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The Dimensions of Change

This chapter summarises the view of social process developed in the body of the thesis, and then discusses the possibilities for change along two axes suggested by that view: the extent of change possible within a discourse; and the changes possible within identity. Several examples illustrate both these axes of change. The discussion of identity then leads into an examination of how the marginalisations entailed in the subject position ‘men’ can be emphasised in order to foster progressive change among men. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the principal theoretical differences between the Connellian framework and the multi-discourse view of social life.

Summary of multi-discourse view

Gramsci’s main innovation in the idea of hegemony is that cultural processes are as crucial to understanding social organisation as material processes and forms, so that moral and intellectual leadership are as powerful as formal structures, and in some cases more powerful. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) add to this foundation the post-structuralist argument from language that social life does not occur in a closed space, so that no single order, social formation or source of power can ever entirely pervade all of social life. The inherent slippage between material reality and the meanings attributed to that reality – the slippage between sign and signified – results in a social space which is open-ended

both in terms of its potential for inclusiveness and the potential variety of forms in which social life may occur.

From this argument of post-structuralist open-endedness Laclau and Mouffe (1985) build a view of hegemony occurring in discourse and use the example of the Marxist concept of class to explore the creation and stabilisation of a specific historical discourse. They identify some key components in a discourse: the importance of the equivalence/difference tension in the creation of new meanings; the stabilisation of a new meaning into a nodal point; and the expression of that new meaning as the nodal point of articulation between subject positions. Hegemony for Laclau and Mouffe (1985) is both the general conditions in social life which allows for the possibility of democratic life, and also the cohering cultural force which holds a discourse together once it is created.

The concept of discourse has great explanatory power by theorising how a single idea or worldview can find expression across a wide variety of social sites and shape a diverse range of social systems. However Laclau and Mouffe's specific work is acknowledged to lack a theorisation of the linkages between their concept of discourse and the realities of material social life (see Chapter 4). To conceptualise how multiple discourses occur in social life I use Goffman's work on 'frames' to show that at most social sites, a large number of simultaneous discourses occur which are foregrounded and backgrounded through co-operative endeavour as the action at a site unfolds. A discourse achieves *traction* in social action via this co-operation, and the most important criterion around the foregrounding of discourses and the enactment of their subject positions is *verisimilitude* rather than empirical reality or other 'objective' standards such as truth or the law. Because discourses emerge from a tension between equivalence and difference, the articulation of any subject position involves an opposing position either implicit in its enactment or explicit in the social action.

Normally competent persons develop a repertoire of skills by which the complex terrain of multiple discourses is routinely encountered and traversed. In addition, people's identity is an ensemble of familiar subject positions which enable individuals to competently participate in widely divergent social settings and to accomplish shifts across several discourses within the one social site or strip of action.

This concrete account of social life and self identity linked to multiple discourses is intended to conceptualise the fluidity and flexibility highlighted by post-structuralist gender theorists such as Judith Butler (e.g. 1990; 1993), and the continuous stability of

social systems emphasised by materialist gender theorists such as Connell. In the multi-discourse view, extant discourses have the weightiness and durability of fixed structures; the enactment of stabilised subject positions creates social structures, and the hegemonies pertaining in existing discourses have real material and cultural force. At the same time the open-endedness of the social space results in the constant creation of new meanings and new narratives about the myriad unfolding aspects of social life. Some of these new meanings and stories become stabilised via practical social activism into new discourses, and these new discourses each cohere via their own hegemony.

The limitations of Connell

With this general background as a starting point, my interest is to more precisely apply Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) general concepts of discourse and hegemony to the Connellian framework's approach to gender and men. I argue that the aspects of gender and men described by Connell are better seen as a specific discourse rather than an all-pervasive 'gender order'. The discourse described in the Connellian framework, which I label the discourse of masculine authority, is a well-established and extensive discourse held together by the hegemony that produces the 'patriarchal dividend' enjoyed by men as a broad group. Alongside this, there are many new discourses of feminism, while feminism, in general, exercises hegemony within discussions of gender. In relation to masculinity theory more specifically, the Connellian framework currently exercises hegemony in the study of men and masculinities. Hence hegemony is not necessarily an undesirable force.

Viewing the Connellian framework from within this multi-discourse approach, Connell's 'hegemonic masculinity' can more precisely be described as the subject position 'men' in the discourse of masculine authority. The multiple 'masculinities' Connell identifies and describes can be considered as effects of discourses in general, such as complicity and marginalisation, or as specific locations on a gradient in capacities enabled by a discourse, such as subordination and hegemony. In summary, then, Connell's collection of 'masculinities' and 'femininities' is a sample of the range of relations made possible between the discourse's nodal point and actual people.

Connell undertakes a socially progressive project in seeking to critically describe the discourse of masculine authority. He explicitly states his political goal is 'social justice' and 'gender equality' – that is, Connell desires change in existing gender arrangements. However Chapters 1, 3 and 5 argue that Connell casts a 'depressing pall'

over the possible pathways for change among men: although he recognises the possibility of individual change, he repeatedly and explicitly rejects the possibility of collective action by men towards progressive change among men themselves, stressing that change by men which benefits men must always produce a re-assertion of patriarchal privilege.

Connell's view here makes sense on one condition: that Connell accepts the nodal point of the discourse of masculine authority. The nodal point is a proposition about the world along the lines of 'social authority resides with men'. Connell takes up a critical subject position in relation to that nodal point, informed by feminist, Marxist, gay rights and other viewpoints (1987:ix-xv, 96-97)and, as a result, is able to partially step beyond the confines of the whole discourse so as to develop the clearest description to date of some of the principal relationships arising within the discourse. But despite this political stance, Connell's *theory* accepts the traction of the discourse's nodal point – that is, the theory describes the social world from within the discourse itself and accepts the nodal proposition that social authority *is ultimately* vested in men *and there is no reality beyond this*¹. In other words from the viewpoint of the Connellian framework the nodal proposition of masculine authority delimits the horizon of Connellian coherence. This is precisely the principal effect of discourses within social life: one of the means by which hegemony operates is to render incoherent other views of the world. Thus the Connellian framework is more accurately seen as the intellectual content for a newly critical subject position within the discourse of masculine authority, rather than a progressive step beyond the hegemony of masculine authority.

On this account the Connellian framework is analogous to a 'protest' type of subject position, similar to first wave and early second wave feminist social activism (e.g. Friedan 1963), which critiqued patriarchal authority but nevertheless relied on that authority's continuity for conceptual coherence. And the Connellian framework is unable to theorise change among men beyond the nodal point of masculine authority because the framework relies upon that nodal point for its own coherence.

The Connellian framework is a useful contribution as a description of the existing discourse of masculine authority, but the framework's theoretical limitations generate an impoverished picture of social change. From the viewpoint of progressive political

¹ In later work Connell accepts that 'hegemonic masculinity' is based in such a singular relation, and that this is a theoretical shortcoming (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 846).

strategy and projects to foster progressive change among men, then, the Connellian framework has little utility.

However substantial progressive change among men is possible, and the multi-discourse view put forward in this thesis is intended to point to general mechanisms in social life which can be stimulated to foster progressive change among men at the collective level. The multi-discourse view suggests several vectors along which significant change is possible, and in some cases change is already occurring along these vectors.

The dimensions of possible change

The multi-discourse view of social life offers an account that emphasises that the immense resilience of existing social systems are underpinned by the fluidity in social processes of meaning-creation. It is the fluid capacity of meaning which enables a male person to be signified *as* a man whether he is old or young, short or tall, black or yellow, here or there, physically present or merely portrayed. This adaptability of meaning routinely enables the operation of vast social systems. But while processes of meaning-creation are being harnessed to support existing social arrangements, these very same processes are being used to create entirely new social arrangements. The most important insight in the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) is that social life is in essence open-ended, and that the traction hegemony achieves in social life relies on a temporary restriction in this inherent open-endedness via the temporary closure of the meaning-creation process. Such closures may continue for centuries, involve inconceivably vast quantities of material resources, and be enacted by hundreds of millions of people – and so they come to appear to be fixed or, as Connell (1987:183) would have it, “structural facts”.

But the view that hegemony’s closure of meaning is fundamentally temporary has profound implications for theorising the possibilities for change. This final chapter now turns to identifying a range of possible vectors of change implied in the multi-discourse view of social life. Earlier chapters have emphasised the open-ended potential for the creation of entirely new discourses, and I will not further discuss that possibility or its techniques. In order to emphasise the possibilities for change in existing social formations, the following discussion looks at two broad areas: changes internal to the discourse of masculine authority; and changes internal to men’s gender identity. Discussion of the second type of change also suggests how the discourse-based nature of

ensemble identity can be exploited to emphasise the advantages to men in engaging in progressive change.

Changes internal to a discourse

The multi-discourse view of social life proposes a conceptual model of discourses in general as the articulation of a nodal point via subject positions, and this articulation takes place in concrete social action to produce social life. All these conceptualised elements of a discourse emerge out of socially enacted processes, so that change is possible in any or all elements of a discourse.

This section canvasses change in each element in turn. Firstly, any discourse becomes present in social interactions only when people take up a relation with the discourse's nodal proposition about the world. That is, discourses must achieve 'traction' in social life, and Chapter 5 discusses how this traction is achieved through verisimilitude and the co-operation of the people present. Traction, then, is something achieved at social sites, and during specific moments in the action at any site. The number of sites at which traction is achieved, and the duration of traction at any one site, may be considerably altered through deliberate action, and these two possibilities, with some examples, are discussed in the first section, below, 'Reach and Spread'. Secondly, changes can be brought about in the articulation of a nodal point through the establishment of new subject positions. This possibility with examples is discussed in the following section 'Articulating the Nodal Point'. Finally, a closer analysis of the nodal point of masculine authority highlights that the discourse has the socially useful effect of generating social legitimacy for men, but that this legitimacy may be articulated in quite different ways.

Reach and spread

Several times through the body of this thesis the 'reach' or 'extension' of a discourse has been referred to. That is, social life can be seen as a landscape of actions occurring at social sites, and actions occurring across a very large geographic distance may be linked up via a single discourse. An example is the discourse of 'nation', which now has reach all around the world. At the same time an extensive discourse may not only achieve traction across a wide geographic area. It may also achieve traction on many occasions in a particular site – that is, it can be applied to a wide *spread* of occurrences at a site. For example the discourse of 'time', in which the flow of events is described in segments of uniform length, is foregrounded very frequently at most social sites. Conversely, a discourse may achieve an extensive reach, but only a narrow spread. For

example, specialised scientific discourses may be able to achieve traction at many social sites but are only occasionally foregrounded in the social action.

The reach and spread achieved by a specific discourse can be contested in a number of ways and can radically alter over a period of time. I will examine these dimensions by using the example of the discourse of sovereignty, whose nodal point legitimates an exclusive control over a specified territory. During a significant historical period sovereignty in the form of monarchy was a major discourse defining the horizon of the social collective (Foucault 1991). In the modern era sovereignty still has immense reach in social life, and arguably even greater reach than monarchy ever had, but its spread has radically altered. Sovereignty is a major operative principle in international relations, where the concept of the sovereign 'nation' enables recognition as a legitimate member of the international community. Sovereignty has also become integrated into the modern notion of individuality enacted by hundreds of millions of people and codified in the legal tenet that legal subjects have sovereignty over the territory of their bodies (Pateman 1988). Monarchy as the most visible and cogent manifestation of sovereignty has simultaneously shrunk in significance. What continues is the coherence of the nodal point of legitimated control of a specified territory whether defined physically or otherwise.

The enormous change in the reach and spread of sovereignty did not occur endogenously, that is, within the discourse itself due to forces internal to the discourse. The discourse of sovereignty, in English history at least, appears to have been fiercely contested since its emergence in the late first millennium: from within by competing nobles and from without by invading neighbours. Continuous contestation has occurred alongside a long-term increase in population, wealth, and technological development, which have themselves occurred within discourses and have in turn enabled further discursive shifts and contestation. In addition, English sovereignty has developed in the context of discursively related material changes in other geographic areas via imperialist trade, as well as discursively related political changes especially in Europe. Finally, innovative discourses have emerged, such as liberty, equality, the public/private split, consumerism, globalisation, the individual, and so on, which are fresh and additional ingredients into the process. And discourses continue to emerge. In other words for all its power the discourse of sovereignty has had to jostle with other discourses which also

seek the foreground in social action, and as a result sovereignty has been changed and is changing in the resultant interaction and contestation.

Nevertheless, a version of sovereignty continues to hold sway, and not simply in the continuing existence of monarchies. Foucault (1980: 121) observed that social theory is yet to 'cut off the king's head', that is, social theory has a bias towards seeing social organisation as emanating from a single transcendent source – the view which Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue so forcefully against. This transcendent view was also evident in the Bush Administration's view that a single 'world order' properly exists, in which the USA acts as the policeman of that order (Neal 2004). That Bush's view was seriously discussed shows the traction still attainable by the idea of monarchy.

Sovereignty, then, provides an example of a discourse with pre-democratic roots whose reach continues to be on a similar scale to masculine authority, but whose spread has enormously expanded due to a massive transformation in its articulation with democracy. At the same time, some of its historical pre-democratic formations continue to endure in the form of monarchy, but with monarchy reducing in spread. This example shows that substantial social change can occur without needing to dissolve or obliterate existing discourses. A discourse can extensively occur in social life but its operation can produce significantly different social effects, partly as a result of changes in its spread.

There are signs that this sort of change is already occurring in relation to masculine authority. Although the reach of masculine authority is unlikely to recede, one of the most significant changes wrought by second wave feminism has been to change the spread achieved by masculine authority. That is, within social collectivities in which feminism has a significant impact there are fewer moments in social action when masculine authority can successfully be foregrounded. This is so partly because of feminist challenges directly to the legitimacy of masculine authority as a discourse – a 'legitimation crisis' (Connell 1987: 158-9); partly because of the increasing reach and spread of equality in democracies (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 138); and partly because other discourses also operate which do not rely upon gender as a basis of authorisation. Gender-irrelevant discourses may be new formulations of existing phenomena, such as neo-liberal government programs in which gender is merely one criterion among many for defining programmatic target groups (Dean 1995), or may be associated with new social phenomena which are not yet gendered, such as new technologies (e.g. du Gay 1997; van Zoonen 2002). The result of the competition, contestation and sidelining from

these other discourses is that masculine authority achieves traction less often – that is, at sites where competing discourses also operate the masculine authority discourse achieves a narrower spread.

The spread achieved by masculine authority may not only being reduced by gender-oriented discourses such as feminism. Studies of rural men in Western countries (e.g. Carrington & Scott 2008) suggest that established masculine authority is being undermined by the globalisation of agricultural markets which are indifferent to local social relations, as well as by changes in the economics and organisation of agriculture which reduce the number of sole operator farms and lead to increasing ‘off-farm’ work. Increased government provision of rural services enable women to more easily find work in rural areas, while feminist-inspired changes for women in the workplace support a new attitude among rural women towards such off-farm work. In this example feminism is only one of many forces involved.

This is not to say that masculine authority is no longer a major social theme. On the contrary, the vast majority of visible social life continues with masculine authority as a key organising theme. In addition, Connell’s (2000) identification of a ‘transnational business masculinity’ suggests the discourse is colonising new social spaces and indeed is helping to create them. Other studies (e.g. Herring 2001; Singh 2001) show how new technologies can become incorporated with patriarchal attitudes towards gender. These examples illustrate an increase in the reach of masculine authority. However increasing reach is only one of the processes of change occurring in relation to masculine authority, and does not give an indicator of the spread of moments over which masculine authority achieves traction at sites to which discursive reach is newly achieved.

Articulating the nodal point

The tenacity and adaptability of discourses such as monarchy and sovereignty suggest that such a widespread and influential discourse as masculine authority is unlikely to disappear. However identifying masculine authority and sovereignty as discourses enables the extensive transformations in sovereignty to be re-examined in order to understand more about the flexibility of meaning-creation processes. Meanings do not exist prior to their articulation, so the articulation of meaning is a crucial element in meaning-creation processes. In the multi-discourse view of social life meanings are encapsulated in nodal points, and nodal points are propositions about the world which are articulated via the enactment of subject positions by actual people. Meanings achieve

coherence only in the face of incoherence, and this aspect of meaning is reflected in the minimal requirement for two subject positions in a discourse: one subject position enacts the nodal proposition while the other enacts that which the nodal proposition is not. Thus the ‘articulation’ of the nodal proposition occurs in the relation between the two subject positions.

On this account there is no upper limit to the number of subject positions in a discourse, so that discourses can encompass a large number of nuanced variations in the articulation of a nodal point. In addition, the content which can be incorporated into subject positions is limited only by the general requirement that the relationship of any content to the discourse’s nodal point is collectively recognised in social action. This general requirement for collective recognition is a substantial immediate constraint on the creative possibilities for subject positions, but another aspect of the discourse of sovereignty shows that over time new subject positions can emerge which articulate an established nodal point in radically different ways.

During the monarchical phase, that is, when sovereignty was primarily expressed as monarchy, the world recognised in that discourse was divided up into discrete kingdoms or empires, and relations between these entities were of second order importance in the actual process of sovereign rule. The *exclusive* nature of the control was emphasised, expressed in the monarch’s absolute power over their territory: the sovereign “stood in a relation of singularity and externality and thus of transcendence, to his principality,” (Foucault 1991:89-90) and the sovereigns themselves and their capacity for rule was ideally unaffected by their relationships with other sovereigns. However this aspect has significantly changed, so that today the sovereignty operating within international relations is an entry requirement into a global community of nations, while the sovereignty attributed to selves at law is applied in principle to every single person equally, including (where applicable) the person of the monarch. In other words, the continuing nodal proposition of sovereignty is now articulated in quite a different way, via an expanded range of subject positions. ‘Monarch’ and ‘subject’ still exist, and still operate in some circumstances. But ‘subject’ may now entail subjection to ‘law’ rather than, or even as well as, subjection to a monarch. And these have been augmented by new subject positions such as ‘citizen’, ‘state’, ‘nation’ and ‘international community’. The enactment of these new subject positions articulates new expressions of sovereignty’s nodal proposition about legitimate control over a territory.

In relation to masculine authority, new formulations of the hegemonic subject position ‘men’ are being developed. Chapter 6 lists a number of these recent and emerging formulations, several from commercial operations and many with no politically progressive alignment at all. I have argued above that the Connellian framework offers the intellectual resources for a new ‘protest’ masculinity, critical of masculine authority’s nodal point in a similar way to ‘protest femininities,’ but which offers a new articulation of masculine authority in its “alliance politics” (1995:238). Anderson’s (2009) study of US college men finds an emerging ‘inclusive’ masculinity which accepts homosexuality within a subject position that in most other respects appears conventionally hegemonic. In these new formations the nodal proposition about the relation between men and social authority continues, but the collection of practices which articulate masculine authority in social life is expanded. Connell’s contribution challenges the nodal proposition’s legitimacy from a different direction while the pattern Anderson discovers stretches that legitimacy over a wider range of practices.

Anderson’s research is especially interesting because it points to the possibility of a similar transformation to that which has occurred with sovereignty: the application of the discourse’s legitimacy to a widening pool of entities by changing the set of characteristics which denotes legitimacy. Anderson’s college research subjects foreground sporting prowess and background sexual orientation. At one level this represents no change: sporting prowess remains an unchallenged source of legitimacy. But from another viewpoint there is a new connection: social legitimacy is associated with heterosexuality *as well as* homosexuality. This may seem a relatively small shift in the sense that the legitimacy of homosexuality is old news amongst political progressives. What is significant, however, is the linkage - the articulation - of homosexuality with the hegemonic subject position in masculine authority. The hegemony of masculine authority continues, but the form in which that hegemony is articulated in social life is slightly changed. Via such apparently small steps very large changes in the articulation of nodal points can occur over time, because each small step - each new subject position - becomes available as material for even newer subject positions. As discussed in Chapter 6, media industries and the corporate world are adept at using these new materials for their own ends. Masculinity researchers with progressive politics can also identify and engage in these processes in order to push for desired political outcomes, as their feminist intellectual antecedents have done.

Formulating legitimacy for men

In his research Anderson (2009) finds little change in masculine authority's nodal proposition that social authority resides with men. As the previous two sections show, a discourse's nodal point can endure and undergo a radical transformation in how it is articulated. The transformation in the articulation of sovereignty in democracies suggests that some aspects of sovereignty's nodal point are widely considered to be of continuing value. Such is possible in the case with the discourse of masculine authority.

Masculine authority has the valuable effect of giving social legitimacy in certain circumstances to male persons when they fit a specific formulation of 'men'. While the legitimacy for men which flows from masculine authority pertains only when men's practices fit this relatively narrow specification, nevertheless a valuable outcome is that the discourse gives legitimacy to men in some form. The problem with the social legitimacy emerging from the discourse of masculine authority, then, is not that it generates legitimacy as such, but rather that it authorises men *more so* than women or at the expense of women. In addition, like sovereignty's older form of transcendent and exclusive control, masculine authority excludes specific sorts of men, so that its authority is also at the expense of some men. In other words the problem lies in the basis upon which its authorisation is achieved, rather than that it legitimates men.

This thesis argues that the force of a discourse is its hegemony. That is, a discourse operationalises the ability to convey the impression that the social action under way is to be framed in only one specific way. All discourses frame social action and achieve that framing when conveying sufficient verisimilitude between their nodal proposition about the world and the action being framed. Thus any social legitimacy achieved by a discourse is very closely linked to its nodal point. I suggest (Chapter 4) that the nodal point of masculine authority is something like 'social authority resides with men'. This statement implies a unitary authority which extends all across the social space: there is one social authority, similar to the monarchic version of sovereignty in which a single sovereign entity fills and defines the social space, and this single authority has its agency in masculine authority's subject position 'men'. The discourse of masculine authority, then, achieves its coherence partly by reference to a universal or transcendent authority. It is this discursively generated transcendent authority which Connell mistakes for an empirical reality (see Chapters 4 and 7).

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that a significant discourse which is gradually expanding in social life is the democratic discourse of equality. Feminist discourses are one example of this expansion, and I have argued above that at social sites where feminist discourses gain traction they reduce the spread of masculine authority at those sites. However Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) general point raises the possibility that there could be a major but slow process occurring whereby the traction of transcendent authority is gradually giving way to a legitimacy based on inclusion. Foucault's observations on the emergence of the discourse of governmentality as a shift from transcendent control of territory to a focus on governing a population supports this contention.

As we have seen in the case of sovereignty, this scale and direction of change does not necessarily require the dissolution or negation of the discourse of masculine authority. In this chapter's previous two sections we have seen that the spread of a discourse can change radically, as can its reach, and that new subject positions can be created and stabilised, enabling articulation of the nodal point in quite different forms. In relation to the discourse of masculine authority, what continues to be beneficial is that the discourse offers legitimacy for men in many social situations. However the basis of this legitimacy could be reformulated, or articulated in new ways, around inclusion based on equality rather than transcendent authority.

The burgeoning men's activism around issues of fathering, men's health and boys' education could be seen as examples of attempts to stabilise new subject positions along these lines. This activism may rarely step beyond masculine authority's nodal point and, for this reason, it may be seen as containing an undesirable conservatism (Adkins 2003; McCarry 2007; Robinson 2003). But as I argue in relation to the Connellian framework, such conservatism is evident in pro-feminist scholarship as well, and in itself is not an adequate criterion upon which to reject its usefulness for progressive politics.

The history of feminism over the last two centuries offers many examples of the usefulness and strategic benefit of creating new 'critical' subject positions without ever stepping outside of the existing discourse. Each new subject position enables a discourse's nodal point to be articulated in a new way – that is, a new perspective on the nodal point is possible. An example is the Connellian framework's new insights into the manifestations of masculine authority in social life, such as multiple masculinities and the relations among them. In addition each new subject position exists as a resource in social life available to be articulated with other discourses in the endless process of social

creation. Critical subject positions offer hooks to articulation with other discourses, so that an increase in critical subject positions increases the resources available for new discourses. The multi-discourse view of social life presented in this thesis is intended to offer a conceptual frame through which new subject positions in existing discourses can be viewed by social scientists as potential resources for desirable social change *even when those new subject positions affirm undesirable nodal points*.

Marginalisation and identity

Turning now from discussion of the changes possible in the elements of discourses to the changes possible within identity. This section discusses the marginalisations which arise in every subject position whether hegemonic or not. One of the logical inferences from Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) account of discourses is that the coherence of every discourse is achieved against an incoherence which forms the margin of the discourse, so that meaningful social life entails marginalisation of that which is meaningless. Thus the left wing project of inclusion and equality can never be achieved uniformly across social life. Rather, a sort of operational inclusiveness can be increased by proliferating the number of discourses, so that when groups suffer marginalisation in one discourse it is a relatively small effort to foreground other discourses in which they are legitimated. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) name this approach as radical and plural democracy.

Another significant aspect of the marginalising effect of discourses arises in the subject positions of every discourse. Subject positions come into existence as a set of views and practices which articulate a specific relation to a nodal point. The differences between the subject positions of a discourse energize and enable this articulation, so that one subject position is only ever a partial expression of the discourse's nodal proposition. Thus, although the hegemonic subject position of a discourse strongly supports its nodal point – affirms it and acts as though the nodal proposition is true and already exists, that subject position is not able to articulate opposition to the nodal point. Opposition can of course be expressed by people, but doing so coherently involves taking up another non-hegemonic subject position. Hegemonic subject positions are by definition not marginalised or subordinated, and instead are privileged by their discourse, and this is one of the reasons why such subject positions appear to be desirable.

However all subject positions are partial, in the sense that they articulate part of a nodal point. This partial nature of subject positions also finds its expression in the

personal identity of individuals. The account of self identity as an ensemble of subject positions in Chapter 5 suggests a mechanism by which multiple discourses become incorporated into the lives of individual people, thus enabling people to manage many simultaneous discourses in social life. But alongside the process of learning the skills for social competency, the partial nature of every subject position points to another force which prompts people to make up their identity as an ensemble of subject positions. An identity as an ensemble of subject positions enables a person to enact a variety of modes of being a socially recognisable self. But it is more than a matter of expressing variety. Identity is made up of an ensemble precisely because any one subject position is unable to express a convincingly human social entity. This is so because a single subject position comes into being in relation to only one nodal point, and nodal points are only statements about the world; they are not the richness and complexity of the world or of humanness itself. But in addition, no matter how rich or complex a *nodal point* may be, any of its *subject positions* is only ever a partial articulation of that nodal point. Thus every subject position, even hegemonic subject positions which enjoy the advantage of legitimation in their discourses, involves a marginalisation of aspects of personhood within an individual.

This is true of Connell's 'hegemonic masculinity' or, in my terms, the subject position 'men' of the masculine authority discourse. Being a 'man' of masculine authority is a specific formulation of how-to-be-male which attains its coherence within a frame in which social authority resides with men. The advantages and privileges pertaining to this subject position are very real, but just as real are the associated internal marginalisations which operate within individuals when they take up that subject position. That is, some individual capacities, styles of expression and practices are accentuated and legitimated while others are de-legitimated, denied, dealt with through other intra-psychic devices such as projection, or simply not expressed or not developed. The intra-psychic operations which handle these internal marginalisations are incorporated into other significant formations in the masculine authority discourse, such as the subject position 'women' which handles emotional expression work for 'men' and is constructed as an external focus for male sexuality. The particular formulations of these subject positions underpin well-established social systems such as the corporate world, the sex industry and the institution of marriage. The example in Chapter 5 of Max Mosley gives a sample of the variety of ways in which ordinary human complexity can be incorporated into an ensemble identity, and how the subject positions in this ensemble form are elements in existing social systems.

The internal marginalisation involved in taking up any subject position in a discourse cannot be resolved by taking up some new subject position which does not involve marginalisation, since marginalisation is part and parcel of taking actions which are socially meaningful. Rather, as with Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) suggestion of radical and plural democracy, a more satisfactory approach is to reduce the vulnerability to extensive or continuous marginalisation by increasing the number of subject positions making up the ensemble of a person's identity, so that a greater variety of personal attributes, skills or qualities can be enacted. This complexification of identity, or what could be called an *enriching* of identity, is beneficial up to a certain point, since people have limits of time, skill and energy. However at the lower end of the range of possibilities, a person whose ensemble of identity includes only one or two subject positions will very likely benefit from more.

This possibility of enriching personal identity could be a key strategic asset in fostering progressive change among men. The extensive traction of the masculine authority discourse and the quantity of its associated social resources create its hegemonic subject position 'men' as immensely attractive and desirable. As a result, in the face of its privilege and authorisation it is relatively hard to see the marginalisations involved in that subject position as drawbacks or negatives for the men who incorporate that subject position into their identity ensemble. An excellent example of this difficulty is how the gendered differential in mortality and morbidity in Western countries is commonly framed. Despite the extremely widespread nature of this phenomenon and the extremely well-established empirical data which reveals it, Connell (2000:193) is able to conclude that in matters of health men are not worse off than women. One orthodox explanation of men's poor health and life span is that individual men engage in risk-taking behaviours in order to enact socially desirable forms of masculinity, and that a small number of men do this which skews the statistical average for men, thus creating the appearance of a general difference between men and women (Schofield *et al.* 2000:249-250). In other words, socially desirable forms of masculinity have no inherent drawbacks for men themselves, but some men are mistaken in how they enact masculinity, producing lower averages for men overall.

Men's health activists are currently attempting to replace this 'men behaving badly' view with a 'social determinants of health' approach which recognises that systemic disadvantages exist for men arising from current gender arrangements and other aspects

of social life (McDonald 2006; Smith & Robertson 2008). In discursive terms, the men behaving badly view rejects the possibility that marginalisation can be associated with the hegemonic subject position – in other words, the men behaving badly view emerges from within the masculine authority discourse where the hegemonic subject position can only be seen as advantaged. The social determinants of health view attempts to formulate a ‘men’ which is linked to discourses of care and equality as well as gender, and is thus relatively innovative.

The emerging men’s health theme is only one example of potential enrichment of men’s identities, however. Another example is in men who use psychological or personal growth work tools to examine their gender identity. Connell’s view of these projects is that they are an attempt to rehabilitate hegemonic masculinity in the face of feminist destabilisations – “masculinity therapy” (1995:206), rather than genuine change. In contrast, Magnusson’s (2007) longitudinal ethnographic research shows the extent to which the privileges flowing from hegemonic masculinity to men can be re-framed by men themselves to be of little value and even actively destructive of their own well-being. The study’s participants do not necessarily cease to take up hegemonic masculinity in response to this re-framing (though some do). But all participants, over a period of years, construct new subject positions or take up other subject positions which link them to other discourses. In discursive terms, this study’s participants could be enriching their identities.

A further possibility for change at the level of identity arises in the potential for change in the formulation of masculine authority’s ‘men’ so as to encompass some practices which are commonly subordinated or marginalised in that discourse. Anderson’s (2009) study of US college men, discussed above, finds an emerging ‘inclusive’ masculinity which accepts homosexuality within a subject position that in most other respects appears conventionally hegemonic. In this move, the legitimacy and basis of masculine authority may not be significantly questioned, but the collection of practices which signify it is expanded. There are payoffs for men from this expansion, in terms of opportunities for personal expression, increased ease in social relating, and even in workplace technical proficiency (Anderson 2009:128-9).

In summary, the ‘men’ of masculine authority (or Connell’s hegemonic masculinity) benefit from that hegemonic position within the social terrain achieved by its originary discourse. Such benefits are enabled because other possibilities are

subordinated or marginalised. The Connellian framework highlights the social and personal costs borne by groups of people who take up non-hegemonic subject positions or who are marginalised by the discourse. However this section theorises a view that the hegemonic subject positions in discourses also entail marginalisations *for the people who take up those hegemonic subject positions*. In relation to fostering progressive change among men this theorisation enables an identification of the drawbacks to privilege which are part of the expression and enjoyment of privilege itself. In very simple terms, power comes at a price, and that price is partly paid by the powerful.

In terms of academic involvement in fostering progressive change, the internal marginalisations of hegemonic privilege can be more closely examined and highlighted, and in this project there is a great deal of data already developed in men's gender activism since the 1970s. Magnuson's (2007) study, discussed above, uncovers only a tiny amount of this data. Also the many ways men routinely deal with these internal marginalisations can be elicited by research. For example, building on Legman (1978), an argument could be made that dirty jokes and the widespread whingeing about wives and marriage in which men engage are ways to incorporate these internal marginalisations into workable subject positions.

Such potential research has the valuable attribute of fostering progressive change by emphasising how *men themselves* can benefit from change. This approach is far from a simplistic reversal of feminist propositions about gender inequality, such as Farrell's (1994) *Myth of Male Power*. Indeed, crucially, the argument here is that the marginalisations suffered by masculine authority's 'men' are precisely related to their privileges. Nor is it an argument for men to claim a kind of 'poor little rich boy' victimhood. Rather, one important conclusion from Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) account of hegemony is that progressive political action must entail the proliferation of discourses, so that the marginalisations inevitable in every discourse and every hegemony can be more easily countered by foregrounding other discourses in which those specific marginalisations do not pertain. Similarly, the inevitable internal marginalisation involved in taking up any subject position can be diluted when people enrich their identity by incorporating a wider set of subject positions into the ensemble of their identity.