wives of the Promise Keepers, or with other women who support the movement, might yield additional information as to the utility and practicality of the discourses shown throughout this thesis for the everyday practice of maintaining and providing for families. In addition, if, as Connell holds, we can only "logically speak of the crisis of a gender order as a whole and of its tendencies towards crisis" (1995a: 84), then we must question the implications for women, in general, of men's attempts to redefine hegemonic masculinity.

5 Reflexive Account

My first encounter with the Promise Keepers movement was within an undergraduate ‘sociology of the family’ course in Saskatoon where the professor brought in a *Time* magazine article telling about large Promise Keepers rallies across the country, the movement’s rapidly increasing members, and the values and lessons the group sought to promote. From the beginning, my interest in the Promise Keepers has always been from a sociological point of view. I decided to write my undergraduate term paper on the subject and was invited to speak in other classes about what I had learned. Three or four months later, the Promise Keepers planned a trip to the city and within a few days the event was completely sold out. Of course, the local media covered the story, playing up the controversy between Promise Keepers and feminists. When the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women asked me to participate in an interview on CBC on the topic of the Promise Keepers, however, I decided to provide the media with my information but felt unprepared to sit in an interview on short notice. I followed the movement closely, collecting all media reports and writing a few commentaries for the local newspaper myself (Saskatoon Star Phoenix. 1998, May 13). With all this attention, my excitement built, and when I moved to Victoria to pursue my graduate degree, I had already made up my mind to study the movement in more depth.

Since beginning this research, right from the proposal phase, I have kept a journal of my thoughts and feelings about the project. The majority of information discussed in this reflexive account comes from the journal entries I have made. This chapter will be organized into four main areas of discussion, which together make up the notion of reflexivity as discussed by Walsh (2002). These four dimensions include personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual reflexivity.

5.1 PERSONAL REFLEXIVITY

Throughout the course of conducting interviews and analysis for this study, I have had plenty of opportunity to reflect on the impact this experience has had on me. Through the course of these interviews, I confronted personal feelings of guilt, discomfiture, and, at

times, the notion of having compromised my values and beliefs. Three different scenarios come to mind specifically when reflecting on this subject. First, strong feelings of guilt surfaced after an interview with one of the Promise Keepers who voiced strong opinions regarding homosexuality. As I have attempted over the years to practice low tolerance for discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, I felt as if ‘cornered’ to give the appearance of agreement with the interviewee’s negative sentiment in order to provide a less critical environment. I felt I had compromised my sense of self by nodding and implicitly affirming the interviewee’s heterosexist opinion and assumption of shared (hetero)sexual orientation¹⁰ by stating “m hm” after major points or pauses in his monologue.

Second, this same interviewee returned to conversation about sex and expectations for women’s sexuality several times. Through the interview he noted that women under the age of 40 “naturally” bring sexual connotations when working in an office environment and added that he “wouldn’t want someone, someone in a short mini skirt up here distracting the men” (Mark PK 20:1). As a woman under 40 wearing a skirt and interviewing him at his office, I felt uncomfortable. This unease changed to irritation when he turned the focus toward me:

“Now you’re dressed very appropriately right now, I think it’s totally professional, there’s no overt messages happening here. Now, however, if you were to come in something very explicit then all of a sudden there’s something different going on here isn’t there?” (Mark PK 21:5).

Having realized that at least I was not being construed as a sexual object, I grew angry at the notion that something as simple as a woman’s choice in clothing might incite a man to believe that she has devious intentions. Knowing that a ‘responsible interviewer’ should not address the issue if she hopes to continue collecting data, I quickly turned the conversation toward clothing styles for men and then changed the subject altogether. A friend later attempted to placate me with a quote she attributed to Emile Durkheim which points to the true mark of a scholar as one who can listen to opposing viewpoints and not get angry.

¹⁰ See Luff, 1999: 694.

The third situation where I felt uncomfortable with the requirements of my role as a researcher occurred whenever I was questioned on my religious affiliation. Cited as an important feature for the Promise Keepers, a particular emphasis on the “cultivation of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ” was found by Bartkowski in his research on the movement (2004: 95). Similarly, as noted by Donna Luff in her experiences interviewing conservative women, “another area of particular difficulty for me... was questions about my religious beliefs. I was rarely asked about my position on feminism, despite many pre-interviewing concerns about how to answer that in a truthful but non-alienating manner, but I was frequently questioned about my religious background and belief” (1999: 695). The first time an interviewee asked me if I had a ‘relationship with Jesus’ I was unprepared. This occurred during an informational interview in April of 1999, which I had conducted for a graduate research methodologies class. The participant in the interview was a pastor in one of the local churches who supported the Promise Keepers; the session was intended to help me develop the interview guide used in this study. When he saw that I did not fully understand his question, he asked if he could pray for me and, with my naïve consent, proceeded to hold both of my hands and stare into my eyes for almost twelve consecutive minutes, calling upon Jesus to become my “father, mother, and lover.” Not wanting to repeat this awkward situation, when three of the men in this study asked me if I had a relationship with Jesus or if I was Christian I simply said “yes.” Although I felt qualified to answer the question, recalling my previous experience, I felt guilty for not fully expressing the strong beliefs I have carried for years. Again, this caused some discomfort in the recognition that interviewers are sometimes required to silence their viewpoints in order to proceed with the interview.

At several points, I have discussed my unease with this obligation in being a ‘responsible researcher’ with my supervisor, and after the debriefing she provided me with some reading material on the “recognition of the fractured and often contradictory subjectivities of the researcher” (Luff 1999: 687). Donna Luff, as a feminist researcher coming to terms with the implications and responsibilities of being such, notes that there are inherent “problems, possibilities and conflicts, internal and external, that critical

interaction and dialogue between feminists and their ‘opponents’ can produce,” adding that “in this context, experiencing ‘rapport’ was often far from comfortable” (1999: 696). Acknowledging that other ‘responsible researchers’ have experienced dissonance when attempting to build and maintain rapport through the interview process has helped me to accept the experience and maintain my attempt to “fairly represent the experiences of relatively ‘powerful’ and publicly anti-feminist [men]” (Luff 1999:688). Thus, I chose to work through feelings of guilt or discomfiture within this reflexive account and have attempted to put forth accurate portrayals of these men’s accounts, taking what they said at face value and considering the cultural and historical context, and not altering the analysis of responses based on my own misgivings.

What has enlightened me the most throughout this process is recognizing the differences between these men yet the discursive similarities they use in talking about North American masculinities. Similar to what was found by Hillar and DiLuzio (2004) in their research on motivations for participating in qualitative research, many interviewees expressed gratitude at having the opportunity to discuss their viewpoints with an interested listener, and many commented that they appreciated the questions I asked because it challenged them to voice their opinions. Quoting Phoenix (1994:57; cited in Luff, 1999), I believe that “since the whole point of interviews is to evoke respondents’ accounts rather than hear one’s own discourses reflected back, I would argue this is usually interesting data rather than upsetting and that it is manageable within the interview context.” This conflictual information was precisely what I was looking for, and in the end, I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to expand my understanding of the discourses used by these participants, and at no time have I thought of this project as uninteresting.

5.2 INTERPERSONAL REFLEXIVITY

One of the concerns I had prior to beginning this research was regarding issues of reactivity and whether or not the participants would feel comfortable talking about potentially controversial gender issues in the presence of a young female researcher. In view of the relaxed way in which interviewees discussed sexuality and intimate

relationships (as outlined in section 3.5 and in the material discussed above), it is likely that reactivity regarding discussing personal issues remained minimal and that concerns about the sensitive nature of some of the topics were not prevalent in the minds of the interviewees. I say that reactivity issues remained minimal rather than absent because, although I believe that interviewees were able to, and did, talk openly about their experiences and opinions of masculinity, there were two occasions where it was clear that interviewees were aware that their viewpoints might not be deemed socially acceptable, especially in conversation with a woman. First, in discussion regarding one interviewee's opinion that working women are too relationally-oriented to be able to run a company, the participant interrupted his narrative three times to qualify what he was about to say.

“What happens is, in many professions, you have to get on with the job, and men understand that. When women run a company, now this is going to sound terrible, you don't get that same drive, you get ‘well, lets make sure everybody's happy.’ You just don't have that much activity. I know that's a terrible generalization, but I know that for a fact. You're probably thinking ‘how dare he say that’ but I know, I do know, I've seen it, that women are far more relationally oriented” (Mark PK 18:11).

The participant's mention of how “terrible” his generalization was and his idea that I was thinking “how dare he say that” shows that he was aware of, if not concerned about, the potential for me to make a judgement of him based on his speech. It is unclear how the conversation would have developed had he not been as mindful of the context in which he was speaking. The second occasion where reactivity is evident comes from jokes made by two interviewees during the course of their interviews. When asked if there were particular activities in his life that made him conscious of his masculinity, one interviewee replied with laughter: “when I'm doing the dishes. I'm just kidding” (Johnboy 10:18). Another interviewee provided a similar response after being asked to clarify his claim that he participates in some traditionally feminine activities. He replied, again with laughter: “well, I douche. I'm just kidding. Um, I'm sorry, I don't mean to offend” (Dave 12:21). As both of these men espoused largely egalitarian views throughout their interviews, and both knew of my research through personal contact and had had several occasions to speak with – and joke with – me in the past, I assume that their jocularity was meant to sound preposterous. Although these two would likely

provide similar responses if asked the same questions outside of an interview format, such guffaws followed by the words “I’m just kidding” show that these two were aware, not only of the potential for their jokes to be construed as inappropriate or offensive, but of the social implications for men who engage in such activities.

In many cases, issues of reactivity in interview settings are linked with issues of relative power between the researcher and the researched. With the particular dynamics between myself and the interviewees in this study, however, I feel that considerations of power were not unidirectional. Thus, although the researcher generally holds considerable power in an interview situation by virtue of his or her role as interviewer, that authority may be offset by the relative power held by interviewees and interviewer outside of the research setting. For example, implications attached to social expectations regarding age, gender, occupational status etc. may provide interviewees with more relative power. There were likely situations where both the interviewees and I traded positions of power in the course of the interview and, I would argue, more often occupied spaces of equality. For example, even via the asking and answering of questions, I may have held a degree of power when asking questions or probing for additional detail regarding their experiences of masculinity but the participants, as the ‘holders of information’ in a voluntary study, could provide or deny my requests to whatever degree they chose. Thus, issues of power or control in the interview process may have affected the direction of the interviews for the time that either I or the participant were speaking, but the continual trade of question and answer found in a semi-structured interview allowed room for each of us to explore and express our thoughts more fully than a highly structured interview would likely allow. As well, it could be assumed that participants’ positioning of themselves as men who promote a gendered division of labour that includes higher levels of authority for men compared to women creates an environment where a female interviewer could be construed having less relative power by virtue of her gender. Thus, as discussed by Luff, “power in such interview situations is a two-way process” and the balance of power becomes multi-layered (1999: 697).

Luff contends that there is an advantage in having same-sex researchers and participants in order to facilitate a “filling in from experience” based on shared gender (1999:693). However, I would argue that the heterogeneity of the present situation has provided an opportunity to identify and problematize portions of interviewees’ talk that may not be available in shared-gender interviews. Rather than filling in the gaps from my own experience, I was able to probe for further explanation and clarity from participants and invite descriptions of the participants’ experiences in their own words. Moreover, I would hesitate to promote Luff’s notion that shared-gender interviews are more favourable than heterogeneity between researchers and participants because I believe (a) that it is a fallacy to think gender is the only bridge of experience with which to have common understanding (taking other factors such as race, culture, class, education, etc. into account); and (b) that often assumptions of shared gender do not provide a bridge at all (Riessman, 1987).

5.3 METHODOLOGICAL REFLEXIVITY

When I originally proposed this research, I had hoped that a larger sample of men from the Promise Keepers movement would have volunteered to take part in this research. I knew of several churches in the Victoria area that supported the Promise Keepers, and had brief conversations with individuals, including a Pastor at one of the churches, which left me with the impression that people were interested in discussing their experiences in the movement. However, after placing the advertisements in the churches and in the newspaper, I received a disappointing response from members of the Promise Keepers. I realize that it is somewhat of an imposition to ask someone to commit to talking with me, a total stranger, for at least a one-hour interview. It is likely that that prospect alone might deter some people from volunteering. It is also likely that some people thought that I might enquire about issues that they considered personal in nature, so some men may have sought to protect themselves and their privacy. Also, since the Promise Keepers movement has received negative attention from women’s groups as well as from local media in some American and Canadian cities, that potential respondents were afraid that they would be made to answer questions regarding the more controversial issues connected with the movement (e.g., views on abortion).

After conducting the interviews with the four men from the Promise Keepers who did volunteer, I continued with my attempts to recruit new volunteers through the local churches and asked various Pastors if they could draw attention to the recruitment memo when speaking with any men whom they felt would be suitable interviewees. After spending some time on this but receiving no new responses, I decided to open up the interviews to men who did not belong to the Promise Keepers but who might be able to make a valuable contribution, based on their comparable social circumstances (i.e., age, education, family type, etc.) and their admitted experience of having questioned contemporary definitions of masculinity.

As a result of including non-Promise Keeper men in the sample, some of the questions originally included in the Interview Guide regarding Promise Keepers' reasons for joining the movement and their views of the organization itself were used as peripheral information which supplemented the body of the findings rather than comprising a main focus. In the end, I feel that the inclusion of non-Promise Keeper men benefited the overall study. With additional reading on the 'crisis of masculinity,' hegemonic definitions, and the history of the family, my own interests moved more toward an analysis of masculinity as opposed to reactions to the 'crisis' advocated solely by the Promise Keepers movement. Thus, the necessity of expanding my sample to include non-Promise Keepers had the effect of reinforcing this slight change in focus as I was then able to look at discourses regarding men's roles in the family that I knew were not influenced by participation in the Promise Keepers. The fact that there was overlap in many of the discourses used by men from both samples provided better insight as to the existence of such discourse in mainstream secular society.

In addition to having questions on the interview guide that did not make their way into the analytical focus for this thesis, there were a couple of questions that, in hindsight, I would have liked to have asked the participants. Most importantly, the interview guide contained very few questions on the relations of cathexis, inquiring only about the influence of homosexuality on hegemonic masculinity. As segregated gender relations

are premised on heterosexual relationships, I feel that direct questions regarding men's and women's sexuality and the influence of social and cultural changes, such as advances in reproductive technology and rising rates of pre- or extra-marital cohabitation and divorce, may have been useful in more fully understanding the effects of these phenomena on masculine identities. Had these questions been asked of each participant, I believe I would have found further evidence of the use of discourses highlighted by participants throughout sections 3.5.1 to 3.5.3 on sexual purity, men's sexual needs, and (anti)abortion. These conservative discourses are commonly utilized throughout secular and non-secular North American society.

Another topic I would have liked to add to the interview guide is to engage participants in further discussion on the political and ideological changes that have accelerated over the past few decades. Some of these men lived through the political turbulence of the 1960s and 70s and would likely be able to provide insight into whether major issues of the day impacted their own lives and in what ways. For example, in the extract below, the interviewee talked about being in university and witnessing political activism from 1965 to 1971.

“In the 70's, I was like 30... We heard quite a bit about feminism and civil rights back then. I was on a university campus from '65 to '71, so there was lots going on. I don't remember too much about it, I remember some of the radical literature, some of the communist groups and stuff like that. I think I probably related more to the anti-Vietnam sentiment, some of that was, I remember some of the feminist literature that we talked about and I don't remember if we had to do any reading on it in the classrooms but I do remember the period a little bit”
(Bushy 18:25)

Even if some participants were not of an age to remember, I think it would have been useful to inquire as to the major political motivators they think contributed to social change, and to gain insight as to whether these men feel their own lived realities have been impacted by political issues. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, the widespread movement for women's emancipation partnered with the difficulties of maintaining 'traditional' roles in a consumerist society and commercial expansion enabled increasing numbers of women to enter the labour force, postponing marriage and family. Masculinities theorists (Donovan, 1998; Messner, 1997), as well as some of the

participants in this study (see section 3.6.1), discussed these changes as the major contributors to participation in men's movements and to the current 'crisis of masculinity.'

However, as much as I would have liked to gain more insight into these men's experiences, some of the interviews already lasted too long. The informed consent form I asked interviewees to sign (see appendices) noted that sessions would last approximately one to two hours. In one situation, the intriguing discussion continued for almost three hours. I ran out of tape when recording the interview because I had not anticipated participants wanting to share that much time for the study. Three other interesting and amusing incidents occurred during some of the interviews, disrupting the conversation or impairing the recording. First, a cat and dog fight occurred while interviewing one of the non-Promise Keepers in a mutual friend's home. The growling and fussing carried on until we paused and broke up the tussle. Fortunately, we were able to regain composure quite quickly and continued on with the interview. The second disturbance was simply a matter of scheduling the meeting at a restaurant near the participant's home. Although we asked for a quiet location "somewhere in the back," about halfway through the interview a large family with several young children were seated next to us. Though this did not interrupt the flow of the interview and we continued discussion without pausing, it did create challenges when attempting to transcribe portions of the interview. Similarly, the third disturbance occurred during an interview at the participant's office. An employee decided to vacuum the hallway immediately outside of his office. The participant excused himself from the interview long enough to ask the employee to continue at another time. These incidents reflect the challenges accompanying the implementation of interviews within uncontrolled neutral settings. Had the interviews been conducted in my own office on campus, it is likely that these types of disturbances would not have occurred. However, I did not want to impose upon the participants more than absolutely necessary and I felt that asking them to (a) travel to the university and (b) find their way through campus to my office in the difficult-to-navigate Cornett building would be asking too much. Fortunately, each of these disturbances did not disrupt the overall flow of the interview and I feel that no information was lost as a result.

Bartkowski, in his study of the Promise Keepers, combined an analysis of texts with interview data and participant observation, noting that this holistic approach provided a more complete depiction of the purposes and motivations behind men's participation in the movement. He admonishes all researchers to "get out of [the] office and into the field" (2004: 148), noting that "qualitative accounts that overlook the *social practices* through which religious identities are accomplished and from which religious culture emerges are missing something crucial" (2004: 148, emphasis in original). What Bartkowski overlooks, however, is this movement's inherently patriarchal standpoint that precludes an ethnographic analysis by female researchers. Women are simply *not allowed* at Promise Keepers rallies and men's groups, making participant observation a non-viable option for me and focus group discussion an uncomfortable prospect. Had I been able to attend a small men's group or a large rally in addition to completing these interviews, it is probable that I would have discovered additional context for the discourses utilized by the Promise Keeper participants. Fortunately, however, Bartkowski has undertaken this type of analysis and—although he advocates all researchers getting into the field—I have been able to provide support for my own findings with insight from his efforts. Thus, in conclusion, as a female researcher, I feel that my use of interviews, structured through knowledge of Promise Keepers' textual materials, and supported by the work of both Donovan (1998) and Bartkowski (2001, 2004) as reference points for comparison, has provided a holistic and triangulated approach to the analysis of the discourses utilized by these men as well.

5.4 CONTEXTUAL REFLEXIVITY

Over the four years since I began the research for this thesis, I have had numerous conversations with individuals on the topic of Promise Keepers and I would estimate that perhaps only one person in twenty may have heard of the movement prior to our discussion. At first, this surprised me. How could a movement boasting at least 18 thousand members across Canada and over a million in the United States sink below the radar of our social consciousness? In light of Bartkowski's (2004) notes on the diminishing public attention paid to not only the Promise Keepers movement but to the

last wave of men's movements in general, and as a result of the shifting of my own interests from studying the Promise Keepers, solely, to an examination of discourses of masculinity in general, I have come to realize that perhaps this is another example of the "ephemeral quality" of the interests of North American society (as eloquently stated by Bartkowski).

If my own experience can be used as an example to shed light on the transient nature of our social attention, then I can understand why a movement that once concerned and angered feminist groups across the continent is now merely a passing interest for masculinities scholars and the few who still attend the much smaller rallies in church basements instead of the former football stadiums. It was my interest in the Promise Keepers that first introduced me to literature regarding the 'crisis of masculinity,' but through that literature, I have become increasingly interested in men's responses to the contemporary challenges of 'traditional' identities. I originally thought that the Promise Keepers were a unique phenomenon, with their 'quick fix' to the uncertainties many men continue to face, though have now come to see the movement as another in a long line of shifts in the gender order that result from being a part of such a complex system. Taking it back to the work of Martin (1994) and Bauman (2000), such shifts are to be expected in complex systems: they allow the system of gender relations to perch at the brink of catastrophic collapse only to be assuaged by the fluctuation that exists throughout the system. Thus, like the first 'crisis of masculinity' said to take place in the early 1900s, the forces which enabled the growth of the Promise Keepers have shifted and reduced the societal demand for what Promise Keepers has to offer.

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7 Appendix I: Church Memo/Newspaper Advertisement

A University of Victoria graduate student is conducting a study on changing views of masculinity amongst those who are, or have been, involved in the Promise Keepers organization. Participation will involve a 60-minute interview regarding your views on the changing definitions of masculinity and manhood in today's society, and how these views fit in with the ideals of the Promise Keepers.

For more information, please contact Tanya Allen at 472-4722.

8 Appendix II: Informed Consent Form

Is Masculinity in Crisis? A Discourse Analytic Study of the Promise Keepers

This consent form, a copy of which will be given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. This will provide a basic idea of what my research is about, and what participation in this research will involve. After reading this form, if you would like clarification or more information regarding this form or this research, please ask.

This research is designed as an individual project within the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria; the resulting research report will be handed in as part of my Master's level Sociology Thesis requirements. The purpose of this research is to investigate how some men articulate their experiences and knowledge regarding masculinity and the changing definitions of manhood. I will be exploring contemporary meanings of 'masculinity' amongst those attracted to the Promise Keepers organization, and comparing these responses to various sociological theories and research regarding current and historical images of men and masculinities. It is hoped that information gained through this study can contribute sociologically to the study of masculinities, men's social movement activism, research on the Promise Keepers organization, in particular, and men's use of discourse in the construction and maintenance of masculine identities. In addition, this research may provide you with an opportunity to express views on a topic of mutual interest.

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your knowledge of or active involvement within the Promise Keepers organization. If you agree to participate in this research, your participation will include a face-to-face semi-structured interview lasting approximately 1-2 hours, the format of which will be created by myself to direct responses toward views of masculinity in a current social context.

The interview questions are not designed to be personally intrusive, and I assure you that our discussion will be held in the strictest of confidence. This interview will be tape-recorded and later transcribed. All tapes, transcripts, notes, data disks, and names will be stored in a locked cabinet. My thesis supervisors will only have access to this transcript material. All material will be destroyed once I have defended my thesis and final revisions have been made. Complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed in public settings, however, I can assure that neither your name nor the name of your church will appear on the tape, transcript, or within my research report. With your agreement, comments made by yourself in the course of this interview may be quoted, by way of illustration, in the report that I compile from this study. Any such quotes would be attributed to a pseudonym, and in such a way as to conceal your identity.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions within this interview without explanation. You have the right to fully withdraw at any time, again without explanation. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will only be used with your written permission. If you do not give

written permission, data collected up to that point would be destroyed. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask questions and to voice any concerns throughout your participation. If you have future questions concerning this research, please contact:

Tanya Allen at (250) 370-0489, or

Dr. Alison Thomas (supervisor) (250) 721-7581

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice President Research at the University of Victoria (250) 721-7968.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your participation, the purpose of this study, and its voluntary and confidential nature. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in this interview.

Participant

Date

**A COPY OF THIS CONSENT WILL BE LEFT WITH YOU, AND A
COPY WILL BE TAKEN BY THE RESEARCHER**

9 Appendix III: Interview Guide

Social characteristics of family and work:

1. I'd like to start the interview by asking a little about your background and the time you spent growing up. Do you have any brothers or sisters? Where both of your parents around when you were growing up? Where were you raised? As a child in ____, do you recall the types of messages you got from parents, friends or teachers about being a boy or a man? How were boys expected to act then? And girls?
2. How far did you go in school? Did you work while in school? What was your first job? And what do you do now? How do you think this job fits into what you learned about masculine or 'manly' jobs when you were a child?
3. Are you married now? If yes, how long have you been married? Does your wife work outside of the home? Do you have any children? Boys/Girls? Do you teach them any of the messages that you learned about men's/women's roles when growing up? If so, what? If not, how do you speak to them of the expectations of being a boy or girl in today's society?

Masculinity:

4. Thinking still of the present, do you think that today's society presents us with any particular ideals of masculinity? How would you explain/describe these? Can you think of any examples?
5. How do you, personally, define 'masculinity'? What does the word mean to you? To what extent do you think that you match this definition of masculinity? Can you give me some examples? Are there any particular activities in your life, such as with work, family, leisure activities, in which you are conscious of being more or less 'masculine'?
6. We were talking a while ago about the messages you learned about masculinity while growing up. From your perspective, has there been much change in society's ideals of masculinity over the last couple of decades? Are different things expected of men today, than when you were growing up? Can you give me some examples? Can you think of any particular situations where ideas about masculinity have changed? (Prompt, if necessary, with relation to the workforce, fatherhood, or the sexual division of labour, feminism, and homosexuality). What do you think about these changes? To what extent do these changes affect you, as an individual? Do you think there are circumstances where expectations for women's roles or ideal 'femininity' have changed? What do you think of these changes? What would you like to see happen in the future regarding these areas?

Promise Keepers:

7. To what extent are you familiar with the Promise Keepers organization? Can you tell me when you first heard about the Promise Keepers? What was it that interested you about them?
8. Do you currently consider yourself a 'member' of the Promise Keepers? What made you decide to (or not to) get involved?
9. If a PK member: How long have you been participating in Promise Keeper activities? Do you participate in the Promise Keepers' small groups? How about the rallies? Can

you tell me what goes on in a typical small group meeting? What happens at the big rallies? What do you like about the Promise Keepers gatherings? Are there things you dislike?

10. Why do you think the Promise Keepers movement is so popular? In what ways do you feel that men like yourself can benefit from the Promise Keepers activities? Can you give me any examples? How do you think that becoming involved with the Promise Keepers has affected your life (or the lives of those involved)?
11. What do you see as the future of the Promise Keepers movement? Or the future of men's social movement activism? What about the future of gender relations?
12. Are there any other things that you would like to mention that we haven't already covered?