

**New Possibilities for Men:
Reconceptualising Men's Engagement with Gender
Change**

Abstract

My aim in this thesis is to show that a 'negative paradigm' of agency and its relation with social process leads to the view that men can have no direct personal motivation to engage in gender change. To argue this contention, I offer an alternative account of agency and social process, leading to a new view of the significance of personal relationships in late modern societies and a reassigning of the broad social significance of women's involvement in new forms of intimacy. Following some critique of my view, I argue that the significant issue for men in personal relationships is their lack of autonomy in intimacy. I then introduce Kimmel's account of masculinity based in the negative paradigm, but one which nevertheless elucidates historical data showing the existence of men's long-standing fear of feminisation. I critique this negative-paradigm account of masculinity, but redeploy its historical data to support my contention regarding men's lack of autonomy in intimacy, arguing that men's fear of feminisation is understandable when men are increasingly vulnerable to women's autonomy in intimacy as a result of large-scale social changes. Finally, I conclude that men can address their lack of autonomy by developing narratives of identity and practical relationship skills enabling them to achieve such autonomy in personal relationships. This can result in direct personal benefits to men from engaging in gender change.

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Men and Conceptions of Agency

An oft-repeated claim amongst writers on masculinity is that men as a group are reluctant to change (e.g. Segal 1990, Stoltenberg 1989, Connell 1995, Kimmel 1994, Heath 1987). Indeed, men's opposition to gender change appears to be confirmed by widely rehearsed statistics on gender-based inequalities, as well as by empirical research into men's attitudes (e.g. McMahon 1999, Kimmel 1987). One of the most well-known theorists of masculinity, Bob Connell, argues that gender change revolves around "the objective possibility of justice in gender relations" (1995: 44), but that it is impossible that men could collectively organise around this goal since it is directed against men's shared interests (236). Men receive a "patriarchal dividend" which they are reluctant to give up (226). Nevertheless it is clear that men can and do change (45). Men can engage in "alliance politics" (238) where their interests intersect with other groups, but not in politics directly addressing issues for themselves simply as men.

Here Connell sees men as having 'interests' which flow unidirectionally from the fact that they are men. Embedded in this view are a number of key theoretical assumptions. McNay (2000: 2-3) argues that a *negative paradigm* of agency is widespread in works that seek to understand aspects of social process in terms of dichotomies of opposing forces, such as feminist work that explains gender relations in terms of male domination and female subordination. The negative paradigm of agency derives from a view that the process of subject formation occurs within a dialectic of freedom and constraint, but it is the constraint pole of the dialectic which has been given theoretical privilege. This emphasis upon constraint and

“subjectification as subjection” arises from “ a frequent assumption, albeit implicit, of the essential passivity of the subject”. On this account, agency is received by the agent in a uni-directional flow of power that is essentially repressive. The defining moment of the agent’s self-identity is considered to be the “disavowal of difference”, producing a sense of coherent self via its opposition to an other. Self-identity, and agency itself is thus seen as rooted in dichotomy and opposition.

Although the disavowal of difference might be one aspect of agency, it is not a complete account. Principally, the assumption of passivity

leaves unexplored how individuals are endowed with the capabilities for independent reflection and action such that their response, when confronted with difference and paradox, may involve accommodation or adaptation as much as denial. In other words, it leaves unexplained the capabilities of individuals to respond to difference in a less defensive and even, at times, a more creative fashion. Arguably, it is such qualities that are partially characteristic of the responses of women and men to processes of gender restructuring in late-capitalist societies. (McNay 2000: 3)

While the negative paradigm of agency has been a productive strategic move for groups on the ‘margins’ to gain access to the ‘centre’, it produces a particular set of difficulties in theorising men. Because the negative paradigm of agency assumes power is passively received from one’s position within a dichotomy, when women are theorised as men’s subordinated ‘other’ men can only be theorised as powerful. And because power flows from position, the powerful can only be conceptualised as seeking to protect their position since that is the basis of their power. On this account, men are seen as participants in social change either as forces of opposition to change or, more weakly, as allies for the subordinated in their more easily identified struggles.

At stake here are two issues: first, there is the impact upon women of men’s resistance to gender change. Increasingly it is recognised that men must be active participants in social change if equality for women is to become a reality (Connell 2005). Second, there is the situation for men themselves and what might motivate men to actively engage with gender change. Connell (2005: 1812-1814) lists four existing reasons currently motivating men: wishing to support the women in their lives; the ‘toxic’ costs of masculinity for men; enabling benefits to their community; and acting on political or ethical principles. Although all these reasons are both valuable and valid, they are not directly ‘about’ men themselves in the sense that the direct benefit to men personally is not immediately

apparent in the reasons. In men supporting women or their community, men indirectly benefit as women's lives or their community are enhanced. Avoiding the toxic costs of masculinity is a move *away from* something rather than a clear step *towards* something. And acting on principles apparently has appeal to only a small minority of men, as exemplified by the tiny number of men involved in gender change on that basis (see for example the discussion amongst profeminists in Pease 2002).

As Connell (2005: 1818) puts it, "What is needed now is a widespread sense of agency among men, a sense that this transformation [in gender] is something they can actually share in as a practical proposition." But in making this claim, Connell's professed interest is in creating "gender equality" - that is, in improving women's status vis-à-vis men by getting men involved in that project (2005: 1801). While this remains both a necessary and valuable task, my focus in this thesis is upon men and men's motivations to enhance *their own lives* by engagement in gender change. Of course men can ally with women and "share" in gender change, as well as having multiple motivations for engagement in gender change. What is missing from the literature however is the possibility that men's engagement in gender change can result in direct benefit to themselves personally. This possibility is, I suggest, worth pursuing because it is likely to result in men's more sustained and therefore more successful engagement.

Given that women put gender in the social spotlight in response to their social marginalisation, it is perhaps understandable that there has been little work which suggests men can personally benefit directly from gender change. However, some possibilities for men's direct personal benefit do exist. An early strand of thought in this regard was the 'men's liberation' approach, which highlighted the costs to men of masculinity and urged both personal and social change (for example Farrell 1979, Nicholls 1975, Fasteau 1974, Pleck and Sawyer 1974). Although the notion of 'toxic' masculinity which arose out of 'men's liberation' still exists (see above), it constitutes a negative move away from existing arrangements rather than a positive program. A further possible benefit to men engaging in gender change was provided by Bly (1990), who argued men lack a productive relationship with their fathers, resulting in a lack of connection with a 'deep' sense of masculinity. The remedy for this lack is developing emotional intimacy with other men in men-only retreats. Although Bly offers direct personal benefits to men, this 'mythopoetic' solution comes at the cost of a depoliticisation of gender and a

sequestration of men from wider social engagement (Messner 2000: 21). Yet another possible direct benefit is suggested by the 'men's rights' lobby, which puts forward a view that it is men who lose in the current gender order (e.g. Farrell 1994), and this can be remedied by fighting back against women for control of children and a reassertion of men's place in the home (Kimmel 1987). While men's increased involvement with children is desirable, the men's rights program as such is logically indefensible in the face of overwhelming data demonstrating women's marginalisation.

Although each of these lines of thought have benefits, they do not constitute what I consider the most desirable goal: conceptualising men's engagement in gender change motivated by direct personal benefits to themselves. Accordingly, in this thesis I contend that the shortcomings of the negative paradigm of agency render men as logically opposed to gender change; and thus the negative paradigm inhibits conceptualising the direct personal benefits to men from active engagement with gender change. To argue these contentions I will firstly borrow from the work of Anthony Giddens to offer an alternative conception of agency and explore some facets of current gender arrangements using that alternative conception as a basis. I will then set out Michael Kimmel's account of those same facets of gender arrangements but based, I argue, in the negative paradigm. Using Giddens' conception of agency and gender initially offered, I then critique Kimmel's account, offering a new conception of the nexus between gender, self-identity and life in modern societies. Finally, I draw on this new conception to offer three conclusions which suggest direct personal benefits for men engaging in gender change.

Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows. In Chapter 2 I will offer an alternative paradigm of agency and social process developed by Anthony Giddens in his structuration theory. I use Giddens' work because he explicitly elaborates a conception of agency and builds on this to develop a view of the significance of personal relationships and intimacy in late modern societies, and especially the differing implications of intimacy for women and men. I set out Giddens' views of modernity and intimacy, and then take up Giddens' schema to argue that men have become increasingly reliant on women for the benefits of intimacy, and that these benefits revolve around the generation of a *wealth of feeling*.

Giddens' account of agency and late modern intimacy is not without problems. In Chapter 3 I engage with critiques

revolving around the extent to which Giddens' views are grounded in empirical or concrete reality. I refute one strand of this critique which argues his conception of agency is disembodied, pointing the reader to his extensive work on embodied phenomenological aspects of agents. Another strand of critique is that the new intimacy exists only for a small group of affluent people and is not a widespread phenomenon. I do not entirely reject this observation, but argue that there are a number of levels of change occurring simultaneously, and over the last two centuries there have been substantial changes which still need explanation. I go on to explore difficulties with Giddens' definition of 'active', delineating it from 'autonomous' and arguing that a significant difference between men and women lies in their relative levels of autonomy in intimate relationships.

In Chapter 4, to provide an example of the negative paradigm applied to men, I set out the excellent historical investigations of modern masculinity by Michael Kimmel. I use Kimmel's work because his research covers the same time period and sort of society covered by Giddens in his account of modern intimacy. While Kimmel draws the conclusions suggested by the negative paradigm of agency and power - that men should ally with women in women's struggle - I take up Giddens' alternative view of agency and social process to argue that men's fear of feminisation is understandable when men are increasingly vulnerable to women's autonomy in intimacy as a result of large-scale social changes. The most significant point from this is that women have developed a new basis for autonomous self-identity in the midst of formal subordination, and as a result women have had an unexpected though explicable impact upon men (and society more broadly) as a result. A second highly significant point is that in late modernity personal relationships are increasingly important anchors of self-identity for everybody.

From these main points, in Chapter 5 I draw three conclusions. Firstly, women's active agency has produced the modern forms of intimacy not because they are women but through a complex of historical circumstance and specific features of social systems. Secondly, men can develop autonomy in personal relationships through developing narratives which portray them as autonomously active in personal relationships and through learning practical skills to shape relationships. Thirdly, autonomous self-identity based in personal relationships is not only a practical possibility for men as well as women, but further is a pragmatic and constructive response to continuing processes of globalisation offering men

increased possibilities for ontological security. I offer a very brief self-critique, pointing to a number of areas of this thesis requiring further work. Finally, I summarise my argument across the whole thesis, and summarise the key conceptual points of my alternative view of agency and social process, pointing to how these lead to a new view of women's impact on social process and the resulting possibilities for men.

Agency and Modern Intimacy

Anthony Giddens is perhaps most widely known today for his input to recent debates about modernity, reflexive modernisation, globalisation and detraditionalisation. However in the 1960s and 70s his detailed and extensive critiques of existing schools of sociological thought culminated in a new account of agency, social process and the role of social theory, brought together in his 1984 work *The Constitution of Society*. In this chapter I draw upon some key aspects of this work, as well as his later work specifically about modernity, to demonstrate how his view of agency enables a new view of processes in late modernity and especially a new view of some distinctively gendered aspects of late modern social life. Within this framework, intimacy is significant not only in ‘private’ life but rather is centrally implicated in all aspects of late modernity. Women’s role in intimacy thus becomes repositioned as highly significant for its impact not just for women, but upon society as a whole and, most importantly for this thesis, upon men. My primary aim in this chapter is to establish the conceptual connections between an alternative account of agency and what that account of agency enables in terms of conceptualising specific areas of social life. The work of Giddens is ideal for my purposes here because his earlier theoretical work on agency and social process makes it possible to clearly trace the conceptual underpinnings to his claims about modernity and gender.

Post-traditional Societies

Giddens develops a view that contemporary Western societies are “post-traditional” (1990: 2). Traditional societies

are characterised by a relative absence of change and a social order grounded in locally-based relationships and practices authorised by their prior existence - i.e. by tradition (1984: 199). In this view, traditions act as a significant organising force in the social order. Post-traditional societies, by contrast, are characterised by dynamic continual processes of change, powered by 'structural contradictions' (1984: 193-199). Giddens considers the primary structural contradiction in capitalist societies is the tension between the private sphere or 'civil society', pulling towards the projects of individuals, and the 'public' sphere of the nation-state pulling towards considerations of the social whole. Relationships and practices are 'distanciated' - occurring over considerable distances and across time (1984: 171), enabling 'globalisation' to an unprecedented degree. That is, far-distant events can have immediate personal impact, for instance via the purchase of imported goods, the use of telephone or internet, or the consumption of news in the media. Institutions, including governments and corporations, are 'reflexive' - that is, knowledge is used in a systematic way to achieve institutional objectives, as well as used to systematically shape the structure and activities of the institution itself (1990: 20). Alongside this, 'disembedding mechanisms' - including codified laws, bureaucracies, money-based systems of exchange, and expert systems of knowledge - structure distanciated events (ibid).

Giddens ties this picture of modern societies into his picture of social agents. He argues that human actions underpin the social world, which collective actions bring into being, so that the particular shape of agents at any moment is intimately intertwined with the shape of social systems. This is not to say that agency is theoretically prior to society. Rather, he makes the point that structures have a dual quality: structure both enables social systems and is produced out of social systems (1984: 25-28). The pattern of agency, a structural feature of social systems, simultaneously produces and is produced by the very social systems in which agents enact their agency (1984: 19). This recursive process of agency and social system is fundamental to all societies (1984: 25), and it is this process which he positions as primary in his "structuration" approach to social theory.

Reflexive Self-identity

Giddens argues that agents are also recursively produced, but by no means are agents passive in this process. A crucial human characteristic is that we are knowledgeable - we have a range of cognitive skills enabling us to monitor our actions.

These skills in turn enable us to be reflexive - to shape our actions on the basis of 'knowledge', or some awareness of what has gone before, resulting from our capacity to continuously monitor our actions. This continuous monitoring is not simply a relatively passive reflective or remembering process. Human agents are 'purposive' - above all, we actively carry out activities. This means that we monitor events in the light of our purposes - whether those purposes are available for discursive description or entirely unconscious. And "It is the specifically reflexive form of the knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices" (1984: 3).

The natural world may go on without us, but our own human world is constantly created through our repetitive human action. Giddens (1984: 60; 48) argues that the repetition of actions, especially those which are repeated automatically or unconsciously, gives us a sense of solidness or predictability about our world. Thus what he labels 'routinisation' is a crucial part of self-identity and of social process. Routines occur at all levels of human life, from the details of using our native language and conducting conversations, through to the vast bulk of transactions in the corporate world. Routines are not just passively followed, however. Humans are active: "they do some things and leave others undone" (1984: 6) Routines are of course chronically followed, but there is a purposive character to this sequencing/ordering: we constantly bring our knowledgeability into play in order to 'go on' into the next moment of the routine. In addition, we can follow multiple routines at once, or switch from one relevant routine to another as social encounters unfold.

Our practical capacity to 'go on' in social encounters almost automatically using high degrees of skill and knowledge is labelled by Giddens as 'practical consciousness'. Practical consciousness is most often 'non-conscious' rather than unconscious, in the same way that an experienced car driver uses considerable skill and knowledge but uses it automatically. At the same time, much of the content of practical consciousness can be described by a person discursively if they stop and think about it, or are asked to account for some action (1984: 5).

Although agents are purposive and we actively pursue projects of many sorts, we are not fully rational. The active pursuit of the project of 'being oneself' in day-to-day social interaction, for example, is largely enabled by the habits, patterns and background knowledge held in practical

consciousness. The content of practical consciousness may be 'explicable' or capable of discursive rationalisation, but what prompts us to develop a specific habit A and not habit B may not be accessible to discursive consciousness. Here Giddens posits the existence of an 'unconscious', along similar lines to Freud's use of the term (1984: 6). Unconscious motivations are seldom available to discursive consciousness. However the boundary between practical and discursive consciousness is relatively permeable, and alterable "by many aspects of the agent's socialisation and learning experiences", whereas between these two areas and the unconscious there is something like a "bar, centred principally upon repression" (1984: 7).

Agency and Unintended Consequences

Neither are agents, in Giddens view, fully intentional in the sense of having full control over the results of intended actions. When agents use their agency - i.e. the capacity to "produce an effect" (1984: 9) - the effect produced actually in the world can never be fully predicted or determined, because we do not have full control over all aspects of situations in which we live. This means that agency entails both intended and unintended consequences. It is "hard to exaggerate the importance of the unintended consequences of intentional conduct" (1984: 11-12) in the sociological description of social process, and Giddens goes into some detail to explain why. He differentiates between unintended actions, such as "slips of bodily management" (1984: 6), and unintended consequences of intended actions. Here he describes three ways in which unintended consequences may be of interest analytically. First, an 'accordion effect' can arise from a single action, for example the chain of events connecting the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and the start of WWI. Second is "a pattern resulting from a complex of individual activities" (1984: 13), such as how geographic segregation of ethnic populations can arise in a city through people of an ethnic group wanting to live close to each other. An 'end result' is taken as the entry point to analysis, and the events leading to its creation are studied.

Third is "the mechanisms of the reproduction of institutionalised practices:

Here the unintended consequences of action form the acknowledged conditions of further action in a non-reflexive feedback cycle (causal loops). I have pointed out that it is not enough to isolate functional relations in order to explain why such feedback occurs. How, then, does it happen that cycles of unintended consequences feed back to promote social reproduction

across long periods of time? In a general way, this is not difficult to analyse. Repetitive activities, located in one context of time and space, have regularised consequences, unintended by those who engage in those activities, in more or less 'distant' time-space contexts. What happens in this second series of contexts, then, directly or indirectly, influences the further conditions of action in the original context. To understand what is going on, no explanatory variables are needed other than those which explain why individuals are motivated to engage in regularised social practices across time and space, and what consequences ensue. The unintended consequences are regularly 'distributed' as a by-product of regularised behaviour reflexively sustained as such by its participants. (1984: 14)

Ontological Anxiety and Security

Giddens' account of agents and the social order portrays the experience of predictability or solidness in social life and of a continuous or coherent sense of self as contingent very largely upon us continuing to do things more or less as we have always done them - that is, upon our routine exercising of the skills and knowledge we hold in practical consciousness. Most of the time most people have feelings of 'ontological security' as a result of this seeming solidness (1990: 36). Ontological security can be generated in the most horrendous circumstances, such as in WWII concentration camps (1984: 61). However, this sense of security can be relatively easily disrupted by even relatively minor disruptions to expected patterns (1984: 23), producing ontological anxiety.

The generalised nature of anxiety - its ontological aspect - arises partly, Giddens argues, because of its basis in our infantile experiences of separation from our principal caretaker(s), most often mother. Prolonged absence of caretakers means death for infants, and any absence can thus "threaten the very core of the emerging self" (1990: 46). But infants gradually learn that caretakers disappear and reappear, and learn to generate, to varying degrees, a 'basic trust' which at the same time enables our gradual engagement with external reality beyond the infant-caretaker relationship (1990: 45-46).

Since everybody has some motivation to generate ontological security, this interest acts as an organising principle in social interactions. "Rituals of trust and tact in day-to-day life", enacted "through control of bodily gesture, the face and the gaze, and the use of language ... touch on the most basic aspects of ontological security" (1990:47). For example, "the observing of 'civil indifference' between strangers passing in the street ... serves to sustain attitudes of generalised trust on which interaction in public settings depends" (1990: 46).

Ontological Anxiety and the Modern 'Trajectory of the Self'

The foregoing account of agency, reflexivity and ontological security/anxiety, argues Giddens, is transcultural (1990: 57). Every sort of social order must in some way enable and allow for these key characteristics of human agents. The generation of ontological security is a relatively straightforward operation in a society grounded in traditions revolving around highly embedded relations and practices. Individuals can often rely upon patterns of interaction repeated across very long periods of time - frequently much longer than a single life-span. The history of the Western industrialised societies which attain the contours of late modernity, however, is of a gradual disconnection from tradition as an authorising force and its replacement with abstract systems - symbolic tokens (such as money) and expert systems of knowledge (1990: 20). Two other major characteristics of late modernity are the time-space distancing of relationships and practices, and the development by institutions of reflexive methods of institutional self-shaping. At the same time, there has been a gradual spread of 'freedom' and democracy, and a corresponding shift in the ways open for individuals to generate ontological security and a change in the significance of ontological anxiety. Arising from the Enlightenment, a key tenet underlying expert systems is the principle of 'radical doubt': "knowledge is always open to revision ... in the light of new findings or ideas. The integral relation between modernity and radical doubt is not only disturbing to philosophers but is *existentially troubling* for ordinary individuals" (1990: 21, emphasis original).

A principal way in which individuals can manage this existential angst is through the picking out of one's life as a distinctive trajectory which is intentionally shaped by the self as an ongoing "reflexive project" (1990: 75). A key enabling approach here is to view one's life as a narrative which it is the individual's task to shape, incorporating both intentional actions and externally-sourced events (1990: 76). In the highly dynamic modern world, new possibilities regularly appear and choices proliferate. 'Lifestyle' is one example of this choice-range and its incorporation in commercial activity (1990: 81). Given this 'open' yet bewildering choice-range, the path through it is increasingly determined by the content of narratives of self-identity which are "internally referential" (1990: 80) - that is, their basic point of reference exists within the orbit of the narrativised life. These actively produced narratives enable the individual to "take charge of one's life" (1990: 73), portraying

late modernity's characteristic doubt, risk and choice as opportunities for self-shaping into a future which to some extent can be "colonised" (1990: 86) through proactive projects of self-identity.

Within this paradigm of the reflexive project of the self, intimate relationships of various sorts come to play a key role. The high moral value placed on 'authenticity' as 'being true to oneself' "skirts any universal moral criteria, and includes references to other people only within the sphere of intimate relationships." (1990: 79), whether these be with one's lover(s), close friends or one's children. Being true to oneself revolves around "becoming free from dependencies and achieving fulfilment" (1990: 79), and in this context intimate relationships become highly important as a context in which both goals may be achieved. In the late modern context one's partners in intimate relationships of sexuality and friendship are freely selected from a range of choices, so that the process of selection - its methods and criteria - becomes an issue of great moment as well. In these relationships each party is supposedly pursuing their individual life trajectory. The other party of course plays a significant part in that trajectory, but the self's considerations remain primary. Giddens labels this the "pure relationship": "relationship for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it" (1992: 58). There is thus a structural link between the sort of self able to participate in a pure relationship and the structure of the pure relationship itself; pure relationship is the form of relationship which enables an 'authentic-narrativised' self to be oneself-in-relationship. At the same time, pure relationship is only possible to the extent that both parties pursue the authentic narrativised form of selfhood.

The Transformation of Intimacy - Romantic Love and Mothering

How did this situation come about? How did this new style of selfhood arise, and why does it take this particular characteristic form and not some other? Giddens argues that modernity has seen a transformation of intimacy, enacted principally by women via the rise of romantic love as a means of spouse-selection, and via the 'invention of motherhood' in its modern form. The appearance of the romantic love complex went hand in hand with three other shifts around the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, all of which went together to significantly impact on women's status. Direct

rule of the father over the household was diluted with the separation of home and workplace. Although men still had formal power in the home, this was frequently softened by the increasing status of emotional warmth between spouses and between parents and children. At the same time, as families became smaller and children were increasingly identified as vulnerable and in need of special care, women's status was enhanced by becoming primarily responsible for child care. "...the centre of the household moved from patriarchal authority to maternal affection" (1992: 42). Mothers thus became idealised in some ways, and this worked in with some of the themes of romantic love, and dovetailed with the separation of the public and private spheres, the 'two sex' model of sexuality and the distinctively gendered patterns of activities and feelings.

All these circumstances supported the idea that the work of romantic love was the work of women.

Ideas about romantic love were plainly allied to women's subordination in the home, and their relative separation from the outside world. But the development of such ideas was also an expression of women's power, a contradictory assertion of autonomy in the face of deprivation. (1992: 43)

The successful romantic relationship enables the participant to rise above mundane life in some way. This is enabled by two sorts of projection. The first is the projection onto the other of the idealised lover who enables a dream-like experience of completion. The second is a projection into a future, which enables the sense of hope, and enables a reflexive acting to create one's (shared) future.

But romantic love more recently is losing ground to what Giddens labels "confluent love" as a form more suited to pure relationship (1992: 61). Romantic love, despite its novel egalitarian aspects, is a very skewed power relation, resulting often in "grim domestic subjection" for women (1992: 62). Confluent love, in contrast, is much more equal in being based in "emotional give and take... Love here only develops to the degree to which intimacy does, to the degree to which each partner is prepared to reveal concerns and needs to the other and to be vulnerable to that other" (1992: 62). Romantic love also deletes a direct consideration of the details of sex, even though it is by definition a sexual love. Confluent love, on the other hand, brings the erotic arts into the relationship, and "reciprocal sexual pleasure" becomes "a key element in whether the relationship is sustained or dissolved" (1992: 62).

On Giddens' account, marriage was experienced by women as a forum of experimentation and creativity - very different to

men, “who could find in marriage and the family primarily a refuge from economic individualism” (1992: 57). During the twentieth century women have been and continue to be centrally active in “a major reorganisation in what marriage, and other forms of close personal tie, actually are” (1992: 57-58). Love used to be tied to sex via marriage, but increasingly love and sex are tied together via the pure relationship which, in addition to having a major impact upon marriage, also appears in contexts other than heterosexuality.

Up to now Giddens’ account of intimacy has largely been about women because he sees women as primarily developing late modern conceptions of intimacy and relationship. Men, argues Giddens are “the laggards” around intimacy, and have been since the late eighteenth century (1992: 59). Men, like women, have fallen in love, but have been influenced by romantic love quite differently to women. By and large men have participated in romance only to the extent of seduction or conquest to ensure access to a woman. Another less common response was the “romantic” man - a “foppish dreamer”, who had given his power over to women (1992: 59). Such men didn’t treat women as equals. Usually a romantic man was “in thrall” to one woman - a throwback to an earlier time. He is “not someone who has intuitively understood the nature of love as a mode of organising personal life in relation to the colonising of future time and the construction of self-identity” (1992: 59).

Anxiety, Freedom and Intimacy

In this section I will highlight the theoretic links between Giddens’ proposal about intimacy and women, and his earlier work on agents and modern social process. Ontological anxiety is a universal feature of humans. Modernity enables the generation of ontological security via the trajectory of the self. But this is not simply a possibility offered. The trajectory of the self is integrally implicated in modernity - *necessary* for both modern social process and for modern individuals. Through the distanciation across time and space of relationships, institutions and knowledges, and the increasingly globalised forces which shape many social sites, the factors shaping many interactions are increasingly beyond the control of individuals and even beyond the control of nation-states. Personal relationships - in which all parties to the relationship are present to each other and thus can have some control - play an increasingly significant role in the capacity of individuals to generate ontological security. This process is an expression of the primary structural contradiction that Giddens notes drives the dynamism in capitalist societies: the opposition between forces

that expand the realm of the 'public' towards global-scale systems, and forces that complexify the realm of the 'private' towards affect-based 'pure' relationships shaped by increasingly few external determinants.

Not only are these opposing forces temporally coincident, but each is part of the other, and each is enabled by the other. With the emergence of the public/private split, men's self-identity has primarily been derived in the public realm. But as men's traditional anchors of self-identity in that realm have increasingly dissolved, ontological anxiety has become increasingly foregrounded. The private realm has become increasingly significant for men as a site in which ontological security is achieved. Alongside this increasing significance for men, the private realm was increasingly defined as women's 'proper' place and has also been gradually developed and enriched by women. For men, this has been a necessary adjunct that has enabled them to support and further the detraditionalisation of the public world which in turn has enhanced their individual freedoms. And for women the private realm has been an opportunity to develop some form of autonomy temporally coincident with the increasing freedoms developing for men in the public world, though quite different in content.

On this account, whatever its historical antecedents in terms of pre-existing gender norms, the public/private split started to appear much more sharply towards the end of the eighteenth century, and is an expression of the primary structural contradiction of modernity. 'Men' and 'women' became increasingly separated into different spheres of life, enabled by a web of significant structural threads between the two spheres. The modern drive towards freedom is all the time constrained by the human need for ontological security, and in detraditionalised contexts the burden of generation of ontological security shifts away from traditions towards individuals. But alongside the apparent increasing distance between men and women has been an ongoing web of dependencies between them via the structural developments of modernity arising from the tension between freedom and ontological security. Just as the tension between freedom and ontological security is productive of modern social life, the apparent split between men's public and women's private activities is also productive of social life.

The formal or 'public' project of freedom has been historically a major personal concern for men far more than women. In the mercantile period and through the early period of industrialisation this project has been pursued via increasing

economic and political freedoms - the great liberal dreams of wealth and democracy. These dreams have been enabled by a gradual de-coupling of social systems from long-standing traditions of geographic connection, monarchy, the Church, and so on. But an unintended consequence of this detraditionalisation has been that the historical sources of men's ontological security are dissolving. Men have become dependent on women for a great deal of their experience of ontological security. Meanwhile, women were being increasingly restricted to a newly-private home, in which they were instrumental in the emergence of the new affect-driven intimacy. Even though this process was not especially intended, it was nevertheless highly socially significant - but had very different significance for men and women. For women, it was a creative opportunity to develop something new in the home itself, while for men it was a necessary support in their creation of something new in the public arena.

Ironically, women's experience of domination in which women did not have control over forces external to their relationships in many ways mirrors the situation men increasingly find themselves in as a result of globalisation. Historically there has been a very long-term trend of the devolution of formal power away from the monarch to the aristocracy, then to merchants/capitalists, then to workers, and so on. This long history has most centrally concerned men, so that men have a long tradition of expecting to have increasing control over their lives - and this increasing control has been seen as more or less equivalent to increasing personal freedom. However, this devolution of formal power has at the same time been enabled by increasingly large-scale social systems which work in the opposite direction - the 'primary structural contradiction' of modernity. An unexpected consequence of this long historical process has been that men have *decreasing* control over their lives at some levels, as I am discussing here in connection with globalisation.

At the same time, Giddens' argument about the transformation of intimacy is that women have creatively found ways to generate new freedoms by the generation of ontological security in a situation over which they have little external control. In this situation, ontological security is generated by concentrating on the relationships within their grasp - that is, concentrating on the elements of their situation which are available to be shaped by them. A key perceptual shift here is in defining freedom in rather different terms from the formal freedoms of the liberal tradition. I suggest freedom via intimacy revolves around a *wealth of feeling*, rather than economic or

political resources. Political and economic considerations certainly play a part in this freedom, but are not the central criteria of success, nor its only enabling resources.

A wealth of feeling comes from a focus on feelings, and shaping one's life on the basis of feelings. And feelings, on Giddens' account of agents, are of central, immediate and constant importance. Ontological security is a state generated momentarily as a lack of anxiety, so that anxiety is a constant possibility. The freedoms of late modernity entail the constant "threat of meaninglessness" (1992: 201) because the patterns in one's life can be so easily disrupted. The emergence of the romantic narrative supported women to focus on the creation of relationships as a site at which feelings are generated, expressed and acted upon. Women perhaps realised that affect-based relationships can be like a buffer that can absorb anxiety, the love and affection drawn on as a counterbalance to calm the anxiety that arises at moments when larger forces shape their lives. If love and affection can absorb anxiety, then in the modern context of the tension between freedom and anxiety, love and affection are enablers of freedom. I suggest it is this possibility which women some time ago intuitively grasped, and has, by and large, not become apparent to men en masse, perhaps because their focus has been elsewhere.

In this chapter I have set out Anthony Giddens' account of agency linked to the formation of social systems via both agents' projects to generate ontological security and the unintended consequences of agents' actions. Again following Giddens, I then sketched how this account of agency can be applied in the context of late modern societies via an increasing prominence of ontological anxiety, the modern 'trajectory of the self', and the related transformation of intimacy as a site of ontological security. Finally, I drew attention to some gendered dimensions of the links between anxiety, freedom and intimacy, arguing that the primary structural contradiction of modern societies which underpins the public/private pattern of social ordering has brought intimate relationships to centre stage for both women and men though for substantially different reasons. Rather than the more common conceptions of agency that foreground rationality or issues of equality, Giddens' view of agency highlights feelings, especially anxiety, as core shaping forces in both the actions of agents and the shape of social systems. This view underpins a new positioning of intimate relationships as a core enabling system for late modern individuals, in turn substantially re-assigning the significance to men of women's activities in intimate relationships.

Giddens' account of modern selves and intimacy is not without its critics however. In the next chapter I will examine some of these criticisms, as well as some of my own, and move closer towards a defining quality that differentiates women's activities in intimacy from men's.

Intimacy and Autonomy

The previous chapter summarised Giddens' account of agency and reflexive self-identity in post-traditional societies, and used this as a background on which to develop his account of the late-modern form of intimacy. In this chapter I examine some criticisms of the conceptual edifice Giddens constructs, focusing especially on discussion around the extent to which Giddens' views are grounded in empirical or concrete reality. One strand of this discussion suggests Giddens gives inadequate weight to issues of embodiment, while another strand questions the extent to which the new intimacy actually exists or is widely accessible. I address these criticisms here, using them to expand upon four aspects of the account of agency and social process provided in the previous chapter: the situated embodied aspects of Giddens' view of agents; the significance of feelings and ideals in his account of agency; how inequality or marginalisation does not negate agency; and that fluctuations in affluence is not a major determinant in the spread of late modern self-identity. I also suggest that social systems are an 'accumulation of history', so that not only do old and new forms exist side-by-side, but the historical roots of social systems continue to exist within their current form.

To carry out these examinations in this chapter, I draw primarily on two external sources of critique: Lyn Jamieson's critical examination of current themes in the discussion of personal relationships (1998, 1999), and Lois McNay's project to rethink subjecthood and agency in feminist social theory (1992, 1999, 2000). Jamieson's work locates Giddens' perspective in a survey of the whole field of discussions around intimacy, while McNay is a major feminist theoretician who coined the term 'negative paradigm' of agency which I use in this thesis, and whose theoretical project seeks to move beyond that paradigm.

Following these critiques, I develop a criticism that the ‘active’ aspect of Giddens’ agent is not clearly differentiated from issues of social change, individual autonomy and the capacity of agents for self-consciously creative unilateral action. From this criticism as a basis, I develop a definition of autonomy in intimacy, arguing that men’s lack of autonomy in intimacy can exist alongside men’s active agency, women’s inequality and the capacity for individual self-conscious creativity.

Giddens’ Agent is Disembodied

Lois McNay criticises Giddens’ account of intimacy as focusing primarily upon a “symbolic account of identity which tends to disregard the more entrenched, embodied and psychic aspect of identity and the extent to which the somatization of gender norms renders them resistant to social change” (2000: 22), resulting in “a relative lack of concern for the issue of embodiment” (2000: 42) and thereby implicitly affirming the masculinist disembodied disembedded view of social actors (1999: 95). Giddens, she argues, over-rates agents’ capacity for reflexive manipulation of ‘pre-reflexive’ areas of life, and fails to account how, for example, “the inscription of the mothering role upon the female body is fundamental to the inculcation of emotional and physical dispositions that maintain gender inequality around childrearing” (2000: 42). Her concern here is echoed by Bailey who, in empirical research about the transition to motherhood finds “more attention needs to be paid to gendered and embodied identity” in Giddens’ account of intimacy (1999: 335).

I agree that Giddens’ 1992 work does focus upon largely non-physical themes of social change, in which issues of embodiment are relatively low-profile. However, as I have shown in the previous chapter, Giddens directly tackles the link between embodiment, practice, meaning, self-identity and social process in his earlier work. The reader should refer to the first three chapters of *Constitution of Society* (1984) for a fuller account of Giddens’ views. McNay and Bailey do not reference this work in the pieces I refer to here. While Gross and Simmons (2002: 532) suggest that in his later work on modernity Giddens takes a new theoretical turn, my presentation of the three works I draw upon in this thesis positions each subsequent work as building upon the previous. In short, it seems to me that Giddens’ earlier extensive treatment of agency and the situated embodied nature of social interaction as the ground of self-identity adequately addresses the ‘disembodied’ criticism in this regard. It is perhaps

unfortunate that Giddens does not adequately cover such issues in his 1992 work.

A core part of Giddens' argument about the late modern pattern of intimacy is that it is enabled by a substantially reshaped field of personal life and personal relationships. While obviously this field is inhabited by real people with real bodies in real time, Giddens' point is that the important shift is not so much in what we DO (though obviously there is change in this too), but rather in newly-constituted narratives of personal meaning and identity, in which a new standard of conduct in the re-shaped domain of personal life revolves around the question "how do I FEEL about ...?" Given Giddens' contention that feelings of anxiety fundamentally motivate agents' actions, this question goes right to the heart of issues of agency and embodiment - though undoubtedly the particular form and setting of the question is distinctively late-modern. To my mind Giddens adequately accounts both for why this question of feeling is important at all for agents broadly, and how the question has risen in importance in late modernity.

Does the New Intimacy Really Exist?

Both McNay and Jamieson criticise Giddens' account of intimacy as being unrealistically optimistic. Although detraditionalisation produces and relies upon principles of democracy and personal autonomy, McNay argues that it is possible to overemphasise "the expressive possibilities thrown up by processes of detraditionalization." (1999, 95). Although the "temporal discontinuity at the heart of narrative identity" can potentially lead to emancipatory possibilities, it can just as easily lead - or perhaps is already leading - to a reactive defence against "the increasing difficulty that individuals experience in coordinating the different temporal dimensions of their life" (2000: 112). Jamieson (1998) contrasts Giddens' approach with 'pessimists', who foreground tendencies towards dissolution in late modernity. Rampant individualism undermines commitment to community, marriage and especially children, and widespread defensive fear-reactions support increasing inequalities rather than the reverse (1998: 19; 33). Although Jamieson herself is not entirely devoid of hope, she asserts that Giddens' "vision of a possible future draws selectively from the range of available evidence" (40), talking up the possibilities for change and more or less ignoring how things are staying the same. Jamieson observes that despite new stories of the post-modern era, "an image of a conventional family arrangement as the happiest way of life is still produced by popular culture in Australia and New Zealand" (1998: 20). This seems confirmed

by empirical research, suggesting only 3-4% of heterosexual couples live in pure relationships (Gross and Simmons 2002: 545).

One of Jamieson's principal arguments, then, is that pure relationship is not a dominant form and therefore not a significant social force. This view, however, privileges material form over narratives of meaning, leading to an understatement of the significance of values in social life. Although "a conventional family arrangement" is still a widespread image of "the happiest way of life", Giddens' argument about modernity suggests that the self-identity of individuals making up that arrangement are constituted very differently now. Modern self-identity is, Giddens argues, contained in narratives revolving around ideals of equality and autonomy. Even though these ideals have been around for a very long time and the realities of people's actions seldom match the ideals, those ideals have a huge potency for individuals (and indeed for entire societies). For example, many researchers have noted a 'cognitive dissonance' between the level of equality actually practiced by couples in housework and childcare arrangements, and the level of equality reported to researchers by couples (e.g. McMahon 1999). The conventional explanation of this cognitive dissonance is that the couple colludes to downplay gender inequalities. I agree with this assessment, but add that the couple's motivation to do so may be a strong desire to believe they are living according to ideals of equality. Giddens' account of agents and agency (1984) takes up issues of motivation as a primary feature of social actors, whereas more material-based approaches such as Jamieson's cannot do so.

Inequality and Poverty as Limits to New Intimacy

For Jamieson, the "main reason for doubting a shift towards disclosing intimacy is the relatively modest change in gender inequalities" (1998: 165-6). She argues Giddens downplays the issue of gender inequality by suggesting that new forms of intimacy "could undermine the ways in which the wider social context produces gender and power" (Jamieson 1998: 40). Adkins (1999) puts the issue more strongly, arguing there is a substantial 'retraditionalising' move especially in gender relations in the workplace - for example, work contracts let to husband-and-wife teams but only the husband is a party to the contract - and that this retraditionalising is cast as a progressive 'new' form of flexibility. Not only does the continuation of gender inequalities cast Giddens' view of the new intimacy into doubt, according to Jamieson. Giddens (and

other theorists) observe that the 'democratisation of personhood' is only possible in conditions of relative affluence. Recent social changes seem to be creating more poverty rather than less, so that "The psychological revolution may not have stalled but for growing numbers the self-reflexive 'who am I?' questioning must compete with more pressing considerations..." (Jamieson 1998: 41). All these points suggest that the new intimacy, if it exists at all, is accessible only to a tiny minority of privileged people and is not a general pattern at all.

I will address these criticisms from a number of angles. Firstly, Giddens' account of intimacy spans a time-period of two centuries, and draws together a number of major large-scale changes - industrialisation, the emergence of the public/private distinction, the confinement of women to the home, changes in the nature of intimacy, and so on. Because he is theorising issues to do with the structure of self-identity and agency, Giddens is attempting to get at underlying structures, so that the scope of his account is very broad. Within this broad picture smaller-scale issues such as short-term or localised increases in levels of poverty or the slow rate of change in inequalities, significant though they may be in themselves, do not by themselves refute or render invalid Giddens' overall conclusions.

Secondly, with regard to inequality, Giddens makes clear that women's active shaping of the intimate realm occurred in a context of inequality and that that inequality was in fact a key shaping factor in the current form of intimacy. This inequality possibly still exists in aspects of intimacy currently - for example, in the theme of women's self-sacrifice noted by feminist theorists of the Ethic of Care (e.g. Houston 1992). The conceptual error Jamieson makes here is to assume that the continuing existence of inequalities shows that nothing of value can be or has been achieved. Giddens' account of agency and women's autonomy in the home directly counters this conception by arguing that women responded in unexpected ways to their limited scope for social involvement - in short, that they exercised agency. This agency had unintended consequences which had a very broad social impact via its intersection with the other major changes going on at the same time. Thus women contributed to the shaping of social systems from a marginalised position, and their marginalisation was a key constituting factor of their contribution.

Thirdly, with regard to affluence, Giddens' argument about late modern intimacy is that romantic themes have almost universally replaced traditional political/economic considerations in spouse-selection, that this is true whether a

person is rich or poor, and that this shift has profound impacts upon the late modern conception of the self. Although some ethnic communities within Western societies still arrange marriages along traditional lines, the determining factor here is not affluence. Poorer people perhaps have less choices, but nevertheless live in a society in which choice is integral in major social systems - for example his account of "lifestyle choices" and their implication in the shape of consumerism (1992: 80-88). Perhaps, as Jamieson says above, the self-reflexive "who am I?" questioning must compete with more pressing considerations, but this does not erase the self-reflexive question itself, nor does it reverse the centuries of events which have produced that question in its current position within social process. The existence of the "who am I?" question, and its role in social process still must be accounted for.

However, there remains the reality that some people create 'pure relationship' while others don't. I will make two response to this issue. Firstly, the patchy appearance of the pure relationship I suggest is a case of uneven change flowing from the specific details of the field of gender. For example Giddens uses empirical data from lesbian relationships to explicate his account of pure relationship because, he argues, issues specific to lesbian relationships render them more likely to be structured by the 'pure' form (see 1992: 49-53). The issue of uneven social change is thoroughly explored elsewhere in relation to Bourdieu's (1977) conceptions of habitus and field (e.g. McNay 1999, Adkins 2003) and one which I will not develop here. Secondly, I propose that there is an 'accumulation of history' in some aspects of social systems. The history of Western personhood is an area of social process in which historical formations are never entirely dispensed with. Foucault argues that our modern conception of 'rights' is ultimately grounded in the divine authority kings were supposedly granted to 'own' their dominion (1980). A significant thread in English history is the aristocracy's struggle to have that divine authority distributed more widely beyond the monarch to themselves, until the time of Hobbes and the social contract when authority was reconceptualised to derive from the collectivity of the people themselves. However the earlier monarchic form was not entirely dispensed with. It persisted (and still persists today) in the assumption of 'ownership' of self and property in one's body (ibid.). The late modern era and the late modern reflexive project of the self continues, I suggest, many of the core monarchic and contractarian themes, and adds a further layer of the self's ultimate authority lying within the self. In some very important

ways, then, even those selves who are highly active in pursuing the possibilities of the late modern 'project of the self' are acting within the accumulations of history - that is, they will always be drawing on themes of selfhood from past eras as well as the present. Conceptions of ownership and rights are by now deeply embedded in modern conceptions of self, even though these are historically 'old' concepts. In the same way, 'older' forms of personal relationships continue to exist side-by-side with newer forms - so that the existence of one does not imply the negation of the other.

The Significance of Autonomy

A major tenet in Giddens' account of modernity is the new emphasis upon the reflexive 'project of the self' amongst late modern people. At the same time he argues for the universal reflexive nature of agency and its intended but often non-conscious action. Both are reflexive, so what distinguishes them? Is the 'project of the self' a widespread feature of late modern life which is forced upon us by large-scale structural change? To what extent is deliberate self-consciousness a necessary precondition for a 'project of the self'? McNay points to this issue: "While self-conscious creativity may be a characteristic of certain types of action, it should not be understood as a generalizable characteristic of agency in 'post-conventional' societies. The uneven and conflictual nature of change within gender relations suggests that it is a more complex and evanescent feature of action" (McNay 2000: 22). Although "Autonomy leading to an ability to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new and unanticipated modes of behaviour ... underlie certain transformations within gender relations", the concern of social theorists is to explain this in "the context of structural, institutional and intersubjective constraints" (McNay 2000: 22-23).

In an attempt to grapple with these multiple issues, in this section I set out some definitions, employing Giddens account of agency. Agency, according to Giddens, is "the capacity to produce an effect", and agents actively intend to act in the sense that we "do some things and leave others undone" (1984: 9). In this sense, then, all people are 'active' in the sense of both taking actions and making choices. However, a key tenet in both Giddens' argument about intimacy and thus in this thesis is that women have been active *in a different way* to men and in very specific ways, resulting in the late modern form of intimacy. Giddens' view is of value precisely because it suggests that men, in certain circumstances, could be similarly active. This meaning of 'active' - which I will call 'socially active' to denote

the significance of such activity for driving social change - is distinct from the sense in which agents are universally 'active'.

A further distinction is between 'socially active' and what McNay refers to as 'self-conscious creativity'. It is quite possible for agents to be socially active but to feel coerced into such activity or to simply go along with it. Examples are Giddens' discussion of 'lifestyle choices' and their implication in late-modern consumerism (1990: 80-88), and the Australian Government's use of the OECD's 'active citizen' concept in its administration of Unemployment Benefits (Dean 1995). 'Self-conscious creativity' on the other hand involves an intention, formulated discursively, to act unilaterally and act differently to habit or to conventions. This deliberate intention is implicated in processes of change in gender relations (McNay 2000: 22), via the capacity of individuals to take new actions on the basis of an articulated program of change couched as social change being brought about through personal actions.

However, I wish to distinguish between self-conscious creativity, which of course always remains a possibility for individuals, and chronic manifestations of autonomy - that is, the routinised ways in which individuals take unilateral actions to shape social encounters and to undertake projects to colonise their future. As Giddens makes clear, the capacity for unilateral action is implicit in our high degree of knowledge and skill - the content of 'practical consciousness' which is substantially pre-conscious - that enables us to 'go on' from one moment to the next in social encounters. Unilateral action in this sense is merely an expression of 'active' agency, and not necessarily 'autonomy'. But one of the arguments from the previous chapter is that men develop a sense of 'autonomous self' in public settings and do not achieve the same 'autonomy' in their personal relationships. What exactly does autonomy mean in this case?

Clearly men participate in personal relationships, and they thus make inputs to those relationships, and do so 'actively' in the sense that they are purposive agents as I delineate above. Despite this purposive activity, in the first chapter I refer to a widely held view that men en masse are not 'socially active' in the sense of actively engaging in gender change. I propose that one cause of men's relative inactivity in *this* sense is a lack of autonomy in personal relationships - that is, the knowledge and skills of men's practical consciousness enables them to 'go on' in certain ways in personal relationships but they do not possess the requisite skills and knowledge to bring about certain relational outcomes, most especially the wealth of feeling that I argue has become a defining currency in late modern personal

relationships. Women likewise 'go on' in relationships, but take specific actions which generate the conditions for a wealth of feeling and an autonomous self-identity for themselves in relationships. It is quite possible that women's deployment of the requisite skills and knowledge arises from practical consciousness - that is, women chronically carry out actions which create the conditions for a wealth of feeling in many of their relationships without being discursively aware of either the details of the skills or of their deployment.

In addition, women may or may not be self-consciously creative - just as men may or may not be. The potential for individual self-conscious creativity always remains a possibility, and can certainly lead to autonomy. But autonomy can be distinct from self-conscious creativity in that autonomy can be chronically enacted from practical consciousness. Chronic manifestations of autonomy are also distinct from chronic enactments of 'active' agency, in the sense that active agency does not necessarily produce autonomy. The distinguishing characteristic of autonomy in intimacy becomes a capacity to unilaterally act to generate a wealth of feeling in relationships. I argue in Chapter 2 that the significance of a wealth of feeling is two-fold: its generation enhances the likelihood that all parties to the relationship will be motivated to continue the relationship; and a wealth of feeling within a relationship can act as a buffer that absorbs or counterbalances anxiety. The person able to generate a wealth of feeling in relationship is enhancing the possibility that the relationship will continue, and thus enhancing opportunities for the generation of ontological security. Thus autonomy is closely related both to the possession of skills and knowledge, and to the agent's capacity to deploy those skills and knowledge in order to generate ontological security. Similarly, I suggest men's development of an autonomous self in the public arena is underpinned by detailed skills and knowledge which they are able to unilaterally deploy to generate ontological security. Although men are active agents across all areas of their lives, the argument I present here shows it is possible for men to lack a sense of autonomy in the home and intimate relationships.

In this chapter, after responding to critiques of Giddens' work as insufficiently grounded in practical realities, I develop distinctions between 'active' agency, self-conscious creativity and autonomy to conclude that men lack autonomy in intimacy. My aim in this thesis is to highlight the shortcomings of negative conceptions of agency when theorising men and gender, by positing an alternative account of agency and

showing that it offers other possibilities. Giddens' account of agency, social process and modernity enables a view of women as subordinated-yet-socially active, or marginalised-yet-autonomous. Alongside this, although men receive substantial social legitimation, I argue they lack autonomy in intimacy. This lack of autonomy is highly significant because of the relation between intimate relationships and ontological security in late modernity. The account of intimacy I present, which leads to my conclusion that men lack autonomy in intimacy, derives from Giddens' account of agency, which enables a more complex reading of an agent's implication in social systems, including (but not limited to) the capacity of agents to carry out purposive actions in oppressive contexts, the significance of ontological anxiety, and the relation between the unintended consequences of actions and large-scale social systems. Thus an alternative account of agency enables new possibilities for conceptualising men and gender and the possibilities for change.

In the next chapter I present some of the work of Michael Kimmel as an example of conceptualising men and gender from the negative paradigm of agency. The example I present takes as its data the same social conditions and time-period as that covered by Giddens in his account of late modern intimacy, and reveals (*inter alia*) a long-standing 'fear of feminisation' amongst men. However I will show that Kimmel's implicit conception of agency inhibits incorporating this useful discovery of men's 'fear of feminisation' into a view that presents motivations for men to directly enhance their own lives by engaging in gender change. In contrast to Kimmel's view, I expand upon the possibilities for re-interpreting men's 'fear of feminisation' offered by Giddens' account of agency and intimacy and the definition of autonomy I developed above.

Rereading Men's Fears

As noted in Chapter 1, a widespread view amongst theorists of masculinity sees little change in men because change is antithetical to men's interests and to men personally. A significant writer to hold this view is Michael Kimmel, who has done some substantial historical investigation of American masculinity from the eighteenth century to the present day (1987, 1993, 1996). A major theme in Kimmel's work is theorising men's responses to women's impact on social process over the last 200 years. Thus Kimmel covers very similar issues and historical period to that covered in the account of modernity and intimacy I present in this thesis. A principal finding from Kimmel's research is a 'fear of feminisation' has persisted amongst men for over a century, and has become incorporated into the structure of masculinity. In this chapter I outline Kimmel's view of the development of American masculinity, and draw on the account of anxiety in agency and the significance of intimacy in modernity presented in the previous chapters to elicit and critique the view of agency implicit in Kimmel's work. I contrast each author's view of men's responses to women's impact on social process, and draw on the concept of unintended consequences to enable a 're-reading' of men's fear of feminisation as understandable in the light of women's new autonomy and widespread processes of detraditionalisation.

Kimmel's Historical Investigations

Kimmel investigates men's responses to feminism in America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1987) and develops a history of significant changes in masculinity in America during the same period (1996). Examination of an eclectic mix of archival material including contemporary art, print and electronic media, film, novels and self-help manuals

reveals three broad styles of response to women's increasing impacts on public and private life. They include the "antifeminist" backlash seeking a reassertion of women's subordination by male authority (1987: 266); the "masculinist" response which sought to counterbalance women's increasing influence in the private sphere by creating men-only social enclaves (1987: 269); and the less visible and less influential "profeminist" support of women's claims (1987: 272). Kimmel argues that these three styles arose initially in the nineteenth century, and have provided historical underpinnings for late twentieth century responses to feminism.

Kimmel finds that these responses are largely shaped by the constitution of masculinity itself.

American men have been haunted by fears that they are not powerful, strong, rich or successful enough. And many of our actions, on both the public and private stage, have been efforts to ward off these demons, to silence these fears. I argue that there have been certain patterns to these actions: American men try to *control themselves*; they project their fears onto *others*; and when feeling too pressured, they attempt an *escape* ... in their efforts to ground a secure sense of themselves as men. (1996: 8-9)

This constant anxiety is of relatively recent date, however, arising from a number of major social changes. "Industrialisation radically transformed men's relationship to their work ... rendering the working man more dependent" (1987: 263). Women increasingly participated in public life and had increased legal standing. "Within the home, women's increased power was buttressed by the nuclearisation of family structure and a clear demarcation between workplace and household" (1987: 265). "Motherhood was professionalised, [and] cast as a calling", alongside the "greater absence of fathers," while "childhood socialisation was increasingly the work of women..." (ibid).

In this setting of major social change masculinity itself underwent a transformation.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, American manhood was rooted in landownership (the Genteel Patriarch) or in the self-possession of the independent artisan, shopkeeper or farmer (the Heroic Artisan). In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, though, the Industrial Revolution had a critical effect on those earlier definitions. American men began to link their sense of themselves as men to their position in the volatile marketplace, to their economic success - a far less stable yet more exciting peg upon which to hang one's identity. The Self-Made Man of American mythology was born anxious and insecure, uncoupled from the more stable anchors of landownership or workplace autonomy.

Now manhood had to be proved. "This *self-maker*, self-improving, is always a construction in progress," writes cultural historian Garry Wills. "He must ever be tinkering, improving, adjusting; starting over, fearful his product will get out of date, or rot in the storehouse." ...the Self-Made Man [is] ambitious and anxious, creatively resourceful and chronically restive, the builder of culture and among the casualties of his own handiwork... (1996: 9, emphasis original)

The late-twentieth century 'fear of feminisation' has roots going back well over 100 years (1996: 321). Anxiety and crisis are inevitable in the modern era for an identity based essentially in pre-industrial social traditions. Recent responses amongst men include the wimp-like 'New Men' or a hyper-sensitivity to any indicator that they may be seen as wimps (especially apparent in national politics); a reactionary whining about men's victimisation; and the forest escapes of 'weekend warriors' (1996: Chapter 9). All these responses are unsatisfactory for Kimmel. The wimp is "not new enough for a truly egalitarian relationship with an equally strong woman" (293), and the resulting macho backlash brought Ronald Reagan and George Bush snr. to the White House. The whiners consider "it is men who are the real victims" (302) - but a sense of powerlessness is inevitable in this construction of masculinity: "feelings of despair and gaping loneliness always attends the blind pursuit of the elusive ideals of Self-Made Masculinity" (306). Weekend warriors "seem to believe themselves to be entitled to the power that is men's privilege. But they do not feel it yet" (321). The most appropriate response, in Kimmel's view, is a rather impersonal and patronising "willingness to enlarge the arenas [sic] so that others may enter" achieved by "joining the struggles of others for their rightful share of the sun" (335). Kimmel sees "a secure and confident sense of oneself" is not a contingent experience in a contingent world, but rather a naturalised "birthright of every American" (334, 335).

Kimmel's view contains a contradiction arising from the problems with the 'negative paradigm' of social agency when applied to men, or indeed to any apparently powerful social group. Power is allocated to men more or less because they are men, and men more or less passively receive this power. Any change in the details of the allocation of that power is therefore perceived as inevitably and fundamentally anxiety-producing, and threatening to the position. Men's responses to the change are therefore defensive - the 'crisis' experienced by many men is an inevitable result of having one's powerful position challenged. Kimmel's attitude towards the crisis is that it is a manipulative appeal or an aggressive demand by the powerful

for a return to the status quo. He argues that men can and should resist such structurally-determined responses to change, and magnanimously share their power. Men's attempts to manipulate, boast, complain or escape are indefensible when men should be using their institutionalised power to give to others the gift of a 'share of the sun' - a gift obviously within men's compass. Here Kimmel reads men as being privileged or powerful enough that they can decide to 'share' their power - even though that power supposedly comes from social structures. I intend to show that the logical difficulty here arises from conceptions of agency and the relation between individual agents and social process.

Anxiety and Modern Selves

The historical timing of the appearance of men's anxiety in Kimmel's account is similar to that of Giddens: arising in the late eighteenth century and gradually spreading across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both writers ascribe its appearance to roughly the same social changes: industrialisation and associated changes in public life, and the appearance of the modern conception of a predominantly feminine 'private sphere'. Both writers also see gender as a highly significant shaping force, both for individuals and in broad social change. But there is substantial divergence as to the source of anxiety and the role of gender.

For Giddens, a fundamental shaping force for all individuals is the contingent nature of ontological security - that is, such security never actually exists externally to a person's phenomenological experience, so that ontological anxiety can thus arise at any moment when unexpected breaks occur in the patterns which temporally structure a person's reflexive monitoring of their experience (see Chapter 2 for an expanded treatment of Giddens' views). In addition however, detraditionalised societies require individuals to manage their anxiety through self-selected day-to-day routines and longer-term projects to shape their individual future - the so-called 'trajectory of the self'. This arrangement is a two-edged sword: individuals can have unprecedented levels of personal freedom but also live with the ever-present 'threat of meaninglessness.' It is this specifically detraditionalised arrangement which Giddens argues emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. On this account, individual anxiety is productive in the sense that it is experienced by individuals as an active force in their projects of self-making. In addition, at the social level anxiety is generative through its finely-tuned constraint of freedoms amongst individuals. Thus anxiety is integral to modern

personal freedom and must be directly addressed and productively incorporated into accounts of agency and social change. It is not sufficient to conceptualise anxiety as the indicator of an error or flaw in masculinity.

Women and the New Intimacy

Giddens argues that women have been both purposively active and socially active in personal relationships because affective or romance-driven marriage became a way in which women could achieve a relatively autonomous personal identity (see Chapter 2 for a fuller account of Giddens' views). The gradual development of romantic love as the template for the marriage relationship unfolded from about the late eighteenth century, alongside the other social changes related to industrialisation Kimmel cites as presaging the appearance of the Self-Made Man. So while men were discovering ways of self-making in the newly fluid industrialised marketplace, women were discovering ways of self-making in the newly constituted arena of relationships in the home. While men were involved in what was more or less a further development of sites of social life and personal action which were already considered legitimate for men to inhabit, women were developing new styles of relationship and a whole arena of intimacy which were quite "puzzling" to men.

... the male sex here misread a key trend in the trajectory of development of modernity. For men self-identity was sought after in work, and they failed - we always have to add, by and large - to understand that the reflexive project of self involves an emotional reconstruction of the past in order to project a coherent narrative towards the future. (1992: 60)

If it is true that men have misread a key trend and have failed to understand a central aspect of 'the reflexive project of self', then this is worth pointing out and examining as an issue of concrete history so as to understand why and how it has come about and what can be done about it. I contend that Kimmel does not take this view. Rather, I suggest that what Giddens calls men's 'misreading' and 'failure to understand,' Kimmel reads as something like a fundamental flaw in masculinity: men's futile attempts to fulfil the 'elusive ideals' of masculinity and thus retain their power. Giddens' account indicates that men seeking to retain their privilege was by no means the only issue in play.

Men became more reliant on women's activities because of social changes from two directions: one is changes in the marketplace, and the other is changes in the home. Men's lack of ability to shape the marketplace is explained above: the

logics of organisation of the marketplace have become increasingly distanced. In the home, women were developing and exercising a new autonomy in the area of intimacy (1992: 43) which they used to create their own lives within existing social constraints, and create affectionate relationships with their children, their husbands, and their women friends. The analysis presented in this thesis suggests that a key characteristic of the home which emerged from women's development of a new autonomy is a wealth of feeling. Since its emergence, a wealth of feeling has not been connected with men as its intentional, skilled or proactive creators. Indeed most commonly a wealth of feeling has been presented to men as something that women create, more or less mysteriously, and then supply to men in certain circumstances. In short, men have been "unable to construct a narrative of self that allows them to come to terms with an increasingly democratised and reordered sphere of personal life" (1992: 117).

A conceptual difficulty can be seen in Kimmel's account of men's responses to feminism: men predominate in social systems but experience crisis. Why does the crisis arise? Kimmel's answer is to dismiss the sense of crisis as arising from a false sense of threat, since men remain powerful. The crisis, then, can only be seen as revolving around men's power, and becomes a device to retain power. He urges men to use their predominant social position to support others' struggle for access to power. Despite the fact that Kimmel portrays men as obviously subject to social process via their vulnerability to the vagaries of the marketplace, he dismisses this vulnerability as somehow not real or not significant, urging men instead to support others' political struggles (perhaps from a place of presumed invulnerability?). This difficulty arises from a key assumption of the 'negative paradigm' of agency-as-subjection: that power flows to people from their position. If a person is in a powerful position, it is assumed they are powerful in all areas of their life. Likewise, if a person is in a subordinated or marginalised position, they are assumed to be powerless in all areas of their life. Liberatory politics inserts another step in here: a person's lack of power can be resisted and deliberately overcome. Kimmel tries applying this liberatory logic to men, with the result that the only 'reason' for men to resist is so that men can support marginalised others since men are not marginalised.

But while women are subordinated in the home, this does not mean that they are powerless to act autonomously and thus have an impact upon men. It is this possibility that Kimmel dismisses. In addition, Kimmel does not notice the changes in

the significance of home for men in a fluid marketplace - specifically that men may have become reliant on women's activities there. He somehow imagines that men will just continue to be stable features of the social landscape, constantly asserting power.

Unintended Consequences

How can the intersections of subordination and autonomy, domination and vulnerability which I sketch above be understood conceptually? Giddens offers an explanation through his examination of the unintended consequences of intentional actions. Social agents are reflexive beings whose actions are undertaken with intention - whether conscious or pre-conscious. Actions by definition have consequences, with only some consequences intended, while others are unintended. And the consequences of actions can vary in their range of impacts, from the immediate and personal to the temporally dispersed and global, depending on which context the actions take place. Giddens notes also that because much of social life is routinised, the consequences of action tend to follow repetitive and often widespread and continuing patterns. Such patterns can arise simply from an agglomeration of individual actions, such as the example of the formation of ghettos in large cities which arise simply as a pattern when people to prefer living near others of their own ethnic group (1984: 13). The patterns of repetitive activities resulting from the agglomeration of individual actions also play a very significant part in the reproduction of institutionalised practices. Such patterns of individual actions can become institutionalised when the original patterns become the basis for further actions, for example when a Jewish school is opened in the Jewish quarter. Now that there is a school, other patterns to do with transport, commerce, religious practices and so on ripple out from that, adding to, reinforcing and also changing the original pattern. Such patterns can also become codified in laws, further sedimenting their institutionalised aspects - originally simply a complex of individual actions (1984: 14).

In the case of women and intimacy, women did not necessarily have any collective agenda to gain predominance in intimacy, nor to alter the value or significance of intimate relationships in social life. Nor did men have a collective agenda to confine women to the home and stem the tide of feminisation, create a marketplace, or construct the gender pattern of the Self-Made Man. Giddens' view prompts us to see social process as something arising from the largely routinised projects of millions of individuals to make the best lives they

can for themselves in whatever circumstances they find themselves in within the constraint of the ongoing necessity to generate some form of ontological security.

Although I argue that the actions of women which have predominated in the personal arena are a result of women's new autonomy, this is not to argue that women generally have *intended* the shaping or re-creation of the personal arena (though some may have). Nor are women's actions the only significant social inputs to the process. Alongside women's inputs, men had significant inputs both via the emerging expert commentaries on motherhood, psychological disorders, appropriate gender roles and so on. In addition men were part of the process both as husbands and fathers, and via their gradually changing needs for ontological security as reshaped through engagement with a gradually changing marketplace. However women have emerged as autonomous agents in the personal arena. The patterns arising from the routinised actions of millions of women play a centrally shaping role in personal relationships because these women pursue their own purposive projects to colonise the future. This 'outcome' has not necessarily been deliberately intended by anybody, but now that it exists it has all the characteristics of any other large-scale social system: moral values, skillsets, narratives of identity and position, legal and knowledge sanctions, material resources and so on.

This in turn has other unintended consequences. Women have developed the skills of intimacy which enable autonomous action in and through the creation of affect-based relationships. Such relationships are rewarding to women AND men because of the affective goods created there, but rewarding as a site for the enactment of autonomous self-identity ONLY to women. Men rely upon the affective goods but do not possess the skills to autonomously generate them. Thus men are reliant on women in this regard.

Kimmel takes the view that men's long-standing fear of feminisation is ungrounded, unreasonable, and inherently unhelpful. Giddens' account of late modernity points to a matrix of forces which are beyond the control of men. That is, women's actions have been increasingly puzzling to men as women have pursued their own development of autonomy in intimate relationships, while men have become increasingly reliant on women's activities in the home due to changes in the marketplace. In this situation it seems perfectly understandable that men will be fearful: men are increasingly reliant on a set of skills they don't themselves possess and don't understand the nature of. Kimmel argues that men should not fear

feminisation but support it because it is the only fair thing to do with the power they 'have', and in the process they create a "democratic manhood" (1996: 333). This, I suggest, is a very impersonal and thus insubstantial motivation for support of what is a major and anxiety-producing shift, entirely deleting the very data Kimmel's research uncovers - namely, that men's long-running fears significantly shape men's engagement with social change. Kimmel is able to do this because the negative paradigm of agency which underlies his conception of social process sees agency and power as deriving from social position, constructing men not only as unproblematically powerful, but also as powerful enough to consciously decide to oppress or support women.

Men's fear of feminisation is, I suggest, pointing to some very real experiences amongst men of exposure to women's autonomy in specific areas, and these experiences and the fears related to them should not be ignored. On the contrary, I suggest men's fear is vital information enabling a more complete understanding of the social dynamics surrounding the personal arena. Principally, I suggest, men's fear can be read as arising from a lack of autonomy in personal relationships in a social context in which personal relationships are increasingly crucial sites of ontological security. Men clearly have personal lives, and are parties to relationships with women, children and other men. However men by and large do not hold the view that personal relationships are sites for autonomous action, nor do they possess the skills to autonomously generate a wealth of feeling within such relationships thus generating ontological security for themselves in personal relationships.

In this chapter I have set out Kimmel's historical account of masculinity and pointed out that the negative view of agency implicit in his account leads to at least two limitations: anxiety is seen as an indicator of structural gender problems rather than a facet of modern freedom; and the impact of the new intimacy and its implications for men is downplayed because women are assumed to lack the power to impact social process. I subsequently elaborated on my argument about autonomy from Chapter 3 by taking up one of Kimmel's major findings, men's long-standing fear of feminisation, to argue that this fear of feminisation can be read as reflecting men's vulnerability to women's newly developed autonomy in personal relationships alongside the new significance of personal relationships in late modern life. This discussion underscores how some additional aspects of men and gender can be revealed from a novel account of personal relationships based in an alternative account of

agency and social process. This alternative account of agency, revolving around a conception of purposive agents acting to generate a sense of ontological security by pursuing their own trajectories of self, is nuanced enough to conceptualise complex interweavings of autonomy, inequality, freedom and constraint, while at the same time conceptualising social systems as partly designed and partly unintended.

The essential outcome of this alternative account of agency is that marginalised or subordinated groups can nevertheless have substantial impacts upon both social systems and other groups in society, even while the conditions of their subordination persist. A result of this is to reveal women's impact upon men as both structural and substantive - that is, women's inputs into social process have not been confined simply to resistance or a struggle for equality. On the contrary, the historical picture of social process emerging from the alternative account of agency and modernity presented here portrays women's impact as both widespread across major social systems and as creating fundamentally new possibilities. At the same time, the analytical importance of unintended consequences in social process prevents an over-ascription of agency which may lead to viewing women as more powerful than they are in reality. Specifically, two factors enabling the widespread impact of women's new creations in personal relationships has little directly to do with women or gender: the freedoms in late modern societies are intimately interlaced with ontological anxiety; and detraditionalising forces promote a focus on personal relationships as increasingly important sites of ontological security.

The argument of this thesis is that negative paradigms of agency inhibit conceptualising ways in which men can directly benefit personally from active engagement in gender change. In the concluding chapter I will draw together the threads of my argument and investigate some conclusions about men and the possibilities for gender change.

New Possibilities For Men

Giddens' explanation of how or why men do not exercise autonomy in intimacy is that men have 'misread' or 'misunderstood' some key social trends. I partially agree with him, to the extent that re-readings or alternative readings of social events or patterns are always possible. But 'misreading' implies that there is a 'correct' reading, and that a 'misreading' is a mistake. I feel that this also misrepresents the situation, and implies that men are in some way 'wrong,' or that they 'should be' applying a particular reading. Rather, I feel it is more helpful, and more in line with other parts of Giddens' work, to take the view that women's predominance in the transformation of intimacy has arisen not because men are wrong or mistaken. Nor has it arisen because men have historically focused upon public life for autonomous self-identity, nor because of men's oppression of women - though both these are certainly contributing factors. Rather, the attitudes and skill-sets men possess or don't possess have arisen through historical circumstance and as an unintended consequence of a wide range of social dynamics, including long-term historical themes and the biological fact of sexual dimorphism. While Giddens' view of a misreading may not represent the situation very helpfully, Kimmel's view that men's fears are not justified is seriously misleading. There is certainly an aspect of paranoia to some men's descriptions of social change, and sometimes an over-ascription of agency and intention of change amongst women. I certainly agree with Kimmel that men's widespread *response* to their fears of seeking a return to the past is both unrealistic and unproductive. However I suggest that, overall, men's fears accurately point to the relative lack of autonomy they experience in relation to women in those aspects of life in which women are relatively autonomous.

Likewise, the autonomy women enact in those areas has not arisen in an essentialist or determinist sense *because* they are women. The affect-based self who actively creates self-identity in their 'personal' life is, at present at least, seen primarily as a 'feminised' self primarily because of the historical background out of which this sort of self has arisen. This is an unintended consequence which is readily understandable in terms of history, and at the same time people want to now perpetuate it not because it is necessarily a good thing, or an essential or crucial aspect, but rather because it now constitutes the existing social order, and people to a very great extent rely on the existing social order continuing for their own sense of ontological security. On this account, men's fear of feminisation has the effect of reinforcing the historical link between the personal arena and women as its proper autonomous agents by focusing on *who* is being autonomous rather than *what* is autonomously produced. It tends to support a more general trend to 'naturalise' women's involvement in the personal arena - and thus reinforces men's lack of autonomy there. Within this frame, Kimmel's suggestion that men support feminisation could be seen as an argument to *support* the status quo of men's lack of autonomy in personal relationships.

As I have argued, the principal issue for men in personal relationships is a lack of autonomy - implying that autonomy can potentially be created. Two avenues for the creation of autonomy exist in the alternative account of agency presented in this thesis. Firstly, as Giddens suggests, men by and large do not narrativise their lives in intimate relationships. One of the key aspects of narrative self-identity is the reflexive involvement in 'what happens next': the narrator is positioned within the story and is thus enabled to shape the story by applying reflexive awareness, knowledge and skills, and aspirations for particular futures. This suggests one avenue for development by men: to construct narratives of identity which centralise intimate relationships of all sorts as fundamentally valuable sites for the construction of men's own identity, in which men are portrayed as autonomously deploying learned skills to shape those relationships as sites of self-identity. Sources of material for these narratives include film and theatre, literature both current and historical, autobiography, therapeutic literature, and the media including advertising. However self-conscious creativity must be employed in order to construct narratives with the desired themes.

Secondly, autonomy is something enacted, and actions require concrete practical skills. The account of agency offered in this thesis suggests we enact our identity and thus generate

ontological security via complex and often intersecting routines, and do so using often pre-conscious but highly developed and sophisticated skills of bodily management and expression - the area of 'practical consciousness'. We reflexively monitor how we are present ourselves in an encounter, and intentionally act to 'go on' from one moment to the next, using this practical consciousness. The vast bulk of actions in social encounters need never reach discursive consciousness and can remain at the level of practical consciousness. Self-conscious creativity and discursively developed projects to learn new skills can not only result in autonomy for agents, but in addition new skills learned through self-conscious effort and discursively framed learning projects can also become integrated into practical consciousness. This account highlights the link between practical skills and identity, indicating that new enactable possibilities of identity are enabled by new skills. The phrase "Oh! I couldn't do THAT! It's not *me*!" reminds us of the power of this link. In short, with intention and practice what at first feels 'foreign' can in fact become 'me'. This suggests the second avenue for development by men: to identify and learn the skills required to generate a wealth of feeling in personal relationships in order to foster the continuation of such relationships as sites of both self-identity and ontological security. Sources for these skills include the sources of narrative elements mentioned above. In addition they can also include (but are not limited to) personal experiences in relationships, women's narratives of relationship creation, and philosophical discussions of relational ethics. As with the creation of new narratives, self-conscious creativity must at first be brought to bear in order to develop learning pathways towards the desired goals.

An ongoing theme for people in late modern societies is the constant possibility of ontological anxiety. The transformation of intimacy is the emergence of a new form of intimacy enabled by and enabling the late modern forms of social order. Its significance is that the new intimacy emerged as a highly significant means by which ontological security can be generated by individuals. The logic of this is readily apparent. Intimate relationships are sites at which individuals have much greater control over outcomes than other sites with more global influences because, in an intimate relationship, all parties to the relationship are present. Thus the major forces shaping the site of encounter are available for direct negotiation by the parties to the encounter. Intimate relationships are thus a site constantly to hand for their participants to autonomously act to generate their own ontological security through both routinisation and

projects to colonise the future. Thus a beneficial strategic response by men to the conditions of modernity is to enhance their own capacity for autonomy in personal relationships in order to expand opportunities for the generation of ontological security. This response at the same time constitutes a direct personal benefit to men themselves.

Although current social themes render personal relationships as a 'feminised' arena, I have argued that this is only a result of history and that women's involvement or the presence of 'feminine' inputs is not an essential requirement in late modern intimacy or personal relationships. Rather, I suggest men can also attain satisfying and effective levels of autonomy in personal relationships through practical projects of narrative and skill development, and can incorporate these new narratives and skills into men's self-identity. Personal relationships are by no means limited to those between men and women, but also include men's relations with other men and with children. Men can continue to be 'self-makers', but can incorporate *all* aspects of their lives as legitimate sites for autonomous self-identity, rather than restricting autonomy to the supposedly 'masculine' public arena. This in turn must impact upon the nature of men's relationship with public life, opening up further possibilities of change.

Limitations of the Thesis

Although a major feminist goal has been women's equality, this does not mean that women's equality must be the only motivator for engagement in gender change. The view of the last two centuries of social process presented in this thesis suggests there are many other possible engagements, and indeed there have already been divergent engagements. The goal of equality is certainly one engagement, but I suggest that it is connected with other engagements by women, such as the apparently frivolous one of women's appetite for romantic novels. The connections between the engagement for men I suggest in this thesis with other engagements such as the feminist goal of equality are crucially important to consider, but are outside the scope of the present work.

Along with this limitation, I acknowledge some further gaps in the work presented here. A significant omission is a more comprehensive coverage of the issue of power. Although I critique Kimmel's equation of agency with power, I do not fully explicate my own view. This may encourage a tendency to ignore issues of domination and subordination, resulting in an implication that I may see men and women as more or less equal, or even that I see women as more powerful than men.

Thus more discussion of issues of power is crucial in order to address these implications, but is outside the scope of this work. However I will make the following comments.

While I highlight women's inputs in social process and that men lack autonomy in some areas, I do not subscribe to a totalising view that women as a group are more powerful than men. Rather, I have put forward the view that men are not universally powerful. I point out that people are variously powerful and powerless, that people's actions create our vast social systems, and that women's autonomy in personal relationships is structurally related to their subordination. Thus I implicitly acknowledge the existence of domination but do not explore it further.

Another significant omission is a direct consideration of bodies and bodily realities - a criticism the reader may recall McNay makes of Giddens' account of intimacy. I accept that embodiment is the ground from which we all come and note that in the selected focus of this thesis, I have relied on Giddens' excellent conception of agents and his emphasis on action as a *pointer* to issues of embodiment which are covered in considerable detail by Giddens (1984: 34-83), and obviously must be addressed if or when my suggestions in the thesis are taken up by actual men. Leder's (1990) discussion of "phenomenological vectors" provides an excellent starting point for considerations of bodily realities and their intersections with narratives of meaning. In addition, Abram (1997) elucidates phenomenological links with large-scale social systems such as language and literacy.

A major conclusion of this thesis is that it is the issue of autonomy rather than simple participation which is key for men in personal relationships. I also suggest that autonomy is closely related to practical skills. However, clearly the shape of men's involvement in personal relationships is not simply a matter of skills, although this remains a tempting but unfortunately over simplistic conclusion. Rather, the self-conscious development of skills is a *necessary part* of what can enable men to move forward. It would be worth drawing a sharper focus on the definition of autonomy and its relation to skills for this reason - but this is outside the scope of this thesis. A starting-point here is Keller's (1985) discussion of "dynamic autonomy."

In addition, although I mention the role of narratives in identity, I have not directly dealt with issues of meaning and value in identity. Clearly the current characterisation of personal relationships as a 'feminised' arena has much more

significance than simply as an historical artefact which can be readily dispensed with. Self-identity is centrally important for people both structurally and also from moment to moment. The presentation in this thesis risks portraying individuals and social process as unrealistically malleable, but changes do come about and can clearly be made intentionally. Butler's (1990) discussion of the performativity of gender identity is a starting point to explore the links here.

Summary

My contention in this thesis has been to show that a 'negative paradigm' of agency and its relation with social process leads to the view that men can have no direct personal motivation to engage in gender change. To argue this contention, I offered an alternative account of agency and social process, leading to a new view of the significance of personal relationships in late modern societies and a reassigning of the broad social significance of women's involvement in new forms of intimacy. Following some criticisms of these views I developed the perspective that the significant issue for men in personal relationships is their lack of autonomy in intimacy. I then introduced an account of masculinity based in the negative paradigm, but one which nevertheless elucidated historical data showing the existence of men's long-standing fear of feminisation. While I critiqued the account of masculinity, I used the historical data to support my contention regarding men's lack of autonomy in intimacy, arguing that men's fear of feminisation is understandable when men are increasingly vulnerable to women's autonomy in intimacy as a result of large-scale social changes. Finally, I concluded by suggesting that men can address their lack of autonomy by developing narratives of identity and practical relationship skills enabling them to achieve autonomy in personal relationships for themselves. This can result in direct personal benefits to men from engaging in gender change.

The following key conceptual moves enabling this conclusion highlight their importance. Agents purposively act, and our routinised actions constitute our identity. We take the actions we take on the basis of reflexive monitoring of events and our knowledge of appropriate actions to bring about desired outcomes. The solidness or permanence of our identity is contingent on ongoing routines, so that ontological anxiety is a permanent possibility. In modern societies substantial personal freedoms are enabled by large-scale and intertwined social systems which, in turn, increasingly can disrupt routines in our personal lives, leading to ontological anxiety. Freedoms

are thus constrained by the threat of ontological anxiety. Personal relationships emerge as buffers against ontological anxiety since the key structuring aspects of these relationships are available to the parties to the relationship. However personal relationships act as buffers in this way because of new qualities of intimacy that women have autonomously developed. Alongside this development, the ground for ontological security men found in the 'public' life of society has gradually dissolved, resulting in men becoming increasingly reliant on women's new capacities in personal relationships.

A capacity to generate ontological security is predicated on our active capacities as agents. Ontological security can be generated routinely by drawing on practical but non-conscious skills. But it can also be generated autonomously in harsh oppressive situations such as concentration camps. Thus autonomy is not predicated on equality. This conceptual separation makes it possible to conceptualise women as both marginalised and socially active. One result of their social activism in this case is the creation of new possibilities in intimacy. Due to social systems intersecting at a large scale, these new possibilities in intimacy have precipitated wide-ranging impacts, including upon men. They also open up the new possibilities for men delineated in my conclusions above. My future direction includes further expanding upon these possibilities to develop links with other aspects of social process and the historical moment, and to create pathways enabling men to embrace these possibilities.

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