Masculinity, fathers and family literacy:

Glimpses behind the 'hard-man' front

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Abstract

A new area of gender and education research explored the relationship between social constructions of masculinities and family literacy work, with 20 men from inner-city Dublin working-class communities. As a consequence of the economic downturn in Ireland, the breadwinner role for many men was exchanged, involuntarily, for that of stay-at-home father (SAHF). Photovoice and a feminist, Freirean research methodology innovatively supported the collective exchange of the men's compelling narratives of care. A series of community-based photography workshops, group discussions and follow-on one-to-one interviews took place with dads who were newly responsible for their children's domestic and learning care. The findings suggest that in their new locations, and despite the influence of patriarchal structures, the men were summoning their agency, crossing gendered lines of demarcation and engaging in 'women's work'. The men's narratives point to significant regendering of family care roles and the destabilisation of cross-generational reproductions of masculinity. The creative methodology rehearsed and contributed to the further, deeper disruption of patriarchal norms. Men participated fluently and empathetically in collaborative conversations about masculinity, care and fatherhood thereby freely and un-stereotypically engaging in public 'care talk' and counter-narratives of masculinity.

Reay's (2010) tripartite theoretical framework: temporality, spatiality and relationality, forms an analytical base for the final analysis of the data. Despite the historic social construction of their masculinities as hard-men and their alienation from literacy, these SAHFs were significantly recalibrating their masculinity towards learning care relationships in both the private and public domain. They were transforming understandings of masculinity in community landscapes through their increasingly confident presentation of themselves as hands-on, involved fathers concerned with all dimensions of their children's educational development.

This is important in the context of widespread concern about persistent literacy inequalities in Ireland and beyond. Boys' literacy performance is declining at a time when traditional and technological literacies are central to personal, social and economic wellbeing. In particular, boys and young men from socially disadvantaged groups are most implicated in basic educational inequalities while their middle-class counterparts continue to maintain their positions of privilege. Traditionally, a stubborn gendered attitude to literacy, alongside a gendered division of care work has prevented many fathers from participation in

supporting children's literacy. Consequently, children do not benefit from fathers as literacy role models and carers, and women continue to bear a gendered, unequal share of family care labour. This study showed signs of a shift in these entrenched gender and educational inequalities.

The men voiced the need for support with understanding and enacting their new gendered identities. This signals an opening for adult education to build on this successful research process through addressing issues of gender de/construction, creating opportunities for dialogue and reflection about masculinity and fatherhood and facilitating praxis in areas of literacy and gender where harmful inequalities are maintained and reproduced.

Acronyms

CAQDA   Computer assisted qualitative data analysis

DEIS   Delivering equality of opportunity in schools

DES   Department of Education and Skills

DL   Distance Learning

DNA   Deoxyribonucleic acid

ERC   Educational Research Centre

ETB   Education and Training Boards

EU   European Union

IALS   International Adult Literacy Survey

MEd   Masters in Education

NALA   National Adult Literacy Agency

NESF   National Economic and Social Forum

NLS   New Literacy Studies

OECD   Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development

PIAAC   Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies

PISA   Programme for International Student Assessment

TASC   Think-tank for Action on Social Change

UK   United Kingdom

UN   United Nations

US   United States

Chapter 1

Introduction: Rationale, context and content

This study set out to identify the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' experience of family literacy learning care work. As such, a primary goal was to uncover and discuss issues relating to men's gendered identities as fathers and by association how their needs might be supported in adult education. The empirical research presented here, makes important contributions to understandings of gender and family literacy and the findings challenge masculinity theory which essentialises men (Connell, 1995).

Despite gender grooming by patriarchal structures such as the family and the education system on their masculinity the men in this study, who were all from working-class communities, were found to be developing a revised and resistant masculinity for themselves, one that fitted with their relocation as stay at home fathers (SAHFs). Whilst the primary focus of this enquiry is the impact of patriarchal gender constructs on fathers I am conscious of the intersecting impact on gender of class, sexuality and ethnicity and some of these cross-cutting factors are in evidence in the men's diverse narratives.

In their new positioning as SAHFs, and without role models to draw from, the fathers in this study were laying aside many of the ideals of masculinity which had taught them to disconnect from others and to develop what some of the participants referred to as a 'hard-man front'. Despite their traditional gender grooming fathers were found to be flexible (up to a point) about their identities and recalibrating their masculinity towards

care in the private and public spheres. They were developing their subjectivity towards *'caring for'* children in the private space of the home. This care work included support for family literacy learning and the background domestic care work that enables children to flourish. Significantly, and further disrupting cross-generational representations of masculinity in working-class communities, men were presenting new meanings of masculinity in community landscapes through their hands on care for children in the public space.

The feminist photovoice methodology, employed in this study, tapped into social processes that illuminated masculinities, supporting participants to break through gendered norms that depict men as inexpressive and unwilling to reveal their vulnerabilities. Fathers were publicly participating in counter-narratives of what I am calling *'care talk'* with other men. They were expressing their love for their children, revealing what one man described as 'soft bits' to one another. Stigmatised, pathologised and essentialised representations of fathers from working-class communities were disrupted in this study where men emerged as caring, connected and involved fathers. Furthermore the research findings signified some meaningful regendering of care labour during recessionary times.

Journey towards the research enquiry

Etherington (2004) reminds us that 'we are embodied beings and a product of our history and our culture' (*Ibid.* 23). For her, reflexive feminist research reveals something of the life story of the researcher in relation to the study. Such transparency brings to light the

values and beliefs that influence the research process and outcomes and I hope that my path towards the research topic provides such insight into my motivations for embarking on this research journey.

I am a radical feminist, and an egalitarian who is passionate about gender justice and I have worked in the area of critical adult education for more than twenty years. These worldviews and experiences are some elements of the backstory to this Ph.D.

> ....a feminist perspective not only makes sense of the world which we inhabit (epistemology); it is also a way of being in the world (ontology) and of guiding our research practices (methodology). (Byrne & Lentin 2000: 52)

My feminism and awareness of gender power inequalities emerged from and was shaped by my personal experience and reflections on the impact of patriarchal privilege, power and prerogative that is afforded to men (Connell, 1995; Stoltenberg, 1994). My journey to adulthood instilled in me an acute understanding of gender power inequalities between women and men and the damaging impact of ubiquitous patriarchal systems, which perpetuated that power (Connell 1995, 2000, 2002; Dworkin, 1981; Johnson 2005).

I grew up in a middle-class family in South County Dublin in the 1960s. My father worked as a travelling salesman for a film organisation. He was on the road during much of the week leaving my sisters, my mother and me the freedom of a very female home space. His return would entail an immediate and remarkable constraint of this freedom. When my father was home his every humour governed our lives. He would give and withhold favour. He would give and hold money. He would give and hold love. He was in control. We learned how to be compliant. Patriarchy granted him this power that was upheld by institutions of the church and state and legitimised through legal structures that affirmed

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male domination over women and children (Inglis, 1998; Lerner, 1986; O'Toole, 2015b). This power appeared natural and unquestionable. We, the oppressed, accepted our roles within this hegemonic order (Lukes, 2005). My father was a gendered product of his times. He was constructed to be a responsible breadwinner. He upheld this role well. However there were undoubted costs to the privileges he held. He was emotionally distant from his children and he was excluded by his unreflexive acceptance of this breadwinning role from intimate connection with his daughters. Thus, these early years deeply imprinted on me an acute embodied, emotional and intellectual understanding of patriarchal power and this has shaped my own way of being in this world, the work I have been drawn to and my approach to such work.

During the 1980s I had the experience of being an at-home mum. The growing-up years of my two daughters and son saw me replicating in some ways the life my mother had led. The patriarchal, socially constructed institutions of the family and motherhood (Holter, 2005; Rich, 1976; Tong, 1998) with their harmful unequal gendered roles of heroic male breadwinner and undervalued, invisible female caregiver encircled me and might have defined me. Alternative possibilities and analysis emerged following a Women's Studies Certificate programme in University College Dublin. This opened up an intriguing world of feminist theory and debate which, through the practice of reflexivity, helped me to make sense of my own feelings and observations about my life and the lives of women in Ireland and further afield. I began to understand that power was not only about oppression and repression. A 'feminist theory of power' (Hartsock, 1983, 224) alluded to energy and competence rather than domination. This feminist viewpoint recognised that power holds elements of dynamic agency and creativity at its centre: it infused the heart of everyday

life, of human relations, of desires and pleasure and when usefully exercised it could be used individually and collectively to resist oppression (Barr, 1999). This feminist view rejected definitions of power solely as domination and hopefully construed power as 'the capacity to produce a change' (Miller, 1992, 241). At that time, my life experience and adult education studies ignited in me a thirst for an understanding of power and powerlessness in relation to deeply gendered inequalities that constructed oppressive and limiting identities for women and girls. Indeed even then, as the mother of a son and two daughters and the wife of a man, I was deeply curious about harmful patriarchy and how it divided us from one another. I became conscious of patriarchy's power to bind and damage everyone in our gendered culture (hooks, 2004) whilst also joyfully recognising my own power in relation to change and transformation.

And so, from a perspective which views the social world as constructed and as such mutable, alongside a conviction that feminist intervention could make significant contributions to bring about social change (Vargas, 2003), I began to work in the social justice context of critical adult education. This brought me into relationship with women who experienced physical and sexual violence, with adult men and women who were deeply affected by having unmet literacy needs and with communities who had been multiply disadvantaged by state negligence. These experiences prompted me to seek out more education and heralded a return to Maynooth University and the Department of Adult and Community Education where I was introduced to the philosophy and practice of radical education.

Both work and learning experiences, alongside my personal experience as a woman, have deeply influenced how I see myself and how I am in the world. I am a critical adult educator, I am a feminist and I am an egalitarian. As such I am most interested and committed to research and activism that contributes to a more just, more equal and loving world.

In 2010 I was involved in two literacy research studies for the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). The first study into Distance Learning (DL) (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010a). prompted me to do an MEd in Adult and Community Education. During the course of that study I began to understand for the first time the far-reaching regulatory impacts on boys and men of their socially constructed masculinity.

> We men are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval. It is other men who evaluate the performance. (Connell, 1995, 128)

Men interviewed for the study into DL felt that without sufficient literacy their masculine identities were weakened. Furthermore, and confirming Connell's insight into masculinity, the research revealed the deep fear that men held of the powerful denigrating gaze of other men.

> It's a macho thing. Men don't want to look bad. We don't want to look weak. We are meant to be strong and to know what we are doing. (Male research participant, Hegarty, 2010, Unpublished M.Ed.)

The stigma associated with having unmet literacy needs compounded feelings of powerlessness for male adult learners using DL and stopped them from participating in more public mainstream literacy provision. Their stories and painful vulnerabilities awoke a surprising curiosity in me about masculinity and its construction.

A subsequent inquiry (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010b) with parents from some of the most disadvantaged communities in Ireland about their experience of family literacy propelled me a step closer to the research question. Reflecting the traditional gender role assigned to women, as those responsible for children's literacy and language development, the research confirmed that mothers were mostly involved in family literacy work with children. These research experiences, my curiosity about the construction of masculinity and a belief in gender justice as a worthwhile goal have supported and sustained this four year feminist study into the relationship between constructs of masculinity and fathers' experience of family literacy learning care work.

Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in the rich theoretical literature from the fields of feminism, masculinity studies, critical education and literacy studies (Connell 1995, 2000, 2011; Fineman, 2004, 2013; Hamilton & Barton, 2000; Luttrell, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2012, 2013; Reay, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2010, 2015; Tett, 2000, 2001, 2014). Feminist and Freirean perspectives are a solid underpinning scaffold to all aspects of the theory and practice of the research. Nonetheless, finding a single theoretical framework for this study has been a complex journey for me. I was torn between the apparent security of setting out with a fixed conceptual framework in mind that provided a clear agenda for data gathering and analysis, and a more fluid and organic approach that relied on the emergence of the deep stories of men's lives to guide me towards a really useful and congruent framework. I wanted to avoid research data 'being poured into a given theoretical mold' (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, 6).

As a feminist and experienced adult education group practitioner, I did not want to limit discussions or let a rigid framework dominate the research group processes. Like Freire (1998) I have great faith and belief in the expertise people have in their own lives and in the dynamic power of dialogue and reflection to bring about emancipatory understandings of the socially constructed world (Connolly, 2008). Such critical dialogue can be the catalyst for the very praxis that is one of the primary goals of critical adult education spaces. I value and see the power of local stories to shed light on our socially constructed gendered world. My interest was not in finding knowledge that would fit into and reinforce previously chosen theories about people and the world (Etherington, 2004). Rather I approached the research from a position of 'not knowing', one of deep curiosity about the human condition and in particular an interest in finding out about the gendered relationships between masculinities and family literacy learning care work. I hoped the research would further illuminate current gendered inequalities in the field of family literacy, where learning care labour has traditionally been women's work (NALA, 2010; Rose, 2007).

I was conscious that I would be working with a vulnerable group, with unemployed men from working-class communities who have had to grapple with the impact of global recession on their lives, and the lives of their families and communities.

I was aware of the literature relating to the challenges of encouraging men to speak about their private and emotional selves (Sattel, 1976; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001) and that it was likely that men would be unused to speaking of their experiences as fathers with other men.

Adopting a feminist and Freirean approach to the research I designed a participatory adult education process which would support the emergence of the men's 'many layered stories' (Etherington, 2004, 23).

Along the research route and guided by the literature review, I considered several potential conceptual and theoretical structures. Readings of Bourdieu (1977, 1984; 1987; 2001) provided inspiring insights into habitus, fields, capitals and masculine domination all of which have relevance in the context of this study. As a facilitator of adult education rather than a social scientist, like Reay (2015) I found his objective and scientific concepts lacking in emphasis on the centrality of human emotion and affect in our messy human lives. Reeser's (2011) framework of institutions, culture, discourse and practice in relation to ideologies of masculinity appeared useful when first encountered, however it also lacked an emphasis on affect. The equality framework developed by Baker, Lynch, Cantillon, and Walsh, (2009), was also considered and the focus on the centrality of care in their work appealed greatly to me. At the same time, as an ex-history teacher I missed the inclusion of the impact of the past on the present that so strongly underpins Bourdieu's work.

It was therefore the work of Diane Reay (2010) and her tripartite framework of temporality, spatiality and relationality that made most sense to me. Building on Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, field and capitals, and working from a feminist perspective, Reay developed her framework to consider the relationship between social class inequalities and the education system. Here, I innovatively use the framework in a different but related context to inquire into gendered inequalities in education, with a specific focus on relationships between masculinities and family literacy. In more recent

work Reay (2015) brought to light the key importance of the role of affect and emotions in conceptualisations of habitus. The study presented here has a particular emphasis on such essential human characteristics. Reay's focus in *Class Work: Mothers Involvement in their Children's Schooling* (1998) was on the invisibility of mothers in parental discourses and on the relationship between class and educational inequalities. This study of fathers' care work, turns towards men who are at home caring for children and supporting children's educational journey. The contribution of fathers to this care work in Reay's study was marginal whilst this research project has found men moving to a more central role in carrying out this day-to-day learning care work.

Economic and social context

The global economic crisis has resulted in some disruption and restructuring of patriarchal, socially constructed, gendered parenting roles and such changes bring both challenges and opportunities. In Ireland, as the recession deepened, high levels of unemployment spread across the male-dominated construction industry (Barry & Conroy, 2012). As a consequence, the one-time breadwinner found himself in the unfamiliar role of fulltime family carer whilst his partner, often in poorly paid and part-time employment, provided financially for the family (Think Tank for Social Change (TASC), 2016).

The State of the World's Fathers Report (Levtov, Van der Gagg, Greene, Kaufman & Barker, 2015) found that whilst men globally wanted to be more engaged in the lives of their children, the demands of a neoliberal marketplace and inflexible workplaces precluded many from involved fathering. This institutionalised patriarchal view of men as carefree actors consequently left women doing most of the caregiving. Women now make up forty

per cent of the global workforce yet they also continue to do ten times more caregiving and domestic work than men (*Ibid.*). *The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030* (UN, 2016) have gender equality as a key priority. Recognising that such gender equality cannot be achieved without the engagement of men and boys, one of the goal's key targets (5.4) is the promotion of shared responsibility for the unpaid care and domestic work within households. The marketplace, and in turn nation states, gain exponentially from the largely unresourced, uncompensated caretaking work of women (Fineman, 2004: Fraser, 2013). As such, societies are 'free riders' on the backs of female care labour and this unpaid care work underwrites the durability of male power (Hanlon & Lynch, 2011, 47).

Embedded within disparaging discourses about working-class parents, fathers are relegated to the realms of deficit and pathology (Reay, 2004). Furthermore, unlike their middle-class neighbours, stigmatised disadvantaged parents may not have the necessary resources to do the more specific learning support work that is the focus of this study (Reay, 1998). Demonising views of parents from poor communities are compounded through media portrayals of them as uninterested in their children's education (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010). Yet research shows that all parents value literacy skills and regardless of parents' own basic skill levels, they report that they want their children to do well and to support their learning in school (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010; Ortiz, 2004).

Literacy and literate activities have been construed by ideals of hegemonic masculinities as of little value (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Renold, 2001). They are viewed as passive and belonging in the feminine, therefore subordinate, domain (Martino & Berrill, 2003). By association, the relationship some men have with literacy also effects their involvement in

family literacy learning care work (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010; Karther, 2002; Nichols 2002) and these issues are central to this consideration of fathers and family literacy learning care work.

Snapshot of research site

The community landscape of the research participants' homeplaces had surface markers of neglect etched into their terrain. One location was an area of recently halted 'regeneration'. Dilapidated flats complexes sat side by side with newly built modern apartments and shopping units. Many of the shopping units remained boarded up with faded 'For rent' signs dangling from windows. These were once a testament to the failed Public Private Partnerships[1] that for a short period of time proffered hope for a better future. This was before the economic crisis that ended in the collapse of any possibility of local communities ever again trusting state promises (Bissett, 2008). Other research sites had similar markers, old and new inner-city developments that were characterised by a lack of green spaces for children, boarded up windows, roads with speed ramps, and traces of scorched tyre marks where night-time 'joy riders' had been busy.

Research sites were located in both the north inner-city and in the inner suburbs south of Dublin. These areas were designated as deprived by Haase & Pratschke (2012) and experienced higher than average rates of early school leaving and unemployment. I am conscious of these coldly descriptive words as I write them. The poverty discourse, heard so frequently over our airwaves, at conferences and during everyday encounters in adult

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[1] Public Private Partnerships were founded by the Irish Government in 1999. They marked the dilution of public sector responsibility for public infrastructure and services, paving the way for the involvement of private companies in such provision.

and community forums can become emptied out of meaning and disconnected from the lived reality of people's day-to-day lives. Yet, they have just such poignant relevance in the lives of the men I met during the course of this study. Their generously shared narratives were vibrant, complex, affectively rich and humane. The stories filled out terms such as 'excluded', 'marginalised', 'unemployed', and 'early school leaver' and traced the associated harm of deep, multiple and intergenerational social inequalities. The stories also exposed the ways in which the men were oppressed by the same gender system that oppressed women. However, this patriarchal oppression was qualitatively different. It carried privilege with it for even the most powerless men whilst it endangered women's safety and as the statistics about violence against women starkly show had cost some women their lives (Dowd, 2010). As such, men as a collective group still possess greater societal power and privilege even when individual men feel powerless (Kaufman, 1999).

Literacy in Ireland

In September 2015 President Higgins stated that

> Literacy, is a gateway to participation in society, it is a fundamental right and must be a priority for all who are concerned with human rights and equality (Pollak, 2015).

He added that the State had a 'great distance to travel yet' before achieving robust literacy development across Ireland. Prior to the 1970s there was scant official recognition of issues relating to adult literacy in Ireland. The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) was established in 1980 and its remit was threefold: to act as a coordinating body for those involved in literacy work, to raise awareness of the issue and to lobby for funding and recognition of the issue. NALA's current definition of literacy combines a functional

and a socio-cultural view of literacy whilst also acknowledging literacy's emancipatory

potential.

> Literacy involves listening and speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and using everyday
> technology to communicate and handle information. But it includes more than the
> technical skills of communication: it also has personal, social and economic dimensions.
> Literacy increases the opportunity for individuals and communities to reflect on their
> situation explore new possibilities and initiate change. The definition of literacy is also
> changing as the concept of "literacies" becomes more widely understood. This concept
> recognises that people use different skills for various real-life situations, for example using
> a computer, reading instructions or understanding a payslip. (NALA, 2012, 6)

Since NALA's foundation a series of international literacy studies have been undertaken by

the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to measure the

functional literacy levels of human capital within and between countries. The earliest

surveys such as the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (OECD, 1997) focused on

literacy and numeracy skills whilst the most recent study, the Programme for the

International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (OECD, 2012) included

measurement of broader concepts such as problem solving in a technology rich society.

This marked a move beyond the measurement of literacy towards an assessment of the

stock of knowledge and ability of populations to perform labour, in order to produce

economic value and boost competitiveness. The gathering of such data is undoubtedly

powerful and adult education and literacy learning agendas have been directly impacted

by OECD and EU policy arising from the increase in the measurement and assessment of

adult literacy skills across continents (Hamilton, 2012). Funding and curriculum content

follow on from such political arithmetic and current focus on family literacy is a direct

consequence of concerns about falling literacy standards in some countries (Eivers, Shiel,

& Shortt, 2004; National Adult Literacy Agency, 2004; National and Economic Social Forum, 2009).

Family literacy in Ireland

Irish family literacy practice emerged from a large body of locally relevant research that suggested that work with families can make significant difference to children's later learning experiences and outcomes (Department of Education and Science, 2000; Eivers et al, 2004; NALA 2004; NESF, 2009). In particular, studies have shown that interventions that support parents in the development of language and literacy skills and with constructing a positive home learning environment, can have a marked impact on their confidence as learning facilitators and on children's achievement (Archer & Shortt, 2003; Archer & Weir, 2004).

Family literacy is now a policy priority for NALA who are partners in the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People (Department of Education and Skills, 2011). NALA specifically promotes family literacy for those adults who have themselves missed out on the benefits of schooling and so face additional challenges in supporting their children's learning. Consequently, family literacy is viewed as

> learning that begins with the lived reality of parents and carers and supports the learning that happens in the home and in communities; breaks down barriers between learning in different contexts; gives vital support to parents whose own education has been limited for various reasons; and develops both children's and adults' literacy learning (NALA, 2004: 9).

Although this constitutes a learner-friendly approach to family literacy, it stops short of dealing with the unequal gender balance in family literacy work and so mothers remain the primary participants in provision.

International Adult Literacy Survey

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (OECD, 1997) found that 25% of Irish adults had significant literacy difficulty and led to a 'sudden and urgent attention to adult literacy' (Hamilton, 2012, 14). Subsequently, and without marked outcome, successive governments have introduced policy initiatives aimed at addressing low literacy levels. The IALS was not without its critics. Hamilton and Barton (2000) reviewed the findings from a perspective that literacy is socially situated and does not lend itself easily to being defined and tested in a positivist manner such as the quantitative approach of the IALS. They argued that the standardised measurement tool employed by IALS produced only a partial picture of a mechanistic practice of literacy. In so doing it decontextualised literacy events from all that was socially and culturally relevant to that practice and was therefore based on an 'impoverished view of the roles of literacy in society' (Hamilton & Barton, 2000: 381).

The Programme for International Student Assessment

In 2011 the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2011) indicated a dramatic decline in literacy and mathematics standards among Irish 15-year-olds. More specifically, data suggested that one-in-four teenage boys lacked the literacy skills to function effectively in today's society. This worsening trend is reflected across the

EU, the US and Canada where literacy and early school-leaving are both gendered issues (Lynch & Feeley, 2009). Concern about boys' literacy grew accordingly.

The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People (DES, 2011) recognised parents' important role in supporting children's literacy development highlighting how parental engagement in children's learning impacted directly on school performance (Desforge & Abouchaar, 2003). Consequently the Strategy committed to help parents and communities support children's literacy and numeracy development. Family literacy programmes became integral to the National Strategy and the responsibility to improve child literacy was foisted on poorly resourced parents.

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

Most recently, in 2013, Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) reported its findings about the literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills of 127,000, 16-65 year olds in 24 industrialised nations. The PIAAC agenda was primarily concerned with human capital and productivity.

> Without proper investment in skills, people languish on the margins of society, technological progress does not translate into economic growth, and countries can no longer compete in an increasingly knowledge-based global society. (OECD 2012, 3)

Data from PIAAC showed that 1 in 6 Irish adults, eighteen per cent of the population was at or below Level 1 on a 5 level literacy scale. Level 1 signified that a person may be unable to understand basic written information such as reading a bus timetable or medicine instructions. Level 3 is construed as 'the level considered by experts as a suitable minimum level for coping with the increasing demands of the emerging knowledge economy' (OECD & Statistics Canada 2005, 31). Considering these figures from a different

perspective, eighty-two per cent of the population, 5 out of 6 adults are above Level 1 and therefore deemed equipped in OECD terms for the demands of the economy. Some people in Ireland get the literacy they need to flourish in life whilst others do not. Although numbers appear to offer certainty and closure on debates about what literacy is and what it is for (Hamilton, 2013a), quantitative data do not provide insight into the relationship between levels of adult skills and for example national and individual well-being (Darcovich, 2000).

PIAAC showed that people who had the greatest levels of unmet literacy needs often had no or low qualification; earned less income; were unemployed; trusted people less; had poorer health; felt that they had little impact on political processes leaving them less likely to participate in civic life.

> The data illustrate that the ability to score well on literacy tests is socially distributed in the same way as wealth, health, political efficacy, and trust in others. So the most fortunate get the best education, housing, skills preparation, jobs and pay, while the least fortunate experience multiple deprivations affecting several categories. (St Clair, 2014, 203)

PIAAC did not concern itself with why such inequalities existed for individuals. The numbers provided few insights into the nuances of unequal literacy distribution where those with the greatest levels of unmet literacy needs came from resource poor communities such as those in prisons, people who were homeless, Irish Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, low paid workers, lone parents, long term unemployed and people with disabilities (Corridan, 2002; Hegarty & Feeley, 2012; Morgan & Kett, 2003; Owen, 2000; Ward, 2002). In recessionary times, those with unmet literacy needs,

dependent on manual work, have few capitals to draw on in seeking alternative work (Barry & Conroy, 2012).

Proponents of PIAAC see the benefits of adult literacy education through a narrow prism of job opportunities and global competitiveness markers. They ignore the myriad other social, family and community benefits of literacy such as better health and wellbeing, improved children's educational achievements, participation in social and democratic processes and the enjoyment of a broader range of informational and entertainment resources.

Adult literacy provision in Ireland is currently the responsibility of Education and Training Board (ETB) Adult Literacy Services. From a budget of thirty million euros they provide adults with between 2 and 6 hours adult literacy tuition a week (NALA, 2014). Much of this provision is shaped by worldwide discourse relating to the skills required by the labour market. The neoliberal agenda and the demands of multi-national companies drive this discourse and impact on national policies and practices. Hamilton (2013b) contends that the OECD and the EU view countries and their citizens as competitors in a global marketplace and identifies an international drive to measure performance across nations in order to develop common measures of achievement. She suggests that this in turn reflects a view of literacy as a commodity that can be traded in the international markets of education and employment.

Neoliberal thinking legitimises political decision-making and feeds into an un-nuanced view of people as homogenised beings who can be molded to meet the needs of an ever-hungry marketplace that benefits the few at the expense of the many. Furthermore it

points to a worrying 'seamless extension of economic objectives into education' (Tett, 2014, 139). It is poles apart from a conceptualisation of a society, a political and education system that is built around people's needs and inevitable vulnerabilities and where the social function of the state is decoupled from a privatised market. Such a perspective shift would be concerned with promoting and ensuring equality of condition and focus on measurement based on a societal commitment to the equitable valuing and support of those who are most vulnerable (Fineman, 2004). It would view literacy not as a commodity but rather as a social good, to be distributed equally amongst citizens and would resource all parents to share really useful learning with new generations.

Study limitations and further studies

The project described here is novel in an Irish context in that it adopted a photovoice methodology and community and literacy practitioner research paradigm. It captures the experiences of family learning with men in a specific community during a time of upheaval and is therefore indicative rather than representative.

Further studies with middle-class, employed, ethnic minority and other diverse groups of men would extend and elaborate the findings. Additionally, data collection with the research participants in a changed economic and employment environment might also prove interesting.

Thesis outline

The research is presented in 10 further chapters. Literature relating to the 3 underpinning themes of the research, masculinities, fatherhood and family literacy and learning form the content of Chapters 2, 3 and 4. These chapters provide a solid conceptual base for the

empirical findings. Chapter 2 explores the radical impact of patriarchy on gender inequality and examines literature relating to the emergence of feminist and masculinities' scholarship. In Chapter 3 the theme of masculinity continues but with a turn towards socially constructed fatherhood. Chapters 4 and 5 explore issues relating to the interconnections between boys and men's relationship with literacy.

Chapters 6 and 7 relate to the methodological choices made during the course of this feminist and creative qualitative empirical study. Chapter 6 presents an account of the fieldwork that supported the emergence of the richly affective and multi-layered stories of the twenty fathers who participated in the research. Chapter 7 discusses photovoice and reflections on its use in the context of this study and so contains both methodological and data-related issues.

The findings from the research are presented in 3 Chapters that correspond to the main themes of the study. Chapter 8 focuses on the findings relating to the formation of the men's masculinities. Chapter 9 explores the data about fatherhood and the final findings' Chapter (10) discusses the men's relationship and experience of literacy and family literacy learning. Chapter eleven concludes by summarising the research design and implications. It presents concluding reflections on this enquiry into the relationship between ideals of masculinity, fathers and family literacy learning care work drawing on Reay's framework: temporality, spatiality and relationality. Finally, the men's suggestions for adult and community education's role in further enabling their care talk and care work are discussed.

Chapter 2

Patriarchy, feminisms and masculinities

Women are strong, bold and brave, but men and boys also have a big role to play in ending gender inequality. (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2014).

Introduction

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Under Secretary General of the United Nations' words remind us that gender inequality is not only a women's issue. It exists in a context of gender relations and can only be transformed when men and boys join with women to eliminate such inequalities. This chapter turns towards a discussion of the literature relating to patriarchy, feminisms and masculinities in order to more fully understand the intersection of powerful patriarchal ideals of masculinities with fathers' relationship with family literacy learning care.

Providing the background for the emergence of theories about masculinity the first section of this chapter traces the development of myriad, dynamic and influential movements and scholarship through various 'waves' of feminism. Subsequently, Section 2 presents men's response to feminism and the emergence of the antifeminist and the profeminist men's movement. Associated and ongoing debates about the meanings of masculinity follow.

Section 1. Feminism Introduction

Feminism is 'one of the oldest and most powerful social justice movements the world has ever known' (Mackay, 2015, 6). Whatever our positionality to feminism, it is clear when we look back over the broad sweep of history that some form of feminism has been

around and influencing change for millennia. The often overlooked foremothers of the feminist movement include Sappho (d.c. 570 BCE), Hildegard von Bingen (d.1179), Olympe de Gouges (d. 1793), Mary Wollstencroft (d. 1797), Jane Austen (d. 1797) and here in Ireland Anna Doyle Wheeler (d. 1848). Standing on the shoulders of the named and unnamed women who have gone before, the diverse movement that is feminism continues to evolve and strive for greater gender justice in both the public and private domains (Baker et al, 2009; Dowd, 2010; Fineman, 2004; Fraser, 2013; Humm, 1992).

Globally, feminists continue to invest their creativity in many campaigns and actions to change unequal gendered structures and to improve the life course of women and girls (Ferree & Tripp, 2006; Kristoff & WuDunn, 2009; Mackay, 2015; Mohanty, 2004; Van der Gagg, 2014). Alongside such advocacy, feminists have developed an impressive body of theory and feminist literature to inform and support their activism. Feminist reflection, theory and literature have brought to light the impact of patriarchy on women's lives (Dworkin, 1988; hooks, 2000a, 2000b Millett, 1970). By association, feminist and profeminist scholarship (Connell, 2000, 2002; Gardiner, 2005; Hearn, 2004; Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell, 2005; Segal, 1990) have laid the foundational work for the emergence of masculinity studies through the identification and analysis of the harm that patriarchal ideals of masculinity have wrought in the lives of men.

I will firstly explore the concept of patriarchy which has been identified by feminists as one of the key systems and structures which privileges those who are male over those who are female (Millett, 1970; Walby, 1990). In reflecting upon patriarchy it is important to think across both the wider public structural contexts as well as the impact of men's socially constructed gender power over women in the private sphere of the home and

family. Patriarchy works against women and at first glance in favour of men, although closer consideration suggests that the latter assumption may be flawed (Dowd, 2010; Johnson, 2005; Kimmel et al, 2005). Following the focus on patriarchy this section continues with a consideration of the waves of feminism including the patriarchal backlashes that have endeavoured to reinstitute control of women.

Patriarchy

Feminist scholars (De Beauvoir, 1989; hooks, 2004; Lerner, 1986; MacKinnon, 2005; Rich, 1989; Walby, 1990) brought to light the damage which patriarchy has caused in girls and women's lives. The term 'patriarch' comes from the Greek language and it means 'the rule of the father'. The word is also used more generally to name the system of male dominance. This dominance may be within a family, a community, a society or indeed pervasive across the globe where it is upheld and sustained by unequal gendered social and cultural structures of nation states (Mackay, 2015).

The patriarchal system originates in pre-historic times where males exerted more power than women and was rooted in the biological differences of the sexes (Doyle, 1995; Firestone, 1970; Horrocks, 1994). The pre-historic role assignment and elevation of strong male hunter/gatherer over weak female/nurturer were deeply ingrained and promoted a powerful androcentric view of man as the inventor of culture in human history (Lee & Devore, 1968). Bourdieu identified this androcentric vision of the world as one that imposed itself as so 'neutral' and legitimate that it required no explanation (Bourdieu, 2001). Such beliefs, however, have not gone uncontested by feminists. Lerner (1986) suggested that the patriarchal assumptions of (mostly) male anthropologists led them to

conclusions which were based on stereotypical binary sex role views about the role of women and men in ancient times. Sex role theory conveniently explained gender patterns through an assertion that women were biologically constructed to be carers and nurturers whilst men were by nature aggressive and competitive. Such essentialising rationales not only hid the unequal social structure that legitimised and perpetuated the power that men exercised over women (Connell, 2000; Fraser 2013; Johnson, 2005), it also determined acceptable behaviour for women and men (Connell, 1995). Bourdieu (2001) critiqued sex-role theory as a social and cultural construct which served to legitimise masculine domination

> …it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalised social construction. (*Ibid.* 23)

Feminist archaeologists (Gero & Conkey, 1991) and anthropologists (Geller & Stockett, 2007; Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974) found male dominance to be far from universal and believed that the work of both women and men was indispensible to the survival of both sexes. Consequently, from a gynocentric viewpoint the contributions of both women and men to the well-being of communities was one of complementarity and interdependency. This alternative analysis sees male/female relationship as egalitarian rather than hierarchical.

Subsequently the system and enactment of patriarchy was legitimated in Greek and Roman law. As such gender inequalities existed for extended periods of history independently of capitalism (Lerner 1986; Said, 1993). The male head of the household had absolute legal and economic power over dependant female and male family members. This firmly rooted patriarchy in the legal institutions of states and furthermore

affirmed male dominance over women and children in both the family and in the wider social context (Lerner, 1986; Seidler, 1997). Direct gender hierarchy was thereby legitimised. Most men were viewed as more valuable than women and masculine domination was embedded, affirmed and perpetuated through inherited state formulations and related practices of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1977).

Sylvia Walby (1990) argued that patriarchy was indispensible to an analysis of gender inequality. She defined patriarchy as 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.' (*Ibid.* 20). She identified 6 autonomous yet interrelated social structures which served to keep women in an oppressed position: male violence, the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, in the state, in sexuality and in cultural institutions such as education, religion and the media. Highlighting the fundamental strength of patriarchy to withstand meaningful transformation, Walby suggested that the dismantling of patriarchal relations of gendered inequalities either within the private sphere of the household or in the public sphere of employment and the wider state context are only minimally impacted by historical and cultural change. Worryingly, she has shown evidence of patriarchy's intensification over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries in Britain. She concluded that patriarchy had moved from a primarily individual and exclusionary form of appropriation of women's labour within the private home space (where a woman's household production work was controlled by a patriarch and where woman was excluded from the public sphere) to one of collective appropriation of women in the public sphere (where patriarchal structures and gendered institutions controlled women). The consequential impact of such a shift further segregated women from men and subordinated women through unequal pay.

Thus, she suggested, in both the private and the public sphere women were disadvantaged.

Holter (2005) proposed that in recent decades this positioning of men had been usefully problematised by men themselves. New understandings have emerged through this process whereby patriarchal structures of oppression, which previously were viewed as working in favour of men and against women, could also conversely work against the interests of men, individually and collectively.

Patriarchal power structures, which oppress women and men, may be difficult to directly identify yet their impact is tangible and oftentimes harmfully embodied in women's lives. Reflecting the continuing relevance of Walby's view of the challenge of transforming patriarchy, today many women remain in a state of 'bodily insecurity' (Bourdieu, 2001, 67). One in three women globally report that they have experienced male sexual violence (World Health Organisation, 2013). Such levels of gendered violence and rape continue to signify patriarchy's on-going impact on women's bodies and lives and indicate a deep gender-power connection. Furthermore, verifying that a man's time is more valuable than a woman's, the wage (and pension) gap between women and men persists (Holter, 2005). As Barker, has succinctly commented in Weingarten (2015, 2) 'You walk out the door in the morning with a penis and your income is twenty per cent higher on average for nothing you did'. An underlying, yet crucial, factor in this economic differential is childcare, and care work more generally, which remain the unpaid and undervalued work of women (Dowd, 2010; Fineman, 2004; Fraser, 2013; Levtov et al, 2015).

In most of the countries of the world, including here in 'fetocentric'[2] Ireland (Smyth, 1992: 22) where on average 10 women a day travel to the UK for an abortion (Abortion Rights Campaign, 2016), women are denied reproductive justice and have neither a right to their bodily integrity nor control of their reproductive capacities (Chrisler, 2012; McAvoy, 2013; McCleary Sills, McGonagle & Malhotra, 2012). Religious fundamentalism is thriving globally and the tenets of many of these religions are rooted in patriarchy and champion a neo-patriarchal agenda that seeks to control women through emotional, physical and sexual violence (Ghanim, 2009).

The dominator culture

Patriarchal power was identified by feminists as ubiquitous and a dynamic of women's daily lives (Dworkin, 1981; Humm, 1992; Millett, 1970). It was perpetuated by threat, intimidation and coercion. A woman had better act 'feminine' or she might run the risk of being subject to 'a variety of cruelties and barbarities' (Millett, 1970, 43-46). The ultimate display of power, violence, was an area of dominance that was/is open to all men (Connell, 2000). At its most extreme, this dominance was maintained through psychological terror and the threat of physical and sexual violence against women. Brownmiller (1975) linked the essential domination of women by men to the threat of rape. Prefiguring Connell's (1995) thinking about patriarchal privilege, Brownmiller argued that the threat of rape controlled and subjugated all women and as a consequence all men were implicitly privileged. Lamm (2004) later defined rape as a political crime committed by men as a class against women as a class and described it as an attempt by men to keep women under their control. The obsession of patriarchy to maintain control

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[2] The 8th amendment of the Irish Constitution equates the life of a woman with that of an embryo.

of women is a core feature of the oppression of women by men (Johnson, 2005). Such violence is not a fact of life, boys are not born violent or controlling. Feminism teaches us that male violence against women is not biological, it is political. Like patriarchy, it has been constructed and in turn it can be deconstructed (Segal, 1990; Steinem, 1984). However the deconstruction of patriarchy involves the participation of men and signifies a willingness to relinquish control of women and hence a letting go of men's gender power (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 2013).

The personal is political

Reflecting the diversity of women, the social force that is feminism with its slogan that *the personal is political*, is not homogenous (Humm, 1992). Rather it encapsulates an 'anarchic fragmentation' (Ward & McMinn, 1987, 20) working over time and globally on intersecting issues: women's reproductive rights, women against violence against women, anti-pornography campaigns, women's suffrage, women's education and peace activism, equal pay, anti-homophobia work, ecofeminism, legal equalities and civil rights. Tong (1998) suggested that there was no one 'true' feminism but rather a kaleidoscopic range of vital feminist thought and endeavour which had as its goal the freeing of women from tangible patriarchal oppressions, however such oppressions were defined at any given time. Feminist reflection, scholarship and activism have all contributed to understandings of patriarchy, intersectionality and in more recent times to the construction of patriarchal masculinities.

Inspired by the feminist analysis of the Combahee River Collective (1977) Kimberle Crenshaw, the American civil rights activist and scholar of critical race theory first coined

the term intersectionality in 1989. Intersectional analysis has been usefully deployed by feminists and others to drill down into deeper understandings of the complex and finely nuanced meanings of overlapping harmful structural systems of oppression (Browne & Joya, 2003; Crenshaw, 1989; Lockhart & Danis, 2010; Meyer, 2012).

First wave feminism

First wave feminism, which had its origins in the nineteenth century, involved itself with issues of equality in the arenas of politics, the law, economics and the rights of women to higher education. In those early days of feminism, ideas about equality and women reaching their full potential were limited to particular social groups. For the most part, white, educated, apparently heterosexual, middle-class women, who were primarily concerned with their own class interests, drove this first wave of feminism. Through the struggles of early suffragettes in the US, England and Ireland, the right of women to self-determination and universal suffrage were eventually realised (Humm, 1992; Ward, 1983) when limited suffrage for women was agreed. Whilst their valiant activism demonstrated that structures could indeed be impacted through collective effort, the cost was high for many individual women who literally laid down their lives for the cause of women's suffrage.

The diversity of women's lived experience and the devastating impact of what had later been identified as intersecting inequalities such as class, 'race', disability and sexuality on some women's lives was largely overlooked by first wave feminists. Furthermore 'full potential' was often signified as being more like men thus strengthening androcentric

understandings which posited that the masculine view of the world was the only view which held value.

Second wave feminism

The publication in 1949 of De Beauvoir's *Second Sex* was seen by many as the marker for the end of the first wave of feminism and the genesis of the radical feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. As such, the *Second Sex* was considered to be one of the key theoretical texts of twentieth century feminism (Murphy, 2004; Tong, 1998). De Beauvoir (1989) importantly highlighted a distinction between sex and gender and argued that society construed male as the positive norm, 'the first sex'. This left woman in the place of negative norm, the 'second sex', to be treated as men's 'other'. *The Second Sex* defended women's claims to their subjectivity and held up the myths of masculine superiority for scrutiny identifying the existence of masculine dualities that elevated mind over body. Confirming the link between consciousness and materiality De Beauvoir proposed that men too were creatures of bodily and sexual desires rather than purely disembodied rational minds; 'Indeed no one is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or scornful, than the man who is anxious about his virility' (*Ibid.* xxv). De Beauvoir's work highlighted women's complicity in their oppression and their role in perpetuating it in their behaviour (Murphy, 2004). This theme of women's complicity in their oppression was further expanded on by hooks (2004) and Bourdieu (2001) when they separately identified women's collusion in supporting patriarchy within the home sphere.

The 'otherness' of women identified by De Beauvoir is located in women's reproductive role which under the patriarchal watch decreed that women's place was in the private

space of the home. This positioned men's rightful place in the more highly valued external public arena (Fraser, 2013; Tong, 1989). Rooted in the desire to control the reproductive role of women, the legacy of such positionings continue to influence the unequal division of labour, including care labour, to the present day (Levtov et al, 2015).

Reproductive rights

Women's lack of reproductive rights were, viewed by some as, the core issue in women's oppression (Humm, 1992). During the early 1960s and into the 1970s there was a flourishing of women-centered activism and campaigns alongside a parallel development of a theoretical literature relating to issues of sexual and domestic violence (Daly, 1978, 1984), abortion rights (Steinem, 1984), lesbianism (Myron & Bunch, 1975), parenting (Millett, 1970) and pornography (Dworkin, 1981). These issues alongside demands for equality in the areas of work, wages and the freedom to develop as autonomous human beings were believed to intimately affect the lives of women globally.

Inclusivity

The women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s was characterised by the minimising of differences between women. This homogenising was later broadened out in response to challenges from radical women of colour such as Cherri Moraga (1981), Audrey Lorde (1984) and bell hooks (1984) who planted the seeds of what would become third wave feminism. Black feminist writers and activists enriched feminist discourse by highlighting their historical experience of combined racism and sexism which had resulted in a multiplicity of complex oppressions. Davis (1982) drew attention to the variety of women's identities that she believed should not be seen in an hierarchical and

competitive light but rather as a rich diversity, to be valued in and of themselves. These multiple identities recognised and included radical lesbian feminists whose profile, it could be said, was less openly evident during first wave feminism. Throughout the seventies the works of Mary Daly (1978) and Charlotte Bunch (1975) sought to highlight lesbian women's experiences, analysis, and lifestyle activism against the persistent, pervasive and violent hold of patriarchy on women's lives.

The feminist movement had room for many sisters with a range of analyses that resulted in dynamically enriching political discourse. Marxist and socialist feminists concentrated on the links between the traditions of a patriarchal labour market and the oppression of women through their confinement in the home. Questions about which came first, capitalism or patriarchy were hotly contested (Hartmann, 1979; Mackay, 2015). In her reconceptualisation of Marx's work, Federici (2004) linked the middle ages and the growth in colonisation, the beginning of the slave trade and the mass expulsion of the peasantry from the land with the European witch hunts which resulted in the murder of hundreds of thousands of women. The link was forged, she suggested, through the pre-capitalist feudal societies need for human resources alongside a desire to control women's reproductive capacities. The so-called reproductive crimes of women included the sharing of information about contraception, abortion, infanticide and strategies to make men impotent. This women's knowledge was feared by those in power and in patriarchal efforts to control women's sexuality, legislation was passed across many European countries which allowed for the hunting and brutal torture of hundred of thousands of women suspected of involvement in any of these activities. For me, Federici's work uncovers the deep fear men had of women's sexuality. It also points to the symbiosis

between capitalism and patriarchy. In concerted efforts to control women and their bodies for the benefit of the male owners of production, this historical period prefigures later moves identified by De Beauvoir to consign women to the unequally valued private space of the home. Here their unwaged care role in the reproduction of the labour force could be ascertained. Women's home-based care work was hence transformed into human capital that in turn supported both the closely aligned capitalist and patriarchal projects and became the backdrop that sustained the unjust gender power system (Fineman, 2004; Folbre, 2009; Holter, 2005; Horrocks, 1994; Lynch & McLaughlin, 1995; Ortner & Whitehead, 1981). Within the home space, women were expected to exhibit 'feminine' behaviours; they were to be 'smiling, friendly, attentive, submissive, demure, restrained, self-effacing' (Bourdieu, 2001, 66), ensuring the comfort and well being of men was the work of women (Connell, 2009).

Radical second wave feminists (Echols, 1983; hooks, 2004) challenged this patriarchal capitalist model and identified women's role in the family as the primary site of women's oppression. Their desire was to create a new society where men and women were existentially equal and where a single standard of parental responsibility existed for fathers and mothers (Millett, 1970). Radical feminists, with whom I most closely align, identified male violence against women as a keystone of women's oppression (Dworkin, 1981). Such violence against women was considered by radical feminists to be both a tool and a telling symptom of patriarchy. Radical feminists were concerned with the conceptualisation of patriarchy as a founding system of women's oppression and one that predated capitalism.

Reflecting the broad diversity of feminist viewpoints, hooks (1984) disrupted the traditional radical feminist position which held that women only spaces and activism could defeat patriarchy when she encouraged both women and men to work together, to confront their differences and to work in political solidarity to fight against common oppressions. This posed a difficult message for many feminists and it was to be some time before some 'women only' feminist structures opened up to profeminist male allies. The debate about men's and trans women's inclusion in feminist spaces continues to the present day (Greer, 2015; Mackay, 2015).

Backlash

The backlash against feminism, like the waves of feminism, has been ebbing and flowing since women first used their voices and energies to mobilise against patriarchal oppression (Van Der Gagg, 2014). Posing a significant threat to patriarchy, feminists in the United States (US) successfully contested the right of women to control their reproduction. The legal ruling that followed, Roe v Wade (1973) allowed for the legalisation of abortion in the US. Feminists had taken on the patriarchs and had won. However, patriarchy did not lie down quietly, rather it regrouped and a cultural battle commenced which sought to reinstate patriarchal dominance by convincing women that feminism had harmed them. The publication of Faludi's *Backlash: The undeclared war against women* (1991), brought to light these patriarchal efforts to fragment feminist progress. *Backlash* traced the upsurge in antifeminist discourse in the US and the UK. Faludi argued that there had been a quiet and pernicious war against women and their rights and this had been mostly fought out in the cultural arena. The conservative and male dominated press and media had proclaimed that feminism was bad for women. The

new freedoms that women had gained, they declared, had brought nothing but misery into the lives of women, families and men. A crisis in masculinity was declared, men were fearful that their privileges were dissipating, girls were doing better than boys in school, well educated women were taking their place in the workforce, family structures were under threat, there was a rise in divorce and a deep feeling that men were losing their patriarchal power (Faludi, 1991). This discourse of men in crisis continues to the present day and has led to the emergence of masculinities activism and scholarship (Barker, 2005, 2011; Connell, 2000, 2009; Hearn, 2002; Kaufman, 2014; Kimmel, 2013). Like feminist activism and scholarship, the field of masculinity has a diverse analysis of gender hierarchies and these will be further discussed below.

Third wave feminism

A third wave of feminism emerged during the 1990s and focused on myriad issues which has led to some challenges in defining exactly what this wave of the movement stands for. This has led to the derogatory labeling of this wave as 'light feminism' (Mackay, 2015, 154). Nonetheless this third wave has tackled many feminist concerns including the extension of the parameters of what it means to be a woman and an interest in women's experience of agentic subjectivity (Butler, 1995). Expanding views of women's sexual identity, including contested positions in relation to pornography and sex work, were also problematised by the third wave (Paglia, 1992).

A concerning feature of third wave feminism has been the conservative media backlash against its continued survival. Echoing the backlash against second wave feminism the media generated image of *'post feminism'* is one of women '*having it all*', having equality,

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equal opportunities in the workplace and greater control over reproduction (Mackay, 2015). Such a populist discourse seems to imply that there is no longer a need for feminism. It is indeed passé. This narrowly focused Anglo/ American media message ignores the Global picture, whilst also rewriting local gendered realities (Connell, 2009). The bodies of women remain the site of war and destruction and the majority of the world's women have never experienced either equality or freedom (Ahmed, 1992). Closer to home, here in Ireland, women continue to be underrepresented in politics, industry and the professions, earn less than men and male violence against women continues to be pervasive, extensive and unrecognised in terms of funding and policy for change (O'Connor, 2016; Safeireland, 2014). In this context, *'having it all',* means taking lower-paid, part-time work and doing the second or third shift with children and housework (Ging, 2013) and continues to mean that women are fearful for their safety.

Some third wave feminists saw themselves living in a post feminist world. They wished to stride away from the backlash that had declared a post feminist world and in so doing many chose to disassociate themselves from the term 'feminist'. The very word they believed was too closely associated with being anti-man, with being judgmental and with extremism. Mackay (2015) and Fraser (2013) suggest that 'post feminism' indicates antifeminist neoliberalism. Such a construction of feminism, they believe, rejects collective activism for structural change and looks to a focus on the rights of individual choice where female freedom is narrowly expressed in terms of the ability to consume (Ferguson, 2010; Gillis & Munford, 2004; Ging, 2013). Evidence of such neoliberal feminism, led by (some) young feminists is most especially to be found in online spaces and is not without its critics.

> Women have a prominent voice in online media; feminism is a broad and verbally defended platform, and what has it all amounted to except a nightmarish discursive juxtaposition between what feminism says and what it is able to do? …. Feminism is proliferating primarily as merchandise; we can buy anything that suits us and nothing that we really need. (Tolentino, 2015)

As with the backlash against second wave feminism, strands of third wave feminism are driven by the media and capitalist and consumer-led value systems. 'Choice feminism' (Ferguson, 2010) describes the freedom of choice which the media portray women as now having and which, in turn, some women claim to have. The focus here is on the individual's right to choose whilst ignoring the wider unequal social, political and cultural context and the reality that not all women are in a position to make choices (Smyth, 2013). The very act of choosing is portrayed by the media as feminist choice, no matter what the choosing relates to or the impact of the choice on the individual woman or on the women around her (Fraser, 2013; Mackay, 2015).

> Feminist ideas that once formed part of a radical worldview are increasingly expressed in individualistic terms. Where feminists once criticised a society that promoted careerism, they now advise women to 'lean in'. A movement that once prioritised social solidarity now celebrates female entrepreneurs. A perspective that once valorised 'care' and interdependence now encourages individual advancement and meritocracy. (Fraser, 2013)

Sheryl Sandberg's (2013) book *Lean In* epitomises this neoliberal individualistic approach to feminism. Resonating with Bourdieu's hypotheses in *Masculine Domination* (2001), she attributes women's challenges in career progression to their docile, people-pleasing socialisation. She exhorts women to become more assertive, to lean in more to the corporate structures whilst overlooking the material and patriarchal structural barriers which stand in the way. This perspective ignores the reality of many women who are not

like her: white, able bodied, well-educated, heterosexual, middle/ upper class and employed.

Fourth wave feminism

Some suggest that a fourth wave of feminism, a resurgence, is currently unfolding (Mackay, 2015; Rampton, 2015). There has been a shout-out of feminist voices and activism here in Ireland which has been part of a wider global social justice movement (Smyth, 2013). The areas of concern voiced by this new wave are depressingly familiar to those who were involved in second wave feminism. Statistics show that violence against women by men continues to be global and shockingly common (Van Der Gagg, 2014). As such, second wave feminism continues to hold relevance today and older feminists find congruence with the concerns of young feminist activists, female, male and transgender.

The early signs of this new wave are indicated in a focus on a desire and drive to take on some of the most trenchant injustices against women (Mackay, 2015). Issues that were central to the earlier phases of the women's movement, such as reproductive rights and gendered political and economic inequalities are all receiving national and international attention by mainstream press and politicians (Dalby, 2012; O'Regan & O'Halloran, 2015). There is evidence that the backlash of third wave feminism against the very word 'feminist' is diminishing leaving space for the redefinition of the term by those, both women and men, who seek to collectively address widespread gender inequalities (Van Der Gagg, 2014).

Conclusion Section 1.

Like hooks (2004) I believe the purpose of feminism is to 'challenge, change and ultimately end patriarchy' (*Ibid.* 108). Feminism has its own unique history, one of vibrancy, dynamism, diversity, anarchy, debate and activism. It has always existed in a space of contestation. It has also been a deeply reflective and self-critical movement, one which includes a multiplicity of viewpoints and understandings of how we might best live together in the world. Reflecting the diversity of women, the literature demonstrates that there is not one universal feminism but rather an agglomeration of intersecting and interconnected feminisms. It is evident that there have been substantive disagreements within feminism leading Mackay (2015, 3) to conclude that 'there are probably as many unique definitions of feminism as there are people who identify as feminists'. hooks describes patriarchy as the single most life-threatening social disease assaulting the male body and spirit (2004, 17). As such and reflecting my own perspective the defeat of patriarchal oppression is not only the work of feminists rather it is also the work of men. For me feminism is about hope and gender justice. It aims to right inequalities that have resulted in the oppression, violation, confinement and domination of women as a group by men as a group. We feminists work to create a more just and equal society, one that is at ease with itself, one where women and men are free to flourish, to make agentic decisions about how their one life is lived and where humane social structures support rather than impede gender justice.

Section 2. Masculinities Introduction

With apologies to O'Casey (1924)

*Boyle: An', as it blowed an' blowed, I ofen looked up at the sky an' assed meself the question —
what is (a) man, what is (a) man?*

Joxer: Ah, that's the question, that's the question — what is (a) man?

The previous section outlined feminist discourse that brought into view the concept of
gender as an unequal social construction. Men and manhood itself 'had been lifted out of
a deep unconsciousness by feminism' (Horrocks, 1994, 12). This section turns towards
debates regarding the social construction of patriarchal masculinities. Perspectives differ
greatly. Antifeminist groupings 'blamed' women for the crisis in masculinity. They saw
themselves as the victims of the feminist movement believing that it had damaged and
was continuing to weaken their gendered privilege (Bly, 1990; Kipnis, 1995). On the other
hand, profeminist groupings identified the patriarchal social construction of unequal
gender roles and structures as the root causes of the harm to women and men (Connell,
1995; Kaufman, 1991, 1999; Kimmel et al, 2005; Seidler, 1997). The latter were conscious
of the need to work alongside women and with other men to transform unequal power
relations that were legitimised through the construction of social systems and processes
that privileged men and oppressed women. There was also a growing understanding of
the futility of what Arnot (2004, 36) termed a 'monocausal analysis of power', and a need
for more nuanced understandings of the intersectionality of class, ethnicity and sexuality
with constructs of masculinity.

The section begins with an examination of these different responses to feminism and both
antifeminist and profeminist positions are explored. Connell's (1995) ground-breaking and

influential concept of hegemonic masculinity and Hearn's (2004) hegemony of men are then discussed. Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) reformulation of the theory of hegemonic masculinities follows. The final sections of the chapter look to the work of Schippers (2007) and her contribution to the discourse alongside Reeser's (2011) views on masculinities as ideology. This review of masculinities provides background understandings to the following chapter that relates constructs of masculinity to fatherhood and fathering practice.

The personal is still political

The feminist slogan that the personal is political was, many men realised, not only relevant for feminists (Murphy, 2004; Seidler, 1997). Feminist activism and scholarship had caused men to look beyond understandings of masculinity as 'a natural' taken for granted reality and forced men to deal with gender as a problematic construct (Messner, 1997). As such Kimmel (1997) suggested that the feminist movement was a vehicle for the resolution of the crisis that was occurring in masculinity where many men felt their masculine status was being eroded as a result of feminist challenges to male power. Unsurprisingly given the seductive nature of holding privilege, reflections on their gendered construction led men to diametrically opposing conclusions in their analysis of meanings of masculinity.

Kimmell (1997) identified two groupings of masculinity activists: profeminist and antifeminist. Profeminists had ties to the academic community. They identified women as the principle victims of patriarchy and recognised the ensuing privileging of men. They believed that patriarchy served a minority of men (those with power, most usually white,

heterosexual and middle or upper class) by keeping the majority of men (those with little or no power) and all women in a subordinate role (*Ibid.*). As such a profeminist (and predominantly middle-class) analysis saw power as the central dynamic in the construction of gender.

In England in the 1960s and 1970s, prompted by the activism and early theorising of masculinity by feminists, profeminist men were involved in supporting women to challenge issues and behaviours relating to gender: male violence against women, rape, homophobia and pornography (Kimmel, 1997; Messner, 1997; Seidler, 1997). Alongside this support for women, and equality, concerned men began to work together to look at the impact of patriarchy on their own lives.

In the UK, publications such as *Brothers Against Sexism* (1974) and *Achilles Heel* (1978-1999)*, contributed to critical debates about men's role in society. In the US, feminism and the men's movement encouraged men to get in touch with their affective and relational selves:

> …to cast aside the mask which was masculinity in search of fulfilment and liberation. The emphasis was on self-development and relatedness, men's relationships to their lovers, their children, their friends and other men. (Chapman & Rutherford 1998, 230)

Borrowing a feminist analysis to scrutinise and illuminate their reality these men began to interrogate what it meant to be a man and to understand the damaging strangle hold of patriarchal power on the lives and relationships of women and girls, boys and men. In this, they recognised the centrality of relationships and thereby the importance in their analysis of the affective and emotional domains.

Antifeminist response

Antifeminist men found a home for their belief system in a number of locations. The Mythopoetic Movement, Men's rights movement and Men's Studies all focussed on the harm that the feminist movement had inflicted on men and their 'natural' authority. They were strongly criticised for their position by profeminist men, for their failure to confront patriarchal power and for ignoring the intersecting issues of race and class (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985). Much of the antifeminist focus was on shoring up men's identity rather than on issues of power.

Mythopoets

In the latter part of the 1980s, men who believed that masculinity was in crisis had already begun to organise workshops, male-only retreats and conferences which focussed on 'reclaiming masculinity'. These activities gave rise to the Mythopoetic movement that was further strengthened by the publication of key texts such as Bly's *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1990) and Kipnis's *Knights without armour* (1992). Amplifying the rhetoric of the backlash, Mythopoets believed that feminism was responsible for damaging men. Kipnis (1992; 1995) suggested that patriarchy was a relic of the past, leaving women in control. The 'natural' authority and birth right of men had been challenged and needed to be redeemed and reasserted. Men were urged to reclaim their ''Zeus energy', the energy that is the essence of male authority' (Bly, 1990, 22) and men were extoled to fight for equal rights for men. One assumes that the authority they were to reclaim was their power over women.

Bly argued that men were experiencing an identity crisis, they had become 'soft' and overly influenced by women's definitions of manliness. He proposed that it was only in the company of other men that men could discover and rearticulate their authentic selves through initiation ceremonies, myths and rituals.

> The crisis and ridiculing of masculinity was brought about by gender feminists (who) have contributed to this problem, encouraging stereotypes of masculinity that would be totally unacceptable if directed towards any other group….the new equation, male equals bad, has given rise to a loss of identity for a whole generation of men. (Bly 1990, 129)

Bly's message held resonance for many men and Schwalbe (1996) estimated that at its peak over one hundred thousand men took part in Mythopoetic events. Some benignly believed that this section of the men's movement aimed to help men to rediscover their true masculinity, to become more in touch with their feelings and emotions. They saw it as part of a process that supported men to become better men, better husbands and better fathers and to critically examine negative and narrow definitions of masculinity.

Critics of the movement saw it as part of the backlash against the progress of the feminist movement. The underpinning discourse was clearly antifeminist and pro-male. The goal was the reassertion of male power and privilege for primarily middle-class, white, middle-aged, heterosexual men (Ferber, 2000). The Mythopoets promoted a return to an essentialist view where gender identity was fixed and rooted in innate biological and psychological difference (Doyle, 1995). Men were urged to separate from women in order to discover their true 'actualised' selves. This seemed to many to be no more than an extension of the old patriarchal message (hooks, 2004); gendered power inequalities and the impact of the social and political context were ignored.

Men's rights movement

A significant, smaller grouping of men focussed on a men's rights approach to challenge feminist progress (Farrell, 1993; Kimmell 1987). Men involved in this movement portrayed themselves as victims of sexism. They highlighted the inequities they saw in the legal system relating in particular to divorce and child custody proceedings. Emphasising men's poorer health and shorter life expectancy than women, they asserted that men carried a disproportionate burden in relation to the financial provision for families.

Horrocks critiqued the men's rights movement as 'too precious and divorced from a political grasp of masculinities' (Horrocks, 1994, 16). Their analysis did not include a conscious and systematic enquiry into masculinity and the social construction of gendered relations of power but rather focussed narcissistically on individual identity and on biological essentialism. Hurtado (1999) suggested that the focus on men's 'wounds' failed to take into account white upper-class, elitist, male privilege and that 'The Western male intellectual tradition cannot theorise from a position of privilege' (*Ibid.* 126). When compared to the numbers involved in the Gay Rights movement and the Women's Liberation movement Carrigan et al, (1985), questioned the scale and impact of the men's rights movement describing it as 'an intermittent, thinly-spread collection of support groups, therapeutic activities, and ephemeral pressure-group campaigns' (Carrigan et al, 1985, 575). The vast majority of men continued unquestioningly in age-old patterns of gendered behaviour.

Men's Studies

Men's Studies emerged originally as a response to the Men's Rights movement in the US and Canada. This critical interdisciplinary academic field sought to understand more fully what it was that was unique to the male experience. Drawing from the fields of psychoanalysis, gay liberation theory, feminism and power structure analyses, academics turned towards the different patterns of masculinities and the social processes through which they were developed and maintained (Connell, 1995, 2000, 2001).

The academic discipline was not a unified entity and in time fragmented. Critical Studies on Men (CSM) had its roots in feminism, gay and queer scholarship and profeminist men's responses to feminism and gender relations. This grouping focussed on the consistent interrogation of power in relation to gender and its construction. For their part, Men's Studies programmes put more emphasis on male identity than gendered power inequalities and has been critiqued by Hearn (2004) as antifeminist and lacking in an analysis of the centrality of power in gender relations.

Further conceptualisations: What is a man?

Alongside these somewhat fragmented and differently focussed men's groupings the work of the pioneering masculinity scholar Bob Connell (now Raewyn) enlivened and challenged discourse about masculinity. With a background in empirical research into education and class dynamics, Connell wrote *Men's Bodies* in 1979. He reflected on the physical sense of maleness and the social construction of the body in boys' and adult men's practices. The paper was subsequently published in *Which Way is Up?* In 1983 alongside others which

focussed on theories of patriarchy. In this paper, Connell first linked the terms hegemony and masculinity, situating both within the patriarchal system of gender relations.

Hegemony

As conceptualised by Gramsci (1971), hegemony is about the persuasive rather than the confrontational use of power. Donaldson summarises some of the main features of hegemony as:

> ….about the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process. It is about the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination. The ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality is an essential part of the process. Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organisation of social institutions in ways that appear 'natural', 'ordinary', and 'normal'. The state, through punishment for non-conformity, is crucially involved in this negotiation and enforcement. (Donaldson, 1993, 645)

Thus hegemony is related to the taken for granted, the common sense apparent truisms of life that are defined by the ruling class. Messages about these allegedly immutable facts are culturally produced and in turn reproduced through practice. They pass into culture as unquestionable truths about human existence. Hegemony is thus about power and the maintenance of that power. It is woven into and reproduced by the system of values, beliefs and morality upon which the institutions of society are constructed and it serves the interests of those in power, the ruling classes.

Hegemonic masculinities

In pairing hegemony with masculinity Connell suggested that hegemonic masculinity was a strategy to oppress women and subordinate certain groups of men. Within such a hegemonic frame, men (some, those from privileged middle and upper-classes) were

conceptualised as the ruling class, they were the state, the 'norm' against which all others were measured. Those who fell outside of this patriarchal hegemony were 'other' (women and those men who are viewed as subordinate). They were defined as deviant, as going against the powerful and androcentric understanding of the world.

Carrigan, Connell and Lee expanded upon the concept of hegemony and masculinity, in *Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity* (1985). The publication of this article has been identified as the point when the study of masculinity entered the sociological mainstream. 'Hegemonic masculinity' is considered to be one of the most significant conceptual tools in masculinity studies (Beasley, 2008). Influenced by gay liberation theory that viewed the oppression of homosexuals and women as part of a patriarchal effort to control (Altman, 1971), the article presented ground-breaking thinking about power and gender inequality. These theorists looked away from biology and sex-role theories to identify the construction of gender as the root cause of inequalities in gender relations.

For Connell (1995), masculinity was inescapably embedded in the body through complex and dynamic social processes that related not only to the present moment but also intimately shaped by what had gone before. Connell defined masculinity as,

> ….simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture. (Connell, 1995, 71)

As such, gender was formed and embodied in relation to history, place and most significantly in relation to others. These early formulations resonate with this study. They are compatible with Reay's (2010) conceptual framework of sociological analysis outlined in the thesis introduction and employed in the analysis of the empirical findings.

Masculinity is performed in a place or space (geography), it is impacted by the practices that have gone before (history) and it is constructed in relation to others (relationality).

Connell (1995) defined hegemonic masculinity as,

> the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell, 1995, 77)

Ideals of hegemonic masculinity are not only about localised social processes that bolster masculinity. Rather they are centrally connected to the institutionalisation of men's dominance over women (Carrigan et al, 1985; Connell, 1995; Donaldson, 1993) and to men's powerful position in most Western capitalist societies where it is 'taken for granted' that many men are 'structurally and interpersonally dominant in most areas of life' (Hearn, 2004, 51).

Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) proposed that masculinity was not only about power over women but also about hierarchical power relations amongst men. This hierarchy of masculinities idealised masculinity that is 'more socially central, or more associated with authority and social power than others' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, 846). This model is positioned at the apex of a pyramid of masculinities (Beasley, 2008). Dowd (2010) in her consideration of hegemonic masculinity suggested that the heart of what it meant to be a man lay in a dual negative: man must not be gay; and man must not be a woman. Ideals of patriarchal hegemonic masculinity required men to erase all that was associated with the subordinated feminine from their beings, including the core human capacity to care.

In a context where men were most powerful structurally the desire for the approval of other men was a central element of Connell's theory of masculinity. It was men who could

expose masculine vulnerability and damage other men through a look of disrespect or disregard, through derisive laughter or the use of violence.

Women and subordinate groups of men, such as those from the working-class or those who had a disability or from a different ethnic background were on the periphery of this process, positioned outside of the frame of power while primarily middle-class, white, heterosexual patriarchal hegemonic men were at the centre. The root of this way of being in the world was planted when infant boys first observed that women held less power in the eyes of patriarchal society than men. This gendered perspective resulted in boys earliest turning away from their mothers, towards their fathers and other more powerful male role models (Chodorow, 1978; hooks, 2004; Schippers, 2007).

In these deliberations and directly relating to this study, the role of powerful gendered social institutions such as the family, education, and the workplace in the reproduction and legitimisation of dominant masculinities came into focus (Carrigan et al, 1985). Anticipating, to some degree, Butler's (1990) work where she defined gender not as a noun but as a verb, a doing, Carrigan et al, (*Ibid.*), defined masculinity as a set of practices which were enacted in a hierarchical and patriarchal social context. As a social group, men were identified as policing gender norms in order to preserve male privilege and domination. Signs of counter-hegemony were to be rapidly denigrated, portrayed as shameful and deviant. Hostility to male homosexuality is portrayed by Connell (1995) as fundamental to hegemonic masculinity where, in its association with the feminine it is aligned with the subordinate.

Whilst masculinity is associated with power, many individual men, despite their gender advantage, feel powerless (Barker, 2005; Dowd, 2010; Faludi, 1999; Kimmel et al, 2005). Feminist activism, growing support for gender equality in the workforce and in the private domain of home-based care work, the greater acceptance of gay masculinity at an individual and structural level, changes in technology and trade, have all posed challenges to patriarchal hegemonic masculinity. More men lie outside of the definition of hegemonic masculinity than are embraced within it. Many men are left feeling like strangers in a world over which they once believed they had control (Kimell et al, 2005). Not being in control is a frightening and shameful experience for men who have been taught with their earliest breath that they must be in control of themselves, their emotions, those around them and their very environment. Regaining control and thereby masculinity is a constant struggle for men, one that is never achieved yet relentlessly pursued. This elusive and slippery objective is a powerful piece in men's sense of powerlessness (Faludi, 1999). The pursuit of power over others is damaging to many men (and many more women). In order to maintain their dominant position men must cast the 'other' as lacking in humanity. This requires of men a disconnection, which is damaging to both the self and to others. Crucially such cutting off from the humanity of others can wither empathy and the capacity to have satisfying, emotionally close relations (Nussbaum, 2004; Schwalbe, 1992) and in the particular context of fatherhood can cause great harm.

Patriarchal dividend

Connell suggests that not all men benefit similarly from hegemonic masculinity and accruals of male privilege vary by intersectional issues such as class, ethnicity and

sexuality. Yet even those men who do not comply with the definition of hegemonic masculinity, those who are not in positions of power, still reap what Connell termed a *patriarchal dividend* (Connell, 1995) through their biological sex. All men are identified by Connell (*Ibid.*) as associated with perpetuating this inequality. Complicit masculinities are,

> constructed in ways that realise the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy (*Ibid.* 79).

In Connell's schema masculinities that are subordinate, marginalised, even resistant, may reap unequal rewards from the patriarchal dividend yet these gains are enough to implicate them in gender injustices (*Ibid.*). Through their ongoing participation and complicity in the maintenance of an unequal gender order, men's silent acquiescence endorses gender inequalities whilst simultaneously advantaging men as a dominant group in positions of structural power locally, regionally and globally. The pervasive nature of men's dominance means that it is a taken for granted oppression, one that Dowd (2010) suggests leads to mistaken assumptions that such patterns are given.

Further developments

Rich discussions and 'healthy disagreements characteristic of most gender scholarship' (Dowd, 2010, 53) have highlighted the very complexity of masculinity/ies and of what it means to be a man in the twenty-first century.

Hearn (2004) critiqued Connell's concept as lacking clarity of definition. He believed that there had not been adequate recognition of the power and dominance of men throughout society leading Hearn to speak not of 'hegemonic masculinity' but of the 'hegemony of men' (*Ibid.* 59). This, he suggested sustained and perpetuated men's 'taken for granted

power' through consent. I read Hearn's shift from masculinity to 'men' as a useful one. It looks away from Connell's oftentimes essentialist focus to identify issues of power and towards men's individual and collective agency and accountability in relation to their performance of masculinity. For Hearn the persistent existence and accumulation of power and powerful resources which men benefitted from, albeit unequally, resulted in a conflation of the very word 'man' and the social category 'men' with power.

> Men's power and dominance can be structural and interpersonal, public and or/ private, accepted and taken for granted and/or recognised and resisted, obvious and subtle. It also includes violations and violences of all various kinds. (Hearn, 2004, 51)

Hearn stressed the need for transformation in the patriarchal gender system to bring about gender justice. Men individually and collectively have a role in dismantling rather than reproducing the hegemony of men. Hearn called for men to position themselves as supporters of feminism, as anti-sexist, anti-patriarchal and gay affirmative. The task for men was thus a subjective one that called on men's agency: 'to change men, ourselves and other men' (Hearn, & Morgan, 1990, 204).

Further challenges to Connell's concept suggested that the term hegemonic masculinity essentialised men, denying anything that was positive in masculinities (Collier, 1998; Whitehead, 2002). Whitehead (*Ibid.*) emphasised the importance of men engaging in discourse as a means of reflection on and resistance to the imposition of unequal gender identities. His suggestion is of significance in this study where men have moved rapidly and without time for reflection or learning, from the public space of the workplace to the private space of the home and family care work. Donaldson (1993) posited that men's greater role in fatherhood signified an intensification of hegemonic masculinity, making

men even more powerful, rather than a move towards greater gender equality and thus a redistribution of power. I suggest that there is a significant role for adult and community education in supporting men to take time out to engage in critical reflection and dialogue about unequal gendered roles. It is through such collective reflexive engagement that counter narratives can be formulated and actions planned to bring about praxis that leads to greater gender justice. As such, I see this research, including the methodological approach, as a form of praxis that makes a contribution to this endeavour.

Gender inequality, difference and power all feature in Kimmel's analysis of masculinity (2000). Like Connell he recognised the impact of structures on gender and argued for the reduction of gender inequality through a range of strategies. The first step in this journey is for men to recognise the seemingly invisible gendered privilege they hold in their being born male. A parallel strategy is also needed to transform unequal institutions of society, such as the workplace, the family and the education system (Kimmel, 2000).

The damaging impact of patriarchal structures on men has struck a chord with many and has gained traction in popular discourse (Kiesau, 2015; Weiss, 2016). Kimmel (2015) has recently argued that it is pointless to lecture men about what they should do to address gender inequalities. Men, he believes, need to be persuaded that gender equality will provide returns for men in terms of better and happier relationships with their partners, their children and with those in their communities. Kimmel highlights research that suggests that men will have better sex with their partners if they become more involved in sharing child and domestic care work (Kimmel, 2015). This persuasive rhetoric is also used by Barker (2005). Whilst both highlight the role involved fatherhood plays in changing gender norms and in rupturing hegemonic masculinity through the promotion of

alternative caregiving masculinity there is, I believe, a worrying undertone in these strategies. Men are represented as being in need of enticement to take up shared responsibility for the care of their children. The argument here is not based in trust that men will involve themselves in childcare work because it contributes to the greater good; the argument is that men will gain if they involve themselves in this care work. More hopefully and with a greater trust in men, Gardiner (2005), like Fineman (2013) suggests that gender transformation rests in men's commitment to gender justice and requires the equal participation of men in childcare responsibilities. This requires massive relearning about what it means to be a man and again points to a role for adult education in this work.

In 2005 Connell and Messerschmidt welcomed the lively engagement with what they term the 'contested concept' (*Ibid.* 830) of hegemonic masculinity. Restating the fundamental concept as hierarchical and consisting of a plurality of masculinities they offered a critique of the initial concept as a 'too simple model of the social relations surrounding hegemonic masculinities' (*Ibid.* 846). On consideration they suggested that the concept be reformulated in four areas: a more complex model of analyses of gender hierarchy was needed, one which recognised and attended to the relationship between men and women, femininities and masculinities and non-hegemonic men. In so doing they addressed an important feminist criticism of the concept (Hanmer, 1990) and brought women back into the frame of the construction of masculinities.

Secondly they recommended the development of a greater geography of masculinities. Here they identified the impact of global hegemonic masculinity and introduced in this context the concept of hegemonic masculini*ties* that exist at three interconnected levels:

local, regional and global. They suggested a framework of analysis for further empirical research on hegemonic masculinity which includes these levels; Local, focussing on face-to-face interaction of families, organisations and communities (where this study is located); Regional: focussing on culture and the nation state and Global: focusing on world politics, transnational business and media.

Their third recommendation suggested that 'a more sophisticated treatment of embodiment in hegemonic masculinity is made' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, 851). A focussed approach on the role of the body in both social processes and in generating social practice holds the possibility of the further illumination of the pattern of embodiment in hegemony. This again echoes the concept of location and place.

With a timely focus, the fourth and final reformulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity related to the dynamics of masculinities. Here, Connell and Messerschmidt reminded us that hegemonic masculinity could change over time. During periods of social change, and as a result of internal tensions and continuous contestation, possibilities existed to reconstitute hegemonic masculinity in order to stabilise patriarchal power. However there were also opportunities during times of change to democratise gender relations, to abolish power differentials and not merely to reproduce a hierarchy that was neither beneficial nor rewarding to men or women. This would require an effort to establish as hegemonic, a version of masculinity that is open to equality with women and links to Fraser's (2013) concept of universal caregiving that is discussed in the next chapter. A 'positive hegemony' (*Ibid.* 853), they suggest, would be a key goal for a reformation of the gender system. Here, Connell and Messerchmidt offered a glimmer of hope that traditional forms of masculinity may be replaced by 'a more humane, less

oppressive means of being a man', a model which 'might become hegemonic as part of a process leading towards an abolition of gender hierarchies' (*Ibid.* 833). Times such as these, when the crisis in the world economy impacts across the globe may provide opportunities for just such change, yet caution is required. Despite the seeming hopefulness of such a message, I believe it is wise to remember that hegemony itself implies hierarchy. I caution a need for vigilance in reframing any projects around greater gender equality that conceptualise masculinity as hegemonic. A globalised environment when the crisis in the world economy impacts internationally may provide opportunities for changes in meanings of masculinities which lean towards more gender just performances. Alternatively, the default position may emerge whereby men seek more fiercely to retain power through the incorporation of caregiving models of masculinity into an even more powerful neo-patriarchal construction of gender. Furthermore in overlooking the messiness, complexity and diversity of how gender and power are performed and experienced Connell's conceptualisation of 'patterns of masculinity' as embedded in social relations (Connell, 2000, 12) suggests that men are without agency in relation to the masculinity they perform. This viewpoint I believe to be reductive and essentialising of men. It denies men's role in developing their subjectivity and of reaching their full human potential. It also erases any trust in men's ability to 'do the right thing' and undermines any belief in men's ability to think for themselves and to hold morally just values.

Gender hegemony

Schippers (2007) adds a fresh perspective to the debates on hegemonic masculinities. Influenced by Butler (1990), Schippers turns our attention towards the *qualities* of the

categories of 'man' and 'woman'. It is, she argues, within this idealised and hierarchical

quality content that the hegemonic significance of masculinity and femininity are to be

found. Such significance is not only about individuals, but is the basis for how social

practice is organised and structured in that it shapes policy, institutional practice and

social structure. This, she suggests, provides a legitimising rationale for inequality not only

in gender relations but also in the intersecting areas of race, class, sexuality, age, region or

nation.

Schippers proposes additions to Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity,

> Hegemonic masculinity *is the qualities defined as manly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to femininity* and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Schippers, 2007, 94 original italics)

She argues that there is no such category as subordinated masculinities as the masculine

can never be subordinated; instead she proposes that there are *male femininities.*

> The characteristics and practices that are culturally ascribed to women, do the cultural work of situating the feminine in a complementary, hierarchical relationship with the masculine, and are embodied by men. Because male femininities threaten the hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity, they are both feminizing and stigmatizing of the men who embody them. (Schippers, 2007, 96)

This concept of male femininities is of interest in the context of this study where men are

moving from the world of breadwinning masculinity to one where they will be engaged in

care work that has traditionally been ascribed to women. In uncovering and making

explicit unequal gender relations, new meanings may emerge which will support ways to

challenge and transform gender hegemony. Such work is congruent with this study and

with adult education practice which seeks to involve participants, through critical dialogue, in potentially transformative learning experiences (Mezirow, 2000).

Masculinity as ideology

More recently Reeser (2011) has contributed to the debate about masculinities by proposing that masculinity can best be understood as ideology. In this context, and reminiscent of Gramsci's concept of hegemony he defines ideology as a 'series of beliefs that a group of people buy into and that influences how they go about their lives' (*Ibid.* 24). A familiar androcentric viewpoint underpins this ideology locating male/masculinity above female/femininity and positioning masculinity as most powerful. According to Reeser, institutions, culture, discourse and practice overlap and work together to embed this power-full masculinity. No one institution does this alone but rather institutions such as the state, the family and the education system all play their part in producing, policing and reproducing beliefs about masculinity.

For Reeser cultural 'truths' are propagated through a range of persuasive images, myths and narratives whereby men are essentialised as having innate tendencies towards violence, warfare and destruction. Media imagery further reproduces a shared symbolic language and helps to identify particular actions as signifiers of masculine character. Cultural discourse and language usage plays its role in reinforcing the construction of the ideology of masculinity that is defined linguistically.

Unlike Connell, and I believe more hopefully, Reeser, like Hearn, stresses men's agency. He proposes that not all men unthinkingly accept this ideology and that the one certain freedom that can be attained by men is in deciding to accept or reject forms of

masculinity (Reeser, 2011, 25). The ability to make such choices implies a degree of self-awareness and agency and prompts many questions: Which masculinities are acceptable and which are not? Who has the authority and power to define such masculinities? How do different times and cultures reconfigure the bounds of what is acceptable or rejected in the ideology of masculinities? Reeser concludes that the interface between masculine ideologies and the day-to-day lived experience of masculinity is perhaps where understandings about masculinity can most fruitfully be understood and it is in such a location that this research is situated.

Conclusion Section 2.

I have outlined the origins of the debate about hegemonic masculinities and provided an overview of its evolving and sometimes elusive conceptualisation. Introduced and developed by Connell, the concept of hegemonic masculinities captured the imagination of researchers, scholars and activists. Whilst Connell's contribution has added greatly to our understandings of masculinities it risks slipping towards a conceptualisation of 'men' as a unitary grouping with a single stable gender identity. One that desires a preferred hegemonic masculinity. This I believe simplifies masculinities and fails to explain the nuances and complexities of individual masculine performance and experiences which unfold in the rich narratives of research participants in this study. Furthermore, Connell's rejection of the idea that individual men can author their own masculinity is overturned by the findings of this research.

Chapter conclusion

A common thread in the feminist and masculinities literature reviewed is the influence of entrenched patriarchal structures on masculinity. I propose that it is patriarchy before masculinity that is hegemonic. It seeks to dominate, control and tightly restrict the lives of women and men. I use the term *hegemonic patriarchy* to name inequalities that are legitimised and perpetuated through a range of unjust social processes and structures that have been created by men to appear as entirely normal and natural. These include the way learning and care are managed in family households.

The structures that influence and mold boys and men, if not resisted, are as essentialising as a view that masculinity is narrowly and biologically determined. A 'real man' must ideally have the capacity to control what is happening whilst simultaneously being able to resist being controlled by others (Johnson, 2005). This is not about biology, yet it suggests that men have no choice about how they can be in the world, if they are to avoid vilification and ridicule. Nor is it about boys or men reaching their full potential. Rather boys are culturally and socially constructed, through a system of induction, into a masculinity that is impossible to achieve. It is one that dehumanises whilst complexly imparting patriarchal privilege to men in recognition of their individual and collective masculinity.

Feminists have long identified men, patriarchy and masculinities as sources of power, domination, inequality and subordination. Yet the feminist movement is, for me, a hopeful one. It places its trust in the possibility of change and continues to work towards the creation of more equal gender relations and structures. Masculinity theorists have

brought to light not only the privileges which men hold as a result of their very maleness, but they have also identified the damage to men of those same systems. Much of the harm done to men has been identified as located in the affective domain (Lynch et al, 2009). The arguments for men to fight against inequalities are frequently framed in relation to the gains they will accrue from greater gender equality. We are told that men will be happier, they will have better relationships with their partners and children, their health and well-being will improve; they even have a promise of better sex (Barker, Contreras, Heilman, Singh, & Verma, 2011; Kimmell, 2015). Whilst these arguments may resonate for some, for me a reliance on arguments that foreground self-interest as a motivation for working towards equality ring hollow. Rather I believe that the required argument is one of social justice. For women and men to continue living in relationships that are characterised and reproduced by personal and structural power inequalities, by masculine domination and subordination, is unjust, unfair and damaging to all. Our lives are short and surely we can do better for reasons of mutuality rather than those of self-interest?

Reflecting on unequal gender relations illuminates, for me, a particular awkwardness for men, irrespective of their social position. Whilst feminists have an identifiable 'other' to look to as the oppressor, men must look to themselves and to the structures, created in men's interests, if they are to fully understand the deep damage of gendered structural inequalities. This is a big ask of men. It suggests a letting go of power. Thus the goal for men who are involved in working for gender justice is undoubtedly complex, yet the gains are great. This is particularly true in the area of love, care and solidarity which has been socially constructed by patriarchal hegemonic masculinity as the women's domain thereby

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leaving many men limited opportunities to fully develop these core and frequently joyful human capacities. This is a deep injustice to men. Relations of love, care and solidarity are fundamental to flourishing lives.

Masculinity theorists have uncovered the rapidly diminishing value of the patriarchal dividend. They urge the continued problematising of masculinity as they believe that patriarchal hegemonic masculinity as it is currently configured can and must be changed if it is to be more useful for humanity. Such a 'new masculinity' would have gender justice as its goal. It is men who are in the most powerful position to do this but it remains a coterminous pivotal feminist goal that they accomplish this task. I propose that feminist and Freirean critical adult and community education spaces may well be appropriate locations for men and women to engage in such critical dialogue.

Chapter 3

Fatherhood

The biological division of labor sets the stage for an array of social and cultural forms of control over women. (Folbre, 2001, 3)

Introduction

The emergence of feminist and masculinities scholarship discussed in the previous chapter inevitably ignited interest in the role of fatherhood and its connection to unequal gendered roles in the home and the workplace. In this chapter I examine the literature relating to fathers and fatherhood. This will provide another piece in the contextual jigsaw to this enquiry into the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' family literacy learning care work.

Drawing on Bourdieu's work on habitus and Reay's extension of the concept into the realm of the affective, the emergence of the fathers' gendered and classed role as breadwinner is traced. I then consider the tension between apparently opposing constructions of fatherhood: one shaped by patriarchy and the other emerging from contemporary rhetoric relating to caregiving and involved fatherhood. Such considerations illuminate the gendered role of motherhood and the moral and social imperative women feel, even when working outside of the home, to care for children (Bubeck, 2995; O'Brien, 2005, 2007). Feminist and profeminist concerns about the integration of caregiving masculinity into even more powerful patriarchal models of fatherhood follow. Further distinctions are noted in the literature relating to working-class

and middle-class fathering practice and the final part of the chapter looks to structural considerations relating to fatherhood.

Conceptual edges

Reay's framework of history, geography/relationships is used to analyse the data in this study and is grounded in Bourdieu's work on habitus, field and capitals. Before proceeding with the chapter, I take a moment to explore Bourdieu's (1985a, 1990) theory of habitus as it provides a further perspective on the gendered construction of men as fathers. Like Connell's theory of masculinity, Bourdieu's theory of habitus is dynamic, socially situated and constituted through a number of interconnected processes that are activated and practiced in a range of social arenas or field*s*. According to Bourdieu, habitus resources each of us (albeit differently) with economic, social and cultural capitals to equip us on life's journey. Habitus is not only something that is externally carried by us, rather it is embodied, 'inscribed in the body of the biological individual' (Bourdieu, 1985b, 113). Yet, as with the construction of masculinity and indeed fatherhood the individual is not the only agent in creating habitus. It is rather a relational process, one that is developed through interaction in a variety of fields, including the family, the education system and wider social structures.

Recognising our interconnectedness to one another, not only in the present but also to those who have gone before, Bourdieu's concept of habitus is both individually and collectively shaped through the unique history of families and their social positioning.

> The subject is not the instantaneous ego of a sort of singular cogito, but the individual trace of an entire collective history. (Bourdieu, 1990, 91)

Although this may seem a deterministic view of our social realities, Bourdieu grants that we do have agency, yet this is intimately connected to and most likely constrained by the dispositions we have learned along the way. I see dispositions as marking the edge of our experiences. To transcend them requires space for conscious reflection and creativity and it is in those moments, in unfamiliar fields, where we become as fish out of water, that the possibilities of change and transformation become clear. This is where edges can expand and new ways of being emerge.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus has been criticised for a lack of engagement with the affective domain (Sayer, 2005; Sweetman, 2003) leading Reay (2015) to argue for the recognition of the role of emotions and the emotional lives of individuals when thinking about habitus. She turns away from what she terms Bourdieu's 'objective and scientific approach' to habitus (*Ibid.* 9) and looks towards the affective aspects of human life. Drawing from the work of Wetherell (2012) who defines affect as 'embodied meaning making' (*Ibid.* 4) and something which could be understood as human emotion, Reay concludes that habitus can be expanded to enable the links between individuals inner emotional worlds, and the external social and structural processes to become clear. In expanding Bourdieu's theory of habitus to include the psychosocial, Reay has provided a really useful analytical tool of enquiry into fatherhood. It is in just such an affectively rich life transition from being a man to becoming a father that the external and internal worlds may either elide or collide.

Studies have shown that fatherhood solidifies traditional breadwinning masculinity whilst paradoxically kindling deeply felt affective emotions (Kaufman, 2014; Levtov et al, 2015; Miller, 2011; Palkovitz, Copes, & Woolfolk, 2001). Fatherhood evokes dormant instincts

such as empathy, attachment, sensitivity and a desire to care for others (Dermott, 2008; Miller, 2011). Such emotions and feelings are incongruent with what men have learned about being properly masculine and so fatherhood catches men off guard. Many (not all) fathers want to 'be there' for children, but the patriarchal imperative and powerful gendered expectations which position men as economic providers can also pull men away from caregiving (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Miller, 2011). Nevertheless becoming fathers is a significant time for men, a time when their identity comes under review (Dermott, 2008; Miller, 2011). It is in such moments of transition to the field of fatherhood that possibilities arise for developing new ways of being and thereby restructuring habitus. Conversely it may also be a time when default positions of deeply inscribed breadwinning imperatives come to the fore. Familiar patriarchal-approved workplace locations may feel like a more comfortable fit for many men, permitting them to conveniently retreat from caregiving (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012). In these positionings men have options that are unavailable to women whose gendered construction had fixed women's 'natural' identity as caregivers.

Breadwinning masculinity, class and the trace of collective history.

Bourdieu's theory of habitus foregrounds the interplay of the past and the present and the breadwinner construct of masculinity has a long history. With its roots in the hegemonic patriarchal structuring of the social world, the ideology of man as provider is embedded in earliest history when a man's worth was judged by his ability to hunt and provide for his family (Doyle, 1995). The male imperative of provision later transferred from food supply to the generation of family income through paid labour. This socially constructed and frequently classed breadwinner role has proved to be remarkably

resilient over time, yet it has also altered and been influenced by the evolving social, cultural and political landscape in which it was embedded (Hearn, 2002).

Prior to the industrial revolution there is evidence that women and men shared some responsibility for contributing to the economic unit of the household (Bernard, 1981). As such women were not wholly dependent on breadwinning partners. In agrarian communities women's labour was recognised as essential to the family economy and Fraser and Gordon (2013) conclude that women's dependency in pre-industrial times was less gender-specific than it later became.

In the UK and the US during the industrial revolution the chasm between the public world of men and the private world of women and children deepened (Seidler, 1997). The fatherhood role was redefined as one of sole, and most often, distant breadwinner (Pleck, 1985; Seidler, 1997). Connell (1995) proposed that,

> The factory system meant a sharper separation of home from workplace, and the dominance of money wages changed economic relations in the household. The expansion of industrial production saw the emergence of forms of masculinity organised around wage-earning. (Connell, 1995, 196)

Being a wage earner with the capacity to maintain a household and support a non-wage earning wife and children defined masculine independence, and further resourced masculine power (Fraser & Gordon, 2013). Men, who had been separated from the intimate life of families, struggled at the end of the working day to re-enter the gendered institution of the family, as full participants (Connell, 2000). Such theorisations overlook class difference. Some men did not have to earn a living rather they were independent, living on inherited wealth, or on the labour of other men, women and in some cases children. No manual or physical labour was required of these men. This was the task of the

working-class man (Morgan, 2005). The breadwinning role of working fathers, who were dependent on others to earn, was firmly rooted by the early twentieth-century. Middle-class and working-class men were constructed by institutional structures to support dependent families through their labours in the more powerful public field of the workplace. Success in this endeavour was viewed as deeply admirable in terms of patriarchal masculinity whilst failure meant questions about masculine credentials (Dermott, 2008; Doyle, 1995).

Women were located within the private and less powerful field of the home and viewed as dependents of men (Fraser, 2013). Such a construction of women further embedded hierarchical binaries which were central to patriarchal capitalist culture: masculine/feminine, public/private, worker/carer, economy/family, and competitive/self-sacrificing (Fraser & Gordon, 2013). Despite the work of feminists and pro-feminist men, many would argue that such core gender divisions persist leaving fatherhood and motherhood as sites of gendered inequalities (Dolan, 2014; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). Such inequalities have further complexity when considered alongside class inequalities (Morgan, 2005) and where a generational connection has been made between hard, physical labour and working-class masculinities (Willis, 1978).

The narrow understanding of a father's role as sole breadwinner was briefly disrupted by the two world wars. Men were encouraged and expected to demonstrate their masculinity through the protection of their homeland and family. Paradoxically men were expected to care for their families by committing acts that were furthest away from caring as they were sanctioned by the state to kill and maim (Barry, 2011).

In the US and in the UK during the Second World War many mothers were left to take on the role of caring for their family alongside contributing to the economy through participation in the workforce. For many of these families, this was the first experience of the dual-earner model of family support where women shared the role of breadwinner with their absent soldier partners. At the same time women continued in their often invisible role as family carer and homemaker. This gendered arrangement foreshadowed the frequently exhausting role women enacted in future decades as 'second shift' workers in dual-earner households (Hochschild, 1989, 2003). Following the war and the return of men to family life, patriarchal concern arose relating to women's growing influence in both the world of work and in the private sphere of the family. Fears were expressed that the supposed biologically determined sex roles of women and men were being weakened (Pleck, 1985, 1987). Consequently, fathers were encouraged to reassert their status, to control children and to oversee their moral development (Seidler, 1997).

During this period, the three functions of the traditional father could be defined as: provision, protection and authority (Ruddick, 1997). The habitus of a good man/father was shaped to include work, heterosexuality and authority over women and children. These idealised worker fathers had no obligations in the home. They were without the burden of caretaking and detached from care relations (Ranson, 2001; Seidler, 1997).

This construct was set against one that construed women as innately talented in the parenting role, particularly in the realm of the nurture and intimate care of children (Dolan, 2014; Fineman, 2004; Hanlon, 2012; Reay, 1998). Gendered skills of motherhood were viewed as socially inferior and less valuable than the exalted rationalising influence

of fathers. Such discourses portrayed mothers as incapable of inculcating moral values in children, implying that they lacked the capacity to take on such roles (Dowd, 2010).

The work of post-war feminists, combined with a related rise in the number of women in both education and the workforce, further challenged and impacted upon gendered and classed constructs of parenting (Millet, 1970; Rich, 1989; Walby, 1990). Feminist debate highlighted the unequal division of childcare and the damaging impact this had on children, mothers and fathers (hooks, 2004). As discussed in the previous chapter, both profeminst and antifeminist men's voices amplified feminist debate, problematising gendered parental roles from very different perspectives (Warren, 2007).

Disrupting the continuum

Bourdieu reminds us that habitus is permeable and that it has the capacity to restructure allowing for new layers of meaning to emerge (Bourdieu, 1972, cited in Reay, 2004). When tracking the changes in meanings of fatherhood over time I am struck by the slowness of change. Yet changes there are.

The 'fatherhood turn' in masculinity studies is a relatively recent phenomenon and the paternal role is now established in sociological terms as 'an interesting social fact' (Dermott, 2008, 9). Picking up the thread from the last chapter of Connell and Messerschmidt's proposed focus on a greater geography of masculinities, the recent publication of *The State of the World's Fathers* (Levtov et al, 2015) presents a global perspective on fathers' role in home care work. Fathers' contributions to working towards gender equality are thereby presented as being of global significance. The report revealed that caregiving fatherhood was of great benefit to children, mothers, fathers and

communities. In sharing the burdens and benefits of domestic and child care work fathers might support women's participation in the workforce and women's equality overall. The report found that men's involvement in domestic care work modeled gender equality to children and this had a lasting positive impact on daughters and sons attitudes to gender roles. Through men's close involvement in their children's lives women, children and men were happier. This in turn resourced children's cognitive and emotional development.

These positive results sit beside some discordant realities about the real extent of caregiving work in which fathers involved themselves globally. Women have taken on more responsibility outside of the home in the labor force yet men's participation in the care work and domestic care work in the home has not kept up. Whilst women make up forty per cent of the world's workforce they also do between 2 and 10 times more unpaid care work than men (*Ibid.*). So, even though there have been some changes in fathers' involvement in this work, progress is slow. Nowhere in the world, not even in the most gender equal Nordic countries (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009) does men's involvement in caregiving equal that of women.

Paralleling the interest in fatherhood at a global level, at the local and regional level fatherhood has also taken its turn under the spotlight of the media and popular culture. Emerging from feminist discussions focusing on gender relations in the early 1960s, the concept of the 'new man' was the foundation for a vision of care-oriented masculinity (Klinth, 2003). The archetype of the 'new man' preceded the 'new, involved father' and both were widely portrayed as middle-class phenomena (Ranson, 2001). Since the '60s there has been significant growth in the number of self-help and advice books targeting fathers (Beaumont, 2013; Greenberg & Hayden, 2004; Sinclair, 2012). The internet, social

media, television and cinema have all played their part in adding to the discourse on involved, responsible, and caring fathers.

In June 2015, inspired by readings of *Making Sense of Fatherhood* (Miller, 2011) and *Making Men into Fathers* (2002) a brief internet search of *'how to be a good dad'* from Google yielded interesting findings. Signifying considerable curiosity about the topic eighty two million such queries had been requested from Google when I first typed the question in their search engine. The following June (2016) the same query evidenced the growing interest in the topic with one hundred and seventy three million requests for information. These searches revealed extensive lists of websites detailing advice and support[3] for fathers and a growing number of blogs by dads discussing their struggles and triumphs as twenty-first century fathers[4]. Newspaper columns have also added to public discourse with fathers writing first hand accounts of the joys and challenges of being a dad and coping with children[5].

Reflecting wider discourse which equates parenting with mothers, men have been most often portrayed in the media as secondary parents who 'help out' as part time caregivers alongside more expert mothers (Coleman, 1989; Miller, 2011; Sunderland, 2006). More recently, the growth in representations and displays of involved fathering in the public arena have raised the profile of fatherhood providing a seemingly widely accepted image

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[3] www.NYCdadsgroup.com , www.geekdads.com

[4] https://www.facebook.com/matt.coyne.524/posts/1744897602400722
http://www.digitaldad.ie/p/homepage.html

[5] http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/series/man-about-the-house http://jrnl.ie/932738
www.artofmanliness.com; www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/banish-daddy-guilt-10-tips-for-frazzled-working-fathers-1.2489957

for men to reflect on when enacting their own fathering practice. This cultural framing of fathers, through sometimes conflicting media representations, is influential in shaping new ideologies of fatherhood. On the one hand, iconic images of involved and caring celebrity fathers have been deployed to encourage men to explore and publicly display their nurturing nature, their 'new masculinity'. Images of the footballer and businessman David Beckham, the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity for some, have been just such an essential reference point in portrayals of fatherhood (Miller, 2011). On the other hand, popular media portrayals of fathers as bumbling, clumsy and foolish exist alongside these more glamorous images. The former cast fathers in a negative light further compounding images of men as incompetent, secondary caregivers to children (Schmitz, 2016). The level of impact of representations of men as involved fathers in the private sphere of the home is disputed. Whilst there is a strong rhetoric and popular approval of caregiving fathering expressed by men, there is scant evidence that such imagery actually impacts on fatherhood practice (Dowd, 2010; Gregory & Milner, 2011). In fact a considerable gap has opened up between what fathers say and what they do. Fathers avow equality 'in principle', yet what is actually done in terms of care work continues to lag behind the care work of mothers (Hochschild, 1989; La Rossa, 1988, 1997; Levtov et al, 2015). Furthermore, and demonstrating their power, fathers continue to pick and choose the care work in which they involve themselves (Dermott, 2008; Doucet, 2006; Hanlon, 2012).

'Caring for' and 'caring about'

Caring is a fundamental human capability and it serves a universal and essential human need (Nussbaum, 2000). 'Caring for' and 'caring about' have been theorised by feminists scholars (Baker et al, 2009; Lynch, Baker & Lyons, 2009; Tronto, 2001) who identified that

caring included not only an ethic, 'caring about', but also activity, 'caring for'. Being loved

and cared for is required for our human development, well-being and growth throughout

the life cycle (Engster, 2005). It is vital in infancy, in early childhood and at times of

vulnerability or illness (Engster, 2004; Fineman, 2010). Care has been defined, by Lynch

and Lyons (2009), as 'work that involves looking after the physical, social, psychological,

emotional and developmental needs of one or more people' (*Ibid.* 57).

The affective domain, where care and emotional capitals are located and nurtured, has

traditionally been viewed through a patriarchal lens as a private, feminised and emotional

sphere (Lynch et al, 2009). The heart of the affective domain is within the private world of

the home and is construed as a passive location where no 'real' work is done and is

separate from economic and public life where men are located. Yet, economic life relies

heavily on the often invisible unpaid care labour that underpins paid work (Fineman,

2004). It is the work that makes work possible (Slaughter, 2016). In defining elements of

the affective domain as work Lynch et al, (2009), highlight the active and dynamic nature

of care labour. The affective domain is not merely about emotion and sentiment but

rather it involves tangible activity which requires time, effort and energy and it involves

work that is both pleasurable and burdensome (Hochschild, 1989).

Lynch and Walsh (2009) define this care work as love labour,

> Primary care relations are not sustainable over time without love labour; the realisation of
> love, as opposed to the declaration of love, requires work. (*Ibid.* 35)

The moral imperative to do care work is greater for women than men and is embedded in

a landscape of socially constructed unequal patriarchal gendered roles (Bubeck, 1995;

O'Brien, 2005, 2007; Shirani, Henwood, & Coltart, 2011). When women involve

themselves in care work it is defined as 'natural' to them, it is part of their gendered habitus. This work goes unremarked. On the other hand, men's involvement in the same work is valorised as exceptional and worthy of praise (Hanlon, 2012; Hochschild, 1989, 2003; Lynch et al, 2009; Reay, 1998; Shirani et al, 2011).

Understanding why women do so much more of this care work and what might motivate men to more equally share this work is central to understanding and changing gender inequality (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012). Just as men reap patriarchal privilege from hegemonic masculinity, some argue that women have access to the benefits that care work brings in relation to intimate and rewarding connection with children. Women are construed by some as the 'maternal gatekeepers', reluctant to give up power in the one sphere in which they possess it (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Dermott, 2008; hooks, 2004; Lamb, 1997). Yet this positioning of women has a cost to them.

It is mostly women who reduce paid work time to look after children. Men tend not to do this, even when supportive paternal policies are in place to enable them to do so. In Sweden, where the 'Daddy Month' ensures that fathers take paternal leave, and where great efforts have been made to disrupt and equalise parenting gender roles, women continue to undertake the primary 24/7 responsibility for the care of children in the home (Plantin, Mansson, & Kearney, 2003). For many women this inequality has a fundamental effect on opportunities for promotion and accrual of pensions (Barry, 2008). Patriarchal assumptions underlying gendered caregiving continue to be an ongoing barrier to gender equality and impact on women's present and future lives.

Fathers and care

To care for others is, Erikson (1963) suggests, the primary developmental task of adulthood. This he terms *generativity* and is closely focused on establishing and guiding the next generation. Whilst men can and do this care work, their framing of its meaning differs from women's.

Fathers consistently describe fatherhood as something that has changed their life trajectories and much of this change is described as an expansion of the capacity to care and to feel (Chesley, 2011; Dermott, 2008; Miller, 2011). Care and its work are associated with the emotional and the feminine and are frequently considered as the antithesis of masculinity (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006; Connell, 1995: Dowd, 2010). As such, care and its expression by men signifies a masculine paradox, one that poses a threat to hegemonic patriarchal masculinity that rests in displays of the self as rational, in control and autonomous. Even the language of love and care is incongruent with hegemonic masculinity (Morrell & Richter, 2004), yet love is a critical element of fatherhood. Research with fathers consistently shows that men want to be free to be able to develop their own emotional capital and that of their children. Emotional capital has been defined by Allatt (1993) as 'emotionally valued assets and skills, love and affection, time, care and concern' (*Ibid.* 143). Fathers have a tangible desire to express the love they feel towards their children in displays of tenderness and in its verbal expression (Dermott, 2008; Doucet, 2006; Miller, 2011).

The care of children involves significant and consistent levels of skillful love labour including the mundane 24/7 drudge work that supports this affective work (Lynch et al,

2009). Like all skills, emotional work and love labour can be learned and honed. Chesley's research with SAHFs (2011) highlighted the transformative impact arising from their involvement in caregiving. In the doing of care men learned to care and reported an increase in their nurturing, communication and conflict resolution skills. The fathers spoke of valuing the time they spent with children and the opportunity this provided to develop close emotional attachments. The men's experiences led them to recognise the daily care of children as valuable work. This impacted on attitudes to work and work colleagues when they eventually returned to the workforce where they reported greater empathy for the challenges of parenting for both women and men.

On the other hand, Dermott's study (2008) with men who were in paid work found that fathers neither needed to spend long hours with children to achieve an intimate father/child relationship, nor did they believe that it was necessary for them to be involved in the daily practicalities of hands-on child care. Good fatherhood, the men believed, was not about child maintenance work:

> Fathers concentrated on the aspects of parenting that were least 'work-like' and downplayed the requirement to perform regular child maintenance activities. (Dermott, 2008, 63)

This continuing power of men to draw down their masculine privilege to choose the care work they do is further underlined in Doucet's (2006) suggestion that intimate fathering may well exist without investment in domestic care labour. This leaves such work in the hands of women and perpetuates the unequal gendered division of domestic care work involved in daily family life. Much of the fun work, such as playtime, bedtime reading, talking with and spending time alongside children, the 'caring about', is done by fathers.

This is reliant on the often hidden 'caring for' work that is done by mothers who continue to bear the heavier load of housework and child care in families (Hanlon, 2012; Levtov et al, 2015; Lynch et al, 2009; Reay, 1995). The possibility that men continue to have discretion in choosing their parenting role is one of the most significant expressions of unequal patriarchal power relations between mothers and fathers (Johansson & Klinth, 2008). Many men continue to rely on patriarchal privilege to pass this work over to their female partners, mothers or sisters (Hanlon, 2012; Legerski & Cornwall, 2010; Masciadrelli, Pleck, & Stueve, 2006) and further illustrate Hearn's view that fatherhood should be viewed as 'a form of certain men's power' (2002, 245).

Dual-earner families

Dermott (2008) reminds us that in a modern consumer society, earning money is important to maintaining oneself and one's dependent children and that this role is now increasingly shared by mothers and fathers. Greater pressure from the labour markets of post-industrial capitalism and growing pressure to consume (Fraser, 2013; Lynch & Walsh, 2009) leave even dual-earner families finding it difficult to make ends meet. This is in a context in the US where more women and men are working longer hours than ever before and where full time employment opportunities have become scarcer and work more precarious as a result (Dermott, 2008: Fraser, 2013). Fraser (2013) credits the work of feminists and the gay and lesbian liberation movements for the growth in the diversity of family models where many no longer prefer the male/female homemaker model and where gender norms about who does what are highly contested. These changes have also been felt here in Ireland where women also occupy the dual-role of earner/carer. These

women include women with children, married women, and a significant number of women who are parenting alone (Barry, 2008).

Research shows that working mothers spend more time with their children than do breadwinning fathers. Despite their roles as full-time breadwinning mothers in the external space of the marketplace, many feel the pressure of the social and moral imperative to assume the major responsibility of childcare and housework (Bubeck, 1995; O'Brien, 2005, 2007). This ensures the further reproduction of traditional gendered divisions of care work and heaps additional pressure on new generations of working women (Bianchi et al, 2007; Chesley, 2011).

Care labour is thus unequally distributed along gendered lines and is construed by patriarchal norms as the work of women (Lynch et al, 2009). Both the marketplace and in turn the State gain exponentially from the largely un-resourced, uncompensated and invisible caretaking work of women. They are freeloading on women's work and as such a collective social debt continues to accrue (Fineman, 2004). Feminists have long argued that this debt can only be repaid through a radical transformation of the institutions of the family, the workplace and wider gendered social structures (Dowd, 2010; Fineman, 2004; Fraser, 2013; hooks, 2004; Millett, 1970). Such a radical transformation would be required whereby the current caregiving labour of women serving the gendered institutions of family, market and state, would change to a model based on what Fraser (2013) calls a 'universal caregiving model' (*Ibid*. 133). Her vision implies a paradigmatic shift from an androcentric view of the world to a gynocentric one. Such a shift would overturn the gender order and dismantle the gendered opposition between breadwinning and caregiving. Reducing the prominence of gender as a structural principle in how society is

organised would, she believes, require a restructuring of the conditions of the marketplace through state intervention. Fraser captures her vision of such a world as:

> ..a social world in which citizen's lives integrate wage-earning, caregiving, community activism, political participation, and involvement in the associational life of civil society – while also leaving time for fun. (Fraser, 2013, 135)

Fraser believes in the importance of having such a guiding vision to work towards and is she believes 'the only imaginable postindustrial world that promises true gender justice' (*Ibid.* 135).

Class and fatherhood

Unsurprisingly, studies with both middle-class and working-class fathers reveal similar narratives about men's desires to be nurturing and caring fathers (Dolan, 2014; Shows & Gerstel, 2009). Nevertheless cultural representations of fathers from middle-class and working-class communities differ greatly. Working-class fathers are pathologised by the media as absent, feckless and deadbeat dads (Dowd, 2010; Hewett, 2015; Goldman, 2005; Gregory & Milner, 2011; Lupton & Barclay, 1997), they are viewed as needing parenting support to help them to be more 'appropriate' parents, that is, more like middle-class parents. This blinkered view ignores wider economic, social and political inequalities. It promotes a hegemony of parenting that is entrenched in a privileged middle-class value system that is subsequently reproduced in the education system (Bourdieu, 1977). Meanwhile middle-class privileged fathers, can draw upon a range of economic, social and cultural capitals to engage in the concerted cultivation of their children (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). This hierarchical positioning by financially secure and culturally approved middle-class fathers is congruent with Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic

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masculinity where men's dominance is not only over women but also over less powerful groups of subordinated men. By relegating working-class fathers to the realm of other, of deficit, whilst inflating and presenting middle-class parenting styles as the superior norm, working-class fathers are construed as inferior (Reay, 2001).

Reflecting a recurrent theme in studies of fathering across classes men in a number of studies (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006; Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Masciadrelli et al, 2006; Magaraggia, 2013) expressed the desire to do fathering 'better' than their own fathers. Mens' desire to move away from more 'distant' models of parenting to ones which are more care-full, reflect wider socio-cultural shifts in relation to masculinities that encourage men to be more demonstrative of their emotional selves (Seidler, 1997). Working-class and middle-class fathers describe experiencing the performance of emotion in the public domain differently. Working-class fathers attending a parenting skills programme in Dolan's study (2014) were happy to embrace parenting qualities such as tenderness, empathy and emotional reciprocity in the private sphere of the home. These feminine qualities were not, however, for public evaluative consumption where they feared ridicule from other men (Connell, 1995). Thus intentions to be involved fathers were overridden by desires to hold on to working-class ideals of masculinity. Meanwhile their privileged middle-class brothers, who had multiple capitals to draw from, were happy to engage in public displays of affection with their children. These displays were in fact expected by peers, even valorised in the public domain (Shows & Gerstel, 2009; Sullivan, 2010).

Differences also emerge between working-class and middle-class practice in the private space of the home. Unemployed working-class fathers, whose partners were in either full

or part time paid work, were more involved in day-to-day childcare than their middle-class counterparts (Brannen & Nielsen 2006; Coltrane, 2004; Gilles, 2009). Whilst limited financial resources impacted on the activities working-class fathers undertook with their children, time spent with them was highly valued and permeated with emotional significance (Dolan, 2014; Gillies, 2009).

Studies show that fathers in middle-class and working-class families alike, deferred to their partners over the day-to-day responsibilities of childrearing (Dermott, 2008; Gillies, 2009; Legerski & Cornwall, 2010). Men most often described household work in terms of being the woman's work but work with which they would 'help out', never truly owning or taking subjective responsibility for that work themselves (Legerski & Cornwall, 2010). This highlights the unequal socially constructed gendered practice of parenting which continues to construe mothers as the primary experts in childcare (Sunderland, 2006), even when they are full-time breadwinners. In turn, these patriarchal constructs, pressurise women and limit fathers' opportunities to reap the affective benefits of this love labour.

Structural considerations

Conscious of the cost of supporting 'fatherless' families, governments and policy makers have been eager to capitalise on and promote the 'father turn' and to 'make men into fathers' (Hobson & Morgan, 2002, 1). Internationally a range of policies and legal frameworks have been developed to encourage fathers to take on, what is defined as their financial care role, in a robust, consistent and responsible manner (*Ibid.*). Focus on the finances of fathering continues to support and reproduce a narrowly gendered

'breadwinning' view which essentialises men's contribution to parenting in monetary terms whilst ignoring the social role of fathers and the importance of the affective father-child relationship (Dermott, 2008; Doucet, 2006; Ferguson & Hogan, 2004; Hanlon 2012; McKeown, Ferguson, & Rooney, 1998: Miller, 2011).

The underlying rationale for such policies and legislation are based on constructions of fatherhood that are either 'optimistic' or 'pessimistic'. The 'optimistic' view of fatherhood is rooted in the desire for gender equality and reflects generational change in gender attitudes. The pessimistic view arises from social changes relating to rises in divorce and separation rates and fears about the impact of 'fatherless' families on the wider social fabric. Associated concerns about financial costs to states relating to lone parent (mostly mothers) families are another motivating factor in the attention on fathering. These conflicting views of men and fathers are the foundations of public discourse relating to fatherhood and construe them in binary terms as either a problem or a resource; as absent or present; as responsible or irresponsible; as feckless or involved (Dowd, 2010; Goldman, 2005; Gregory & Milner, 2011; Lupton & Barclay, 1997) thus negating the nuanced and complex realities of human lives and relationships.

Conclusion

The collective history of families and class, aided by the patriarchal structures of society have shaped men's gendered habitus. Men learn that to be a father means that they must provide for and protect 'their' families. This positions men as the head of families, as authorities and disciplinarians whilst also distancing men both physically and emotionally from their children and partners. A breadwinner construct has long been hegemonic in

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relation to societal ideals of masculinity and has conferred much power and privilege on fathers whilst stabilising the idea that masculinity is not nurturing.

The feminist movement, masculinity scholars and activists have challenged these socially constructed, unequal gender roles. Ideals of hegemonic masculinities, and the patriarchal structures which supported their existence were identified as significant blocks to men's involvement in the nurture and care of children. Many, contemporary fathers desired to parent differently. They wanted to fashion a fatherhood practice that included care, connection and close involvement with their children. Fathers in the literature are actively involved in this recalibration of fatherhood to include affective care work in their parenting (Kaufman, 2014; Levtov et al, 2015, Morgan, 2002; Van Der Gagg, 2014). Yet it seems that fathers are not abandoning traditional roles rather they are integrating new care roles and characteristics into their habitual practices (Catlett & McKenry, 2004; Dowd, 2010; Kaufman, 2014).

These changes are not mainstream. They are more likely to be the unusual and remarked upon than the unremarked. Fathers are not undoing gender injustice. Globally women continue to do most of the care work on the planet (Levtov et al, 2015). Whilst many men have moved away from the distant breadwinner model to a more involved and nurturing practice of fatherhood, they continue to hold on to their discretionary power about the child care work they do and are more likely to choose the fun activities than the invisible, unremarkable domestic care work which supports children and families to flourish. It is in this context of choice where men's continuing power is most starkly clear. Men can make choices where women can not.

The literature reviewed here points to the need for structural change if newly emerging care-full fathering practice is to influence the feminist project of greater levels of gender justice. This requires a change in androcentric assumptions about the gendered nature of care across society, in legal systems, in the institutions of the state, the workplace, in education and health (Dowd, 2010; Fineman, 2004; Fraser, 2013). Such changes would need careful scrutiny to ensure that the emerging recalibration of fathering masculinities is directed away from the further accrual of power over women towards a universal caregiver model supported by gender just state structures (Fraser, 2015).

In the next chapter I take an in-depth look at the literature relating to the impact of gender constructs on boys' relationship with literacy. This will provide insight into the intergenerational reproduction of gendered attitudes to literacy within families and compounded by the education system and the wider unequal and gendered structures of society.

Chapter 4

Boys and literacy

I would like to ask that we begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. And this is how to start: we must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently. (Ngozi Adichie, 2015, 25)

Introduction

In the last chapter I explored the changing role of fatherhood and traced evolving debates about breadwinning and caregiving ideals of masculinity. In this chapter, I continue the exploration of the theme of hegemonic masculinity with a shift from men and fathers towards a consideration of boys. Mindful of Bourdieu's emphasis on the influence of the past on the present, literature on boys' relationship with literacy is discussed here in order to uncover the roots of men's relationship with literacy as adults. As such, this chapter explores literature relating to the tripartite relationship between boys, ideals of masculinities and literacy

The chapter opens with a discussion of literacy, feminist contributions to the debate about boys and literacy and the impact of ideals of hegemonic masculinities on boys' relationship with literacy. Opposing perspectives on why many boys appear to be disengaged from literacy are outlined. One side of the debate is rooted in a fatalistic belief in biological determinism whilst the other more optimistic perspective, congruent with my own views, points to the social construction of gender. Finally the chapter considers the

risks that boys face when they negotiate the borders between hegemonic masculinities and involved literacy practice.

Literacy

Definitions of literacy are diverse and change over time in response to changes in the economic, social and political world in which they are situated. Ask a group of people what literacy means and the usual response is one of, *'It's about reading, writing and spelling'*. Some might even mention the use of IT. Such a definition portrays literacy as a neutral 'thing', one that is related to discreet technical skills that are, for the most part, adrift from any context. This instrumental view of literacy can be enriched through questions such as *'How might it affect life if you do not have literacy?' 'Who gets literacy?', 'Who does not?'* Such conversations were the starting points in discussions about literacy with the men in this study. Consequently, meanings of literacy moved quickly from the instrumental to more expansive views linking literacy to the social, political and economic context in which it is embedded. Literacy became something that *'is about everything'* and closely related to issues of social inclusion and exclusion.

In a society that is heavily reliant on the written word, it is important at the outset to recognise that many of those with unmet literacy levels already negotiate their lives successfully (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gardner, 1993). Nonetheless, those who leave school with more literacy assets are arguably better prepared and resourced for their life journey.

Feeley (2014), brings to light, the often-unmarked connection between literacy and inequality. Tracing the development of literacy in the European context she highlights a

literacy narrative that was historically in the control of the privileged few. In such a context, men were predominantly the holders of such capital (Power, 1995). Feeley (2014) suggests that, literacy, 'over and above other intelligences became an essential lever of wealth, power and esteem' (*Ibid.* 44). The unequal distribution of literacy continues to the present day and mirrors gender, class, ethnic and other hierarchies of wealth, status and power (Baker et al, 2009; OECD, 2009; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2012; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). This inequality is not solely to do with brute bad luck (Gheaus, 2009), rather it is the result of political choices which influence who acquires literacy and who does not.

Analysis of the systemic roots of literacy disadvantage focus attention away from the repeatedly cited failures of individuals, families and communities with unmet literacy needs towards the wider, gender unequal, social, political and economic context. Historically, without the skills to read and write, people were looked down upon and frequently portrayed as subordinate, stupid and incompetent (Clanchy, 1979; Cressy, 1977). Indeed the terms 'illiteracy' and 'illiterate' carried derogatory social class connotations (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Labels such as literate or illiterate are value laden words which represent people in a positive or negative frame; 'literate' is associated with knowledge, success, ambition and high ethical standards while 'illiterate' suggests ignorance, indolence and a general lack of moral fiber (Powell, 1999). Such framing, identifies those who are more or less deserving of society's rewards and confirms a meritocracy whereby those who have the highest levels of literacy are awarded the most goods. The social and cultural stigma associated with 'illiteracy' remains today and is strongly felt in terms of low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence (Bailey & Coleman,

1998; De Brun & Du Vivier, 2007; Hegarty & Feeley, 2010a). Damaged self-perceptions, alongside wider inequalities, can hinder individual progress. Adults with unmet literacy needs are more likely to accrue less social, economic or cultural capitals than more privileged others. Many earn less, are less involved in civic society, less healthy and vote less in elections that might encourage fairer policies (Bird & Akerman, 2005; Bynner & Parsons, 1997). The strong narratives that prevail amongst literacy learners in relation to the growth in self-esteem experienced on returning to learning are significant at an individual level. Whether personal transformation has a wider impact is unclear as individual change has limited effect on tenacious structural inequalities.

Critical literacy

Neoliberal thinking saw literacy as a functional and instrumental tool that could be harnessed to grow strong economies, develop competitive markets and exercise social control (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Since the 1970's, the work and ideas of Freire and feminist scholars (hooks, 1994; Thompson, 2000; Weiler, 1991) has transformed the adult literacy movement. Freire sparked discourse about the futility of narrowly viewing literacy as a mechanistic domesticating process when he identified the links between unmet literacy needs and oppression (Freire, 1972; Freire & Macedo, 1987). For Freire, the unequal social context in which literacy occurred was the starting point for critical pedagogy. Critical literacy education was about change, and liberation, and the first step in the process was the examination of a given society and of the citizens' or participants' relationship to it. In this way, a Freirean (1972) concept of literacy involved more than the decoding and encoding of print. Rather the acquisition of literacy skills became a deeply political act that could lead to a more equal and participative democracy. Through

conscientisation, Freire sought to encourage people to collaboratively examine the root causes of oppression in order that they could plan collective action for change. He believed that in firstly *seeing* and *naming* the lifeworld, learners would be able to participate in meaningful, dynamic, authentic critical literacy practice. Critical consciousness would in turn lead to praxis and social transformation towards more just societies (Freire & Macedo, 1987). For Freire, dialogue was at the heart of this practice.

> To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming.* Men [sic] are not built in silence, but in word, in action-reflection. (Freire, 1972, 61)

Like the ethos that now epitomises radical adult and community education, the critical literacy Freire espoused was the practice of freedom. It was the antithesis of the banking form of literacy where learners were filled up with information and knowledge that served to maintain the status quo. It had at its core a belief in people's own expert knowledge about their lives. Freire trusted that learners had within them the potential to change their lives and in turn the lives of their communities. He proposed an empowering, problem-posing pedagogy that recognised the skills, knowledge and experience of learners. He believed that through a process of questioning, critical reflection and praxis, individuals and communities could take control of their own lives and move from being passive, oppressed objects to becoming empowered, critical and agentic subjects (Freire, 1972). Freirean literacy education was an integral part of a radical, politicised pedagogy that purposely set out to stimulate action for change (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Implicit in Freire's work is the idea that having unmet literacy needs is a consequence of an unequal society. The righting of this inequality can only be achieved through a radical restructuring of unequally constructed systems that benefit the few over the many.

New Literacy Studies (NLS) emerged from the work of researcher activists and academics based in Lancaster University and elsewhere, in the 1980s (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1999; Street, 1984). NLS reconceptualised literacy by linking the cultural view of Freire to the realm of socially situated literacy, giving us what is sometimes referred to as a socio-cultural approach to literacy. Street (2012) terms this insight as 'both banal and profound' (*Ibid.* 16). It is banal in the sense that it seems obvious that literacy is always practiced in social contexts, yet profound also as it leads to new ways of understanding and defining what counts as literacy.

Speaking, reading, writing, new technologies and the media all find their place in NLS's definition of literacy. It is in the emphasis on the social situation and the power dynamics in which these events occur that an expanded understanding of literacy surfaces. NLS focuses on the many different ways that people engage with literacy. It recognises difference and diversity whilst also challenging how such differences are valued – or not – within society. One of the goals of NLS is to 'disturb the global homogenisation of literacy' (Clarke, 2002, 120). Through ethnographic research and practice, NLS sought to build an understanding of the great diversity of vernacular or 'local literacies' and to debunk narrow hierarchical notions that decontextualised literacy learning and practice.

> Literacy does not transfer unproblematically across contexts; there are different literacy practices in different domains of social life, such as education, religion, workplaces, public services, families, community activities; they change over time and these literacies are supported and shaped by different institutions and social relationships. (Hamilton & Barton, 2000, 2)

Echoing Bourdieu's theory of habitus (1985a, 1990) and Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinities (1995), socially situated literacy is influenced by what has gone before and by the location in which it is taking place. Equally, and resonating with Reay's (2015) championing of the affective elements of habitus, socially situated literacy is also deeply influenced by the psychosocial, by structural and social relationships. These aspects surface particularly in the school memories of the research participants in this study.

In promoting a new way of looking at literacy, NLS highlight forms of literacy and presentations that span a continuum from local, iconic and vernacular literacy to academic literacy, on paper or electronic screen. It emphasises the need to respond to evolving developments in technological means of communication and the ways in which this changes how literacies are learned and used (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). The agenda of what NLS term 'powerful literacies' (Crowther, Hamilton, & Tett, 2001, 3) is informed by issues of social justice and equality and contrasts with neoliberal educational policy which is solely concerned with servicing the economy (Finnegan, 2008).

Feeley (2009) argues that whilst NLS goes a long way towards counterbalancing the literacy deficit narrative it has not yet addressed the underlying issue of the unequal nature of the social contexts in which literacy as a social practice happens. In focusing on the individual acquisition of literacy skills, NLS ignores wider structural inequalities and 'may in turn unwittingly contribute to the maintenance of inequalities that are rooted in social structures rather than in stigmatised individuals and groups' (Feeley, 2007, 23). Today, literacy is still most easily acquired and used by those who already possess a privileged habitus that is rich in social, cultural, economic and personal capitals and supportive learning relationships. As such, having unmet literacy needs remains an issue

of equality (Baker et al, 2004; Department of Education & Skills (DES), 2005; Feeley, 2009, 2014).

Care and learning literacy

The pivotal importance of the role of the affective in how and what we learn is increasingly being recognised (Cohen, 2006; Feeley, 2014; Luttrell, 2013; Lynch et al, 2009). The centrality of the learning relationship expressed in critical and feminist writing is extensively theorised in the work of Noddings (1992, 2003, 2007). She places the importance of care and caring at the centre of the teacher-learner relationship. In practice this involves a move away from the self towards an understanding of the reality of the other, described as 'caring from the inside' (Noddings, 2003, 14). Noddings suggests this happens through authentic dialogue and it requires commitment on the part of both the teacher and the learner. Whilst Noddings asserts that, 'What is most valuable in the teaching-learning relationship cannot be specified' (Noddings, 2003, 20), she outlines some of the key elements that are essential to that relationship. These include shared contributions, mutuality, generosity, presence and reciprocity. In photovoice research with children, Wendy Luttrell (2013) has shown the importance that young learners themselves put on affective aspects of their lives both at home and in school.

Feeley (2009, 2010, 2014) further fortifies the argument for care by highlighting the affective domain in the specific context of learning literacy. Coining the phrase *learning care* to describe both the enabling and practice dimensions of literacy learning, Feeley emphasises the relational and social process and outcomes of literacy events and acts. She

defines learning care as, 'the attitudes and the actions, both paid and unpaid, that support individuals and groups on their learning journey' (Feeley, 2014, 10).

Learning care is located in the family, the school and community and its effectiveness is determined by the exercise of the state duty of care. The gendered issue of who does home based literacy learning care work and where they learn the skills needed is insufficiently problematised and is couched within the persistent, durable context of wider gender inequalities. My study examines the experience of fathers in this regard. Ultimately, enabling or restricting the capacity of families, schools and communities to equally benefit from literacy is dependent upon the state's commitment and action in creating a more equal society.

Tracing the emergence of concern for boys

Feminist and pro-feminist scholars have highlighted the education system's role in producing and reproducing an unequal patriarchal gender order (Connell, 2000; hooks, 1989; Kimmel et al, 2005; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Feminist research in the 1980s and 1990s drew attention to gendered pedagogical inequalities where androcentric interests were embedded throughout an education system that was neglectful of girls (Delamont, 1980; hooks, 1989, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Spender, 1989; Weiler, 1988, 1991). A feminist focus on girls and education increasingly revealed the low-scores which boys were attaining in reading and writing leading to interest in why boys were 'failing'. This was despite a context where boys were given more attention by teachers, where core texts depicted boys as more active agents of their destinies and where male teachers

continued to hold more powerful positions than women colleagues (Barrs, 1993 cited in Moss 2007; Drudy, Martin, Woods & O'Flynn, 2005).

The fall-off in boys' literacy attainment was viewed as evidence of a systematic disadvantaging of boys by the school system (Sommers, 2000). Boys as a group became identified as oppressed and were depicted as the victims of a gender war (*Ibid.*). Discourses, which focused on failing boys, were set against advances made by girls and their outperformance of boys in educational attainment. A 'moral panic over boys' (Weaver-Hightower, 2003, 475) ensued and 'what was happening in schools came to stand for what was happening in society at large' (Moss, 2007, 19), where a crisis for men had been identified (Faludi, 1999; Sommers, 2000).

'What about the boys?' became the cry from the men's rights' lobby and gained strength through a growth of interest in publications of popular psychology such as *End of Manhood* (Stoltenberg, 1994), *The Wonder of Boys* (Gurian, 1997) and *Raising Boys* (Biddulph, 1998). The cacophony was further amplified by 'parental pressure, practitioner efforts, policy attention, and a great deal of research' (Weaver Hightower, 2003, 472). Media reports about the boy crisis forecast the imminent collapse of traditional family values, the redundancy of the male breadwinner, the demise of social cohesion and the marginalisation of men (Abraham, 2010; Evening Standard, 2008; Sommers, 2013).

Connell (1996, 2000) has suggested that the impetus for such panic was the restoration of gendered divisions and a desire for the shoring up of patriarchal masculinity in boys and men, despite the damage that such constructs of masculinity were causing for many of them (Barker 2005; Faludi 1999; Kimmel et al 2005; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Feminism

was held responsible for the dashed expectations of the birthright of men. The alleged loss of patriarchal dividends and privilege created a masculine culture of lashing out, resulting in a rise in both domestic and public violence (Faludi, 1999). These fears fed the backlash against feminists, driven by a desire for the reinstatement of dominant and hegemonic versions of masculinity. The underlying antagonism further fuelled the new consciousness about failing boys (Martino & Berrill, 2003).

Concerned masculinity scholars emphasised the limiting effect of hegemonic masculinity on boys' education and learning (Connell, 2005; Kimmel et al, 2005). Nonetheless, a divisive 'win/lose dichotomy' (Watson, Kehler, & Martino, 2010, 358) fed into education policy which Martino and Berrill (2003) suggests colonised the pedagogical space and the educational agenda for boys. Feminists and pro-feminists (Epstein, Elwood, Hey, & Maw, 1998; Kenway & Willis, 1998) feared that focusing on boys might impact negatively on the progress girls had made, diverting funding from research and policies that supported girls to make progress. They proposed that pedagogical and curricular interventions be constructed in ways that suited more boys without harming girls (Weaver-Hightower, 2003, 487). In reality, not all girls were succeeding in the education system just as not all boys were failing (Walkerdine, Lucy & Melody, 2001; Weaver- Hightower, 2003). Recent studies in the UK have shown that it is white working-class boys and girls who are falling furthest behind in terms of educational attainment (Stokes, Rolfe, Hudson-Sharp & Stevens, 2015; Strand, Malmberg, & Hall, 2015).

Gender, privilege and literacy

When compared with girls, boys from all socio economic groups are underperforming in literacy (OECD, 2010). That said, concerns about boys' underachievement overlook a global context where the majority of those with unmet literacy needs are women and girls (UNESCO, 2013a). Reflecting wider and gendered structural inequalities, the literacy scores of girls in local or even national arenas do not translate into higher levels of economic or social status for girls or women globally (*Ibid.*). As the attempted assassination on Malala Yousafzai has shown, for many girls going to school is life endangering (Doeden, 2014). For others it is an impossible dream and yet others are kidnapped and disappeared because their participation in education is so threatening to a patriarchal order (Mukasa, 2014).

Boys' literacy, education and class

Whilst it has been argued that processes of male gender socialisation are at the core of the boy crisis and the related struggles that boys face as literacy learners (Kehler & Martino, 2007). It is fair to say that intersecting identity factors such as class (Reay, 2001, 2002), ethnicity (Matthews et al 2010) and sexuality (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino, 2008; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Scholes, 2013) are also contributing threads in this complex story.

The education system was presented by Bourdieu as one of the primary influences in the construction of knowledge and in the transmission of culture. With Passeron, Bourdieu (1979) viewed the family as the site of cultural reproduction, a location where some children (those from working-class communities) were left without the capitals needed to negotiate the unfamiliar and unequal territory of the school. This left them feeling like

'fish out of water' in the education system. Kusserow's study (1999) with middle-class and working-class parents (mostly mothers) found that alongside identity formation in both the school and the home, children were differently socialised. Middle-class children were being raised to be a 'singular unit looking out into the world'. Their identities were being oriented outwards towards individuality, uniqueness and self-actualisation. In contrast their working-class peers were being prepared as a 'singular unit against the world' (*Ibid.* 216). The working-class mothers in Kusserow's study were intent on supporting children to develop resilient and self-reliant identities, ones which could survive the often dangerous terrain of their local streets.

Bourdieu asserted that the function of education, as it was constructed, was to re/produce a social hierarchy where a privileged bourgeois class maintained their position, dominating those from lower and working-class backgrounds. Reay (2010) describes these inequalities in the function of education as the 'making' of the middle-class learner and the 'unmaking' of working-class students (*Ibid.* 402). As such, across social structures, learning expectations and outcomes continue to be stacked against the working classes leaving children from privileged families to continuously reap rewards both within the education system and the wider social context to which educational capitals contribute.

> Not only do the most privileged students derive from their backgrounds of origin habits, skills and attitudes which serve them directly in their scholastic tasks, but they also inherit from it knowledge and know-how, tastes and a 'good taste' whose scholastic profitability is no less certain for being indirect. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 17)

In *Reproduction* (1996) Bourdieu developed the concept of *symbolic violence* to capture the harm that education inflicted on children from working-class communities. Through their engagement in the system children learned first hand of the power and legitimacy of

the dominant culture. Many internalised feelings of failure rather than looking to the unequal system which sought to keep them in their place in order that the hierarchical social order be maintained and reproduced. This educational inequality is affirmed in the narratives of working-class returners to adult education (Bailey & Coleman, 1998; Hegarty & Feeley, 2010a).

Willis (1977) challenged Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction in his ethnographic description of the oppositional school culture of a group of working-class 'lads' in *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs.* His study was conducted during a period when there were steady jobs available even for:

> ....non-academic, low-achieving, school disaffected, white working-class boys and when there was an identifiable British working-class to be reproduced through schooling and work. (Kenway & Kraack, 2004, 95)

Bourdieu's theories, Willis believed, focused too heavily on dominant ideology and the power of structures whilst overlooking the potential for social struggle and the production of alternative or radical consciousness. Bourdieu (1996) saw the possibilities of agency as tightly constrained by habitus and the social and cultural fixing mechanisms of the institutional structures which shape us, and which he viewed as essentially immutable. He suggested that we humans are unaware of such constraints and ultimately unfree, bounded by our social situatedness. This social binding does not however preclude action informed by reflection.

> The social world is....something which agents make at every moment; but they have no chance of unmaking and remaking it except on the basis of realistic knowledge of what it is and of what they can do to it by virtue of the position they occupy in it. (Bourdieu, 2001b, 74)

On the other hand, Willis, (like Freire and feminist scholars) passionately believed in the possibilities of social change and praxis. In his study he found fissures in the construction of the class edifice and evidence of agency. The 'lads' in his study had some limited understanding of their class position through what he termed 'partial penetration' (*Ibid.* 119), a term often critiqued for its masculinist conotations (Weis, 2004). They understood that even with qualifications their lives would ultimately be lived out as their fathers before them. The 'partial' nature of their understandings referred to the incompleteness of their critique of the structures which were shaping them, leaving the lads without insights into the possibilities of transformation that existed for them.

The lads understood that school credentials would ultimately make no difference to the dismantling of any classed system. This did not however mean a passive acceptance of their fate. Through their resistance of the dominant authoritarian learning culture, which had as its goal the making of good workers, the 'lads' celebrated their masculinity in opposition to school norms. Conforming pupils, the 'ear'oles', (who simply sit and listen) were equated with the feminine and therefore subordinate. The 'lads' on the other hand were shoring up their proper masculinity. This positioning, Willis suggests, reflected the patriarchal construction of hierarchical relations. They bolstered their fragile educational and class status through the denigration of mental labour as 'cissy' and the association of physical labour with manliness. Willis (2004) later suggested that these gendered positionings by the lads reinforced dispositions that had a lifetime impact, shutting them out from any possibilities of engagement in further education.

The lads' performed their agency through the creation of a dynamic and ultimately violent sexist and homophobic culture of resistance and opposition to authority. Importantly,

such sexist and heterosexual machismo were, and arguably are, irrespective of class and signify what Arnot terms as 'the collective form that masculinity takes' (Arnot, 2004, 37). As such, these are not solely features of working-class masculinity. Neither are they unique to the period in which Willis's book was published (Kenway & Kraack, 2004).

Ultimately however, through their determination to 'have a laff' (*Ibid.* 12), to choose to invest their capacities in fun and diversion rather than mental labour the 'lads' in the study readied themselves for the shop floor and factory work. Thus, ironically, they were complicit in their own social class reproduction.

Willis's work, as Connell (1995) has noted, importantly pioneered the study of gender within the contexts of working-class cultures in education. The study opened the door to new understandings of the role of the school in generating multiple masculinities which were formed primarily through resistence to school authority and discipline.

Today, education 'continues to be governed by elites' (Dillabough, 2004, 491) who already possess an unequal share of capitals to ensure the continuing educational success of their sons and daughters. This reflects the ongoing unequal nature of the education system and the wider structures in which it operates, where patterns of inequality are sustained and reproduced (Allatt, 1993; Reay, 2010).

There is much contemporary evidence of a growing understanding of the impact of social class on boys' experiences in relation to literacy and educational outcomes (OECD, 2010; Reay, 2002; Scholes, 2010, 2013; Scholes & Nagle, 2012). Whilst some boys are marginalised at school and struggling in their literacy progression, this is not true of all boys. Empirical evidence suggests that it is boys from the lowest socio-economic groups

who continue to leave school with the greatest unmet literacy needs and who benefit least from the education system (Collins, Kenway, & Mc Leod, 2000; Connolly, 2006; OECD, 2010). Boys from more privileged backgrounds, boys who 'fit' ideals of middle-class hegemonic masculinity, boys who are white, heterosexual and already privileged continue to reap the benefits of a system which meets their needs. Furthermore their parents are in a position, through their acquisition of personal, social and economic capitals, to fill any literacy gaps left for their sons (Lynch & Feeley, 2009; Watson et al, 2010; Weaver-Hightower, 2003).

Unlike Willis, who prioritised class over gender, Reay (2004, 2010) placed constructs of both masculinity and class at the heart of the 'failing boys' crisis. Reay viewed class as a 'complicated mixture of the material, the discursive, psychological predispositions and sociological dispositions' (Reay, 1989, 259). She aimed to explore how class and the inequalities it generated were lived in gendered ways. She proposed that gendered constructs denied boys access to their feminine qualities and in turn to literacy engagement.

The chapter on masculinities revealed how ideals of patriarchal masculinity are subject to policing under the 'male gaze' and impossibly demanding expert status in all things (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 2000; Martino, in Skelton, 2001). In the context of education, such expectations heap pressure on boys to know the right answer, to be in control and this in turn has an emotional cost for boys (Reay, 2002). Studies repeatedly show that, most boys learn that literacy and its content and skills, clash with dominant and desirable constructions of masculinity (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Reay, 1998; Scholes, 2013; Walkerdine, 1990).

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Boys who engage in school work are labeled 'swots', 'geeks', 'nerds' and 'squares' and run the risk of being denigrated and ridiculed (Renold, 2001, 374). Studies show that in the context of school-based literacy, boys' involvement in reading and academic success is conflated with girls work and therefore associated with being gay (Martino & Berrill, 2003; Scholes, 2013). As boys define their maleness in opposition to femaleness, 'feminised' literacy must therefore be rejected (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Francis & Skelton, 2001; Kehler & Martino, 2007; Reay, 1998; Renold, 2001).

In relation to the study of English, literature and story reading are viewed by many boys as focusing on uniquely feminine concerns and conceptualised as effeminate, passive, girly pursuits (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Newkirk, 2002). Nussbaum (2004) highlights the role that literature and story telling can play in the nurturance of the empathy muscles that are key to understanding others. Such internal growth, Tanggaard (2016) suggests, supports the capacity to imagine, to dream of a better life for ourselves and for others. Empathy helps to develop moral imaginations and inner worlds and is a critical process in human connection and flourishing. Through empathy we come to see the humanity of others. It is this capacity for deep empathy that gets erased when boys are taught to suppress their emotional selves and to disconnect from others (hooks, 2004). Gender constructs thus limit boys through the denigration of their involvement in literacy and are harmful and limiting of boys' (and later on men's) full capabilities. Nussbaum (2004) suggests that literacy is a human right and that states and other relevant bodies of power have a duty to equally secure the literacy capability of each citizen. In the context of gender, states would arguably also have a duty to support the deconstruction of harmful ideals of masculinities in order for gendered views, including of literacy, to be transformed.

The biological lens

The issue of boys falling behind girls in school prompted a response that was rooted in a biological determinist perspective of gender (Biddulph, 1998; Gurian, 1997; Gurian, Henley & Truman, 2010). This rationale became part of the predominant discourse in the US, Australia, the UK and Canada (Skelton & Francis, 2011) and provided little space for the agency and diversity of boys. Supporters believed that masculine traits were fixed and knitted into the very DNA of boys. Gender was viewed as genetic, something that existed at birth, located within the body alongside organs and tissue.

> …belonging to the culture of manhood is important to almost every boy. To impugn his desire to become 'one of the boys' is to deny that a boy's biology determines much of what he prefers and is attracted to. Unfortunately, by denying the nature of boys, education theorists can cause them much misery. (Sommers, 2000, cited in Martino & Berrill, 2003, 99)

From this reductive perspective, boys are portrayed as highly active, competitive, aggressive and noisy with a 'natural' aptitude for maths whilst shunning literacy. Solutions to boost boys' participation aimed to rebalance what was perceived as an unfair advantaging of girls. These included; targeted pedagogical strategies to respond to boys preferred learning style (Biddulph, 1998; Gurian, 1997; Gurian et al, 2010); more male teachers to counterbalance the feminisation of the classroom; the creation of single sex classes and a review of curriculum materials to match boys' interests.

Such strategies were not without their critics. Research showed that male primary teachers felt compelled to present themselves as 'properly masculine' in schools that were viewed as female spaces (Berill & Martino, 2002; Lingard, Martino, & Mills, 2009; Skelton, 2001). This resulted in male teachers 'exaggerating various aspects of masculinity,

thus presenting themselves as 'laddish' through using humour and demonstrating a passion for football' (Skelton, 2001, 138). In their research, Berrill and Martino (2002) found that male teachers shied away from open displays of affection or nurturing behaviours because of fears of being perceived by parents as homosexual. As such, male teachers compounded gender stereotypes through displays of hegemonic masculinities rather than modeling the diversity of masculinities, including those that were caring, relational and loving.

In a belief that less competition and distractions for boys would help them focus, single-sex classrooms were proposed. Yet research showed that boys in single-sex schools adopted competitive interactional styles, displaying traits of dominance associated with hegemonic forms of masculinity. These behaviours resulted in the silencing and oppression of quieter boys (Lyons, Lynch, Close, Sheerin, & Boland, 2003). In the biological camp, perceived brain difference between boys and girls and their preferred learning styles suggested different pedagogies (Smith & Willhelm, 2002). Boys were narrowly depicted as having a preference for reading about sports and adventure stories, leading to recommendations that these interests should guide pedagogical choices. More recent research has shown that such reductive beliefs about boys' brains were unfounded and there is no significant relationship between gender and preferred learning styles (Jordan Young, 2010; Younger & Warrington, 2005). Often generalised suggestions about how to 'fix' boys, completely disregarded boys' diversity, agency and their multiple learning styles.

The gender lens

Those who held an analysis underpinned by masculinities theory looked to how gender was constructed in order to understand boys' relationship with education (Connell, 1982, 1995; Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005; Francis & Skelton, 2001; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino, 2008; Walkerdine, 1997; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). From this perspective gender identities were viewed as being actively and continually constructed through an array of performances and actions rather than as an immutable given (Butler, 1990).

Reay made the link between boys' aversion to literacy and the construction of masculinity explicit.

> If part of the 'normal' male development involves the expulsion of the feminine which then becomes a target for contempt, learning, especially literacy based learning, encoded as feminine continues to be denigrated by boys who are the focus of the failing boys discourse. (Reay, 1998, 232)

Suggesting that boys were not suffering from feminist initiatives but rather from how education, knowledge and masculinity were constructed, those interested in boys' literacy engagement identified teachers, pedagogy and curriculum as crucial influencers of boys (Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Henderson, 2003; Connell, 1995; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Watson et al, 2010). Development opportunities for teachers were needed and had the potential to support them to confidently problematise and challenge social and cultural constructions of gender (Skelton & Francis, 2011; Lyons et al, 2003; UNESCO, 2013b). Pedagogy that focused on how society and school influenced gendered behaviours was also suggested (Connell, 2015; Skelton, 2001). Classrooms that provided a diverse curriculum and a safe space for discussions about masculinity, sexuality and the affective domain of emotional relationships were proposed to counteract harmful

pedagogies which left unremarked and hidden such vital areas of human development (Connell 2005; Skelton & Francis 2011; Watson et al 2010; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). This in turn, it was believed, would leave boys free to improve their literacy skills without fear of the shame or ridicule which limits the possibility of learning. Such pedagogical action might also challenge the relationship between boys (and later men), literacy and the hegemony of a masculinity that rejects and denigrates literacy as a feminised and therefore subordinate pursuit.

Literacy and boys, risky business

Research has shown (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino, 2008; Reay, 2002; Renold, 2001; Scholes, 2013) that boys have to vigilantly manage their identities if they are not to be bullied, taunted about their sexuality and subjected to daily verbal abuse and ridicule. Such peer pressure results in deeply damaging public humiliation and shame, something all boys want to avoid (Lyons et al, 2003; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Renold, 2001). Managing conflicting emotions requires much determination and energy, energy that could be directed to educational progress rather than towards self-protection. And so, for some boys, it is easier to reject literacy rather than becoming subjected to degrees of persistent violence. This is a growing problem in schools where boys are more likely to be involved in physical fighting, are suspended in greater numbers than girls, are more often diagnosed with ADHD. In extreme cases, and often for unexplained reasons, more boys than girls take their own lives (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Boys' coping strategies

Robust evidence shows that boys, who need to, have developed a range of coping strategies to negotiate the difficult terrain between hegemonic masculinity and literacy (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Reay, 2002; Renold, 2001; Scholes, 2013). For some this involves the establishment of alternative identities and behaviours. These strategies focus on uncoupling academic effort from academic success and demand much psychic energy on the part of boys. Others establish safe foundations of acceptable models of masculine identity before they dare to gather literacy capitals (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Reay, 2002; Renold, 2001; Scholes, 2013). These identities include being sporty, being tough, being hard, being a 'messer' in class. Whilst reading is most often positioned outside of the boundaries of acceptable boy behaviour, the establishment of approved masculine identities allows some boys to safely and quietly engage in what are viewed as feminised literacy activities and academic achievement (Connell, 1989, 2005; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Renold, 2001; Scholes, 2013). For others, reading becomes a clandestine activity, hidden from the eyes of peers and enjoyed in the privacy of the home (Scholes, 2013).

Conclusion

In highlighting the education system's role in creating an unequal gender order, feminist debate uncovered some boys' underachievement in literacy. This led to concerns about boys and their future place in the world. Boys were depicted as failing, as under threat from the progress girls were making. The patriarchal birth right of men was under threat.

Whilst some boys were undoubtedly falling behind in their literacy and academic achievement such hyperbole ignored wider inequalities where boys from middle and upper-class backgrounds continued to do well. The contributions of Bourdieu and Willis, although occupying different positionalities in relation to structure, agency and class signify the importance of creating spaces where learners have opportunities to reflect collectively on their lives and to identify the links between their social realities and the structures which have so intimately affected their lives and worldviews. Such reflective spaces hold within them the possibilities of informed agentic decision making which can in turn lead to enhanced outcomes for boys in terms not only of their engagement in literacy work but also in relation to the range of life possibilities which are there for them to pursue.

In trying to understand why boys were falling behind with their literacy progression some turned to an examination of the biological differences between boys and girls. From this perspective boys were viewed as more suited to particular types of pedagogy and curriculum, ones that would match their 'innate' need to be active. This reductive view held that boys were hard wired to be as they were, construing them as naturally disinterested in learning and literacy.

For those who believed that gender was socially constructed, an examination of the ideals of hegemonic masculinities revealed that boys had been socialised to view literacy as a feminine pursuit and as such of little value to boys. Being seen to be involved in literacy activities put some boys at risk. They were ridiculed, taunted and publicly shamed resulting in many boys having to adopt sometimes ill-fitting identities in order to pass as suitably masculine, as not girls, as not gay, as proper boys. They learned that literacy and

its content and skills conflicted with dominant constructions of masculinity. Others adopted an anti-study, anti-school culture to protect their vulnerable identities and this had lasting impact on the trajectory of their lives.

Whilst the deterministic biological perspective of boys and literacy does not hold out any hope for change, the constructionist position poses pedagogical challenges but also allows for optimism. Whatever the root, deeply inscribed ideas about literacy as something to be avoided, are difficult to erase. Many carry these beliefs about literacy and learning into their adult lives as men and as fathers. This legacy, which views literacy through the lens of patriarchal hegemonic masculinities as a subordinate, feminine, activity can have an intergenerational impact leaving one generation without the will or the skills to support the next. In trying to understand and disrupt the complex impact of dominant constructions of masculinity on boys' and fathers' literacy learning, a fundamental and deep interrogation of gender regimes is signaled and there may conceivably be a role for critical adult education contributions in such a process.

With these boyhood experiences in mind, the next chapter explores literature which illuminates fathers' involvement in family literacy learning care work.

Chapter 5

Gender and family literacy learning

Introduction

Connections and disconnections between ideals of masculinities and family literacy learning care work are the backbone of this study. At the same time, some of the wider inequalities within which family literacy work is situated, notably those of gender (family literacy work is overwhelmingly women's work), class (a hierarchy of literacy exists) and educational inequalities (some families and communities have access to more education than others) are also worth consideration. The feminist and egalitarian interest is to look for ways to include men so that they might share the care burdens (and benefits) unequally carried by women.

This chapter begins with an overview of the literature relating to family literacy. The underpinning ideologies, which shape family literacy interventions, are discussed followed by a snapshot of family literacy in Ireland. The focus is on the barriers and benefits for men of participating in this learning care work and learning from family literacy interventions with fathers are outlined in the concluding section.

Family literacy and learning, a contested and classed terrain

'Family' is understood in this study as:

> A unit of people bound together by special affective relationships; these may be multi-generational, historic and rooted in biological bonds or lifetime commitments of love, care and solidarity. (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010b)

The family, in whatever form, remains the recognised unit for the nurture and development of children and so, consciously or not, is deeply concerned with all aspects of formal and informal learning (Saracho, 2002). Family literacy and learning programmes grew from understandings of the importance of early, pre-school years in a child's development and a recognition of the diverse language use and literacy practices within families (Taylor, 1983).

It is in the intersection between formal and informal learning that issues arise when discussing the 'contested terrain' (Tett & Crowther, 1998, 449) of family literacy. In a landscape populated by questions relating to who defines the very meaning, purpose and value of literacy itself the responses are intricately bound up with issues of power. There is a hierarchy of literacies, where formal, school based and middle-class literacies are valued over and above those that are informal, home based and working-class. Thus leaving the way for dominant forms of literacy to function as culturally normalising tools (*Ibid.*). Furthermore it leads to the marginalisation of the literacies of working-class and minority communities and the culture from which they emerge (*Ibid.)*. Such relegation of people's vernacular literacies has a profound affective impact on how they see themselves and their communities. It contributes to people's internalisation of their own literacy practice as being inferior and deflects attention from an unequal education system which privileges some families and communities over others (Cregan, 2007; Heath, 1983; MacRuairc, 2004; Reay, 2002; Tett & Crowther, 1998).

Structural inequalities give rise to the unequal distribution of social goods including education and it is significant that family literacy programmes are not usually run in middle-class communities. Culturally approved middle-class mothers and fathers are

assumed to be proactive in their children's literacy development (Baumann & Wassermann, 2010). They are already in possession of the appropriate capitals to do this work or in a position to buy in additional expertise if their children need it (Baker et al 2009; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Underpinned by a view that working-class and poor parents do not know how to do literacy support, family literacy programmes most usually take place in disadvantaged communities and their very existence highlights inequalities at the heart of the education system.

Deficit views of parents from disadvantaged and poor communities are compounded through essentialising media portrayal of them as uninterested in their children's education (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010). Discourses about uninvolved and uncaring fathers, lone parent families and out of control and uncared for children all add to the noise of disrespect for individuals and families who are living in areas neglected by the state. Yet research has shown that all parents' value literacy skills and many believe literacy to be the single most powerful hope for their children (Ortiz, 2004). Regardless of parents' own literacy levels, they want their children to do well and to support their literacy development in the ways they can, both in the home and in relation to their children's learning in school (Brooks, Pahl, Pollard, & Rees, 2008; Hegarty & Feeley, 2010; Morgan, Nutbrown, & Hannon, 2009).

Barriers faced by under-resourced parents in an education system constructed around a dominant and for some, alien middle-class culture, are further strengthened by the hierarchical positioning of language registers where the everyday language and literacy practice of the middle-class are most valued (Bourdieu, 1991). This impacts on children and parents from disadvantaged backgrounds who are further stigmatised for their

vernacular language usage. Such rhetoric disregards the learning care work parents are doing to support their children in ways that may differ from the middle-class culture of school and which reflect the rich language and literacy practices of everyday life in diverse families and local communities. (Cregan, 2007; Slaughter & Epps, 1987; Tett, 2000). It is expected that, without guidance, working-class families lay aside their language and literacy usage in order to take on the middle-class literate language of school (Cregan, 2007). Disregarding the diversity of literacy use, schools lose out on important contributions many parents can make as collaborating educational partners (Tett, 2001). Opportunities to promote the status of the complementarity of learning in school and at home are all too often lost and this has negative knock-on consequences for everyone.

The gendering of family literacy work

Tett (2001) illuminates the gendered Ideologies behind approaches to family literacy and learning interventions.

> The assumption that pervades many parent education programmes is that it is not the fault of schools if they fail to educate disadvantaged children rather it is mothers who are blamed, and they in turn blame themselves, for the institutional failure of schools. (*Ibid.* 193)

The role mothers are ascribed in nurturing the language and literacy development of children is reflected and reinforced in the saying 'Educate a woman and you educate a nation'[6]. This phrase encapsulates the gendered imperative that mothers hold primary responsibility for the learning support work involved in child rearing, including their children's language and literacy development (Nichols, 2000). Smythe and Isserlis, (2004) note that whilst family literacy texts,

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[6] Original quote attributed to Dr. James Emmanuel Kwegyir-Aggrey (1875 – 1927)

> ...employ 'parents' in their advice, the texts themselves appear to be written for mothers, and more specifically 'ideal' mothers who carry out appropriate literacy pedagogy in the home as part of their 'natural' roles as nurturers and teachers. (*Ibid.* 4)

In this way, the location of the 'problem' with literacy inequality is placed in the 'private' rather than the 'public' sphere. This gendered arrangement focuses attention away from an unequal education system towards the qualities of the caregivers (Luttrell, 1997). Mothers are made culpable rather than the wider social structures. Responsibility for fixing the literacy 'problem' lies with individual mothers who are often already overburdened, under-resourced, frequently working in low-paid employment, sometimes holding down a number of part-time jobs to make ends meet and are themselves educationally disadvantaged (Luttrell, 1997; O'Brien, 2005; Reay, 1998, 2000). At the same time, the relentless focus on mothers leaves fathers' potential contribution untapped and invisible to teachers and school staff (Goldman, 2005).

Embedded within wider disparaging discourses about working-class parents, fathers are depicted as uncaring and absent (Dowd, 2010; Goldman, 2005; Gregory & Milner, 2011; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). This in turn impacts on how they are viewed by teachers, school staff and administrators. Fathers' involvement in their children's education is often overlooked (Green, 2003; Morgan, Nutbrown & Hannon, 2009; Schwartz, 2004) resulting in communication about children being directed at mothers and leaving men out of the loop. Yet, the increased numbers of women in the workforce and a rise in men's unemployment brought about by the economic crisis means that more men are visible in local communities (Allagretto & Lynch, 2010; Barry & Conroy 2012). Signifying one of a number of recent disruptions to gender performances in families, fathers are dropping off their children at the school gates, they are pushing buggies in playgrounds, they are doing

the family shopping with their children. Fathers looking after their children have become an increasingly common, visible feature of much of the community landscape (McLeod, 2008).

Family literacy programmes

Family literacy programmes most often follow one of two approaches. The school centred and culturally reproductive approach, delivers pre-defined programmes to support the development of what is deemed to be desirable in terms of school literacy. These colonising programmes seek to replace home-based literacy usage with the privileged form of literacy favoured by a meritocratic education system (Heath, 1983). In so doing, I suggest, the home-based, real life language and literacy use of families and communities is misrecognised and disrespected, as are the families who are fluent in their own native tongue.

The second approach to literacy programmes, and the one in which this research is located, uses a learner-centred and culturally productive approach. This is congruent with the adult education philosophy of Freire (1972) and the work of NLS outlined in the previous chapter. Parents, that is, both mothers and fathers, are recognised as experts who engage in a wide range of literacy activities in their everyday lives. The diversity of language and literacy is often far greater than is assumed by narrowly defined school centred approaches (Barton, 1994). In her research in Scotland, Tett (2000) found that the everyday literacy practices of parents from a disadvantaged community in Edinburgh included for example, scanning the TV pages to find out what was on television, writing brief notes for family members, reading horoscopes, understanding a range of signs and

symbols, making shopping lists, keeping a record of family birthdays and anniversaries and sending greeting cards. The school centred and culturally reproductive approach seeks to build on real life literacy activities that families are already finding really useful, rather than emphasising what they are not doing in relation to, often alien, school-based literacy usage. Importantly, it recognises that home and community-based literacy contains within it the experience and history of families, communities and cultures. Here, families' literacy practices are viewed as a respected contribution to the development of both the family literacy programme and the school. Tett and St Clair (1997) suggest that this approach sees families as a rich source of authentic influences on the educational process. They inform and create educational values rather than being treated as empty vessels to be filled with remote values that are derived elsewhere.

> As we have argued, the prevailing culture is not monolithic and there are opportunities for resistance and contestation which can lead to families writing their own stories rather than simply reading books at bedtime. (Tett & St Clair, 1997, 119)

A reciprocal and non-hierarchical process is at the heart of this model. Schools gain from a patchwork of influences located in surrounding cultures and in turn feedback into those cultures (*Ibid.*).

Unsurprisingly, children who feel that their home use of literacy is recognised and valued within school walls are more likely to engage confidently with school learning. Irish Studies, with primary school children, have shown they are consciously aware of denigrating attitudes and responses to their vernacular language use making school an alien place to be for children and parents (MacRuairc, 2004).

Literacy relationships, home and school

Whichever approach is taken to family literacy support much depends on the quality of the relationship between home and school (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010b; Reay, 1998; Tett, 2001; Tett & Crowther, 1998). Wider structural inequalities come into focus at this relational level. As the more powerful and privileged actors, it is generally teachers and schools who define the boundaries of relationship with parents. Teachers most often come from middle-class backgrounds with the attendant 'othering' of those from working-class and resource poor communities (Cregan, 2007). Hannafin and Lynch (2002) suggest that working-class parents are less included, both formally and informally, in school structures than are middle-class parents whose values, language and behaviours fit more closely with the institutionalised ethos of the school and those who work there.

The 'fit' of parents with educational institutions is further clarified by Tett (2001) who suggests that there is an expectation amongst 'professionals' that 'good' parents; have a positive attitude towards the school; that they encourage the same in their children; that they will work with their children to prepare them for school and that they will behave in a certain way in school spaces so that they do not interrupt the smooth business of educating the child. These expectations indicate the gap in understanding, and therefore the relationship, that exists between mostly middle-class teachers and working-class parents (Luttrell, 2012).

Such perspectives feed into a view that parents are problems and they need to adopt to the school's way of seeing things rather than assume they are people with valuable contributions to make to their children's education (Tett, 2001). This despite much

evidence that parental involvement in a child's learning has more of an impact on their educational outcomes than any other demographic measure including social class or level of parental income (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Feinstein, Galindo-Rueda & Vignoles 2004; NESF, 2009). Schools expect changes in the attitudes and behaviours of parents and children whilst themselves avoiding the critical reflection needed to bring about change.

Family literacy in Ireland

The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights commented that equipping a child with adequate literacy and numeracy skills is central to their progression from a life of poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation and increases their ability to participate in society and in democracy (Sepúlveda-Carmona, 2013). Whilst this view of literacy and numeracy as 'things' with which children should be 'adequately' equipped is rooted in the functional view of literacy outlined in the previous chapter, it also acknowledges the importance of the inclusive and enriching power of literacies for individuals and communities. The principle of family literacy as learning that begins with the lived reality of parents underlies the National Adult Literacy Agency's approach to family literacy (NALA, 2004).

Nested in a view of literacy as socially situated, the relevance of literacy in children's lives and in their flourishing is clearly outlined by youngballymun's [7] submission to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in response to the *Better literacy and numeracy for Children and Young People: A Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools* (2011). Here literacies are conceived as existential and relational matters.

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[7] **youngballymun** is a ten-year strategy to improve mental well-being and learning outcomes for children and young people in Ballymun, Dublin.

Language and literacy are the fundamental foundation to our children's expression of themselves, their ability to communicate and central to building relationships with others. As children grow up, literacy becomes the key to unlocking their potential as learners, their doorway to active and meaningful contribution to their community and country. Literacy is a fundamental child rights issue and without good literacy levels, every dimension of life possibility is curtailed. (youngballymun, 2011)

Despite the evidence available and indeed common sense intuition that literacies are indeed bound up with existence, relationships and opportunity, far too many children and young people in Ireland are left with their literacy needs unmet (youngballymun, 2011). The Programme for International Assessment 2012 (PISA) (OECD, 2012) results showed that students attending schools in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools Programme (DEIS) performed significantly less well than their contemporaries in other schools. DEIS was introduced in 2005 and aimed to address the educational needs of children from marginalised communities. Such schools are predominantly located in areas that experience high levels of social harm and highlight the deep inequalities that exist in the Irish education system. Whilst the eight hundred and forty nine DEIS schools have shown steady progress in their literacy targets it is notable that the average scores in DEIS schools remain below average when compared to the general population at both primary and post-primary levels (Ward, 2015). Furthermore only twelve per cent of children from DEIS schools progress to third level education (Humphreys, 2014).

In 2011 the Department of Education and Skills published *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: the National Skills Strategy (NSS) to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020* (DES, 2011). The strategy set out clear targets for children's literacy performance at primary and post-primary levels with a view to substantially improving results by 2020. Furthermore, and in line with Article 42 of the

Irish Constitution where 'the State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family' (Constitution of Ireland, 1945, Article 42), NSS recognised the critically important role of parents and families in supporting children's literacy and language development. Despite this constitutional acknowledgement, disproportionate levels of state funding continue to be directed at supporting learning in schools, rather than in the home (NALA, 2009, 5). Furthermore, a plan to improve literacy, language and numeracy, which does not address the causal socio-economic inequalities, provides only a temporary sticking plaster rather than sustainable change towards a more just and equal society where literacy capitals are distributed equally amongst citizens.

Hegemonic patriarchal masculinity and fathers' family literacy learning care work

As discussed in the previous chapter, literacy and literate activities have traditionally been construed by ideals of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity as passive and belonging in the domain of the feminine (Martino & Berrill, 2003; Watson et al, 2010). Consequently they are of lesser value, to be shunned by 'real boys' and 'real men' (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Renold, 2001). The legacy of such a gendered learning identity deeply impacts and limits the relationship some boys, young and adult men have with literacy and this in turn effects fathers' attitudes to, and involvement in, supporting family literacy learning care work (Karther, 2002; Nichols 2002).

The patriarchal ideals about 'proper' masculinity discussed in Chapter 2 fuelled men's exclusion from care work, strengthening rigidly defined binary parental models which became embedded into family literacy practice. Mothers were positioned as the 'natural'

experts in this area (Karther, 2002), and as the primary parent responsible for the success of children's education (Lareau, 1989; McLeod, 2008; Reay, 1998).

Gender, power and family literacy learning care work

Uncritically reflecting the reality of who does learning caregiving, much of the research on parenting and education has focused on the role of mothers (Nichols, 2000; Ortiz, 2004; Reay, 1998, Schwartz, 2004). This leaves the role of fathers' involvement in children's literacy development largely unseen and unproblematised (Clark, 2009; Ortiz, 2004). My study with men from Dublin's inner city redresses this imbalance and contributes to greater insights into fathers' relationship with this family literacy learning care work.

Issues of gender power and powerlessness are core to this debate. We have seen that men and fathers are already imbued with more authority in the public and private space than women. Fathers and their actions are allocated patriarchal status and privilege (Connell, 1995; Reay, 1998). Corroborating this, evidence suggests that fathers have more effect on their sons' reading achievement than does mothers work in this regard (Clark, 2009; Laosa, 1982; Trent & Slade, 2001). An inflation of men's parental work can overshadow the parenting work that mothers do as a matter of course and these power dynamics are not invisible to children (hooks, 2004). Furthermore, whilst mothers' educational work can be taken for granted, fathers' involvement is not to be expected and frequently valourised. As such, it is viewed as a gift, something to be grateful for (Coleman, 1989; Hochschild, 1989; Reay, 1998).

Reay (1998) has identified the three core components of parental involvement in education as: practical maintenance, emotional and educational work. In the context of

her study with mothers, this parental engagement was construed as women's work where mothers were viewed as naturally talented. Fathers did not concern themselves in any meaningful way in their children's education, and in some instances, were found to add to women's already heavy workload through requests for support in mediating relationships with children. Fathers 'helped out' with this work. They involved themselves at the level of decision-making, advice giving and occasional attendance at parent teacher meetings where their masculinity was 'seen as a resource in dealing with teachers' (*Ibid.* 152). Implicit in this willingness to 'help' is a conceptualisation that this work is primarily women's responsibility. Men can choose, or not, to be involved thus maintaining their position of power and privilege (Nichols, 2000). Whilst a number of decades have passed since Reay's study (1998), trenchant gender roles have been slow to change. This is particularly the case in the private space where home-based literacy learning care work continues to be primarily the work of women (Clark & Foster, 2005; Karther, 2002; McLeod, 2008).

Affect and fathers' motivation

Where there is evidence, fathers' reasons for being involved in their children's literacy are located in the affective domain (Clawley & Goldman, 2004; Ortiz, 2004). Men involve themselves for the love of their children and because they value literacy (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010; Karther, 2002; Ortiz, 2004). They want to be responsive to their children's needs and interests (Clawley & Goldman, 2004). Fathers who struggle with their own literacy are motivated to support their children's literacy development because of their desire for their children to flourish and to attain more from education than they did (Karther, 2002). Fluency in literacy is viewed as the means to such success. Ortiz's study

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(2004) with Hispanic/Latino fathers who were intimately involved in the routine, hands-on washing and feeding of children, were also actively involved in supporting children's literacy development. In their close relationships with their children, they saw literacy as an integral part of daily life. It was described by fathers not just in relation to learning but as a way of communicating and of expressing emotion.

Benefits of fathers' involvement

It is an evident good to have fathers involved in literacy learning care work because,

> ....it is fulfilling for fathers, mothers, and children, and because of this, it can make a difference to their social well being. (McLeod, 2008, 783)

Benefits accrue to children and fathers and by extension to families and communities. Importantly, a brief and tantalising glimmer of the potential of fathers' involvement in this learning care work as a means of diffusing and diminishing ideals of hegemonic masculinity is also discernible in the literature (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010; Morgan et al, 2009; Nichols, 2000).

We have seen that fathers are powerful role models in children's lives. They have a pivotal role in supporting their involvement in language and literacy and in creating literacy rich environments (Saracho, 2007). Furthermore, fathers who actively support and nurture the emergent literacy skills of children describe personal growth in their own confidence and self-esteem (Clark, 2005). Engaging in literacy practices with children strengthens father-child relationships and this is clearly demonstrated in the literature (Ortiz, 2004; Ortiz, Stile, & Brown, 1999; Saracho, 2007). A further benefit identified by fathers is increased personal involvement and interest in learning and reading (Karther 2002).

Studies have shown that children's cognitive ability and their overall academic success have benefitted from fathers' involvement in their education (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; O'Brien & Shemlit, 2003; Palkovitz, 2002). Children's verbal skills are enhanced as are their social and personal development, including levels of empathy, self-esteem and self-control (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997; Palkovitz, 2002; Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Clark (2005) found that fathers' reading encouraged children to see it as an enjoyable and interesting activity and suggests that the emergent literacy practices of children are directly related to the time fathers spend reading to them.

In particular, fathers make frequent reference to the significance of the role of reading in bonding with their sons (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010; Morgan et al, 2009; Nichols, 2000). Here, fathers step out from the shadow of a more traditional and distant male role model defining family learning care work as integral to their role as 'good fathers' (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010). Nichols' study (2000) outlined in some detail the special role reading with sons had for fathers. Significantly, reading with sons was 'something men and boys do together whilst also being construed as different from the 'usual masculine pursuits' (Nichols, 2000, 324). This was echoed in research findings of Morgan et al (2009), who observed that whilst fathers and sons engaged in traditional masculine literacy activities such as reading car maintenance manuals, sports magazines and sports programmes they also noted that fathers and sons were involved in what they defined as less obviously gendered home literacy practices such as reading bedtime stories, using dictionaries and singing nursery rhymes. Whilst Nichols (2000) marks fathers' reading to their sons as a shift towards literacy for some men, I suggest it may also signal something of the possibilities inherent in father-son reading as a tool in promoting close and loving

relationships. Such relationships might conceivably have the power to challenge notions of traditional masculinity and allow for the development of a model of masculinity that includes connectedness, closeness and demonstrable care.

Barriers to fathers' involvement

When considering the barriers which fathers identify in supporting the language and literacy of their children it is difficult to avoid the influence of constructs of hegemonic patriarchal masculinities. This is particularly evident in the context of fears about participating in the public space of family literacy programmes (Fletcher & Daly, 2002; McLeod, 2008). I have previously discussed how ideals of hegemonic masculinity have imprinted a desire in men to be experts in all areas of life (Kimmel et al, 2005) and how having little or no expertise triggers avoidance. Under a patriarchal gender regime, 'not knowing' weakens men's sense of themselves and makes them vulnerable to the critical gaze of other men and women (Connell, 1995). The strength of this construct is reflected in Goldman's findings (2005) where fathers did not want to dilute their masculine identity in the eyes of either women or men in family learning support programmes. They did not want to display an identity that was so closely linked with mothering and nurturing and which was ultimately too difficult to reconcile with their view of themselves as truly male.

In the world of family literacy work, it is mothers who are conveniently viewed as expert. This creates a challenge for fathers in terms of entering into a practice which mothers have made their own (Nichols, 2000). Stepping into this world, fathers doubt their competence and defer to their partners, leaving mothers to carry out the primary responsibility for nurturing language and literacy development (Karther, 2002; Reay,

1998). Mothers' acceptance of this gendered role intensifies the inequality which is supported by an education system that relies on already care-full women to do this work and culminates in an internalised moral imperative on mothers to comply (O'Brien, 2007). Women's effort in literacy learning work does not stop with support for children. Included in the woman's role is a responsibility for enabling and supporting fathers' involvement in learning care work (Nichols, 2000). Mothers retain the job of both 'caring about' and 'caring for' literacy learning activities for their children, providing materials, joining libraries, ensuring that literacy materials are accessible to children and that bedtime stories are read (Dermott, 2008; Morgan et al, 2009). Fathers, on the other hand, are left to encourage children in areas that are unrelated to school and associated more with play and having fun (Goldman, 2005).

For those fathers who themselves have unmet literacy needs, an additional barrier exists. Undoubtedly, many feel a lack of confidence in supporting their children's home and school literacy development. This negative educational legacy creates an added obstacle and additional stress when it comes to relating to school and teachers (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010; Gillies, 2009; Goldman, 2005; Tett, 2001).

Further complexities in relation to fathers' presence in the school space and family literacy programmes are highlighted in research by McLeod (2008) where 'most men felt this was not the place for them and most women felt it was not a place for men' (*Ibid.* 780). Worries relating to safety for women and children underpinned these sentiments. School staff and mothers were fearful of the impact of men's presence in what was described as an exclusive and unthreatening space for women. Women viewed men's participation as suspicious on a number of levels, including questions about perceived gender roles, men's

masculinity and worries about men's predatory intent (McLeod, 2008). Mirroring these fears, fathers expressed similar concerns. Fathers identified discomfort in relation to entering the mostly female environment of the school and worried about how they might be viewed when involving themselves in a space where there were many young children. They expected that their presence would be viewed with suspicion by other men and by women. Worry was also expressed about working alongside the female partners of other men who might see them as sexual rivals if they joined a family literacy group.

Additional barriers faced by fathers are rooted in neoliberal expectations about gender and the workplace. Men are expected to be care-free, to be available to work irregular hours, to do overtime, to not take time off when their children are ill or celebrating successes at school or in life. Neoliberalism relies on women to do this work leaving many fathers to miss out on important language and literacy development processes in children's lives (Green, 2003).

Learning from family literacy interventions

Families and communities have an important role in supporting children in their literacy development (Saracho, 2007). Parents, mothers and fathers, are the most important reading role models for children and young people (Clark, Osborne, & Dugdale, 2009). Some fathers will and do contribute to this learning care work (Karther, 2002; Ortiz, 2004; Saracho, 2007), however, because fathers' contribution to children's literacy development is mostly undertaken within the private space of the home their efforts are sometimes unseen (McLeod, 2008; Morgan et al 2009).

We have seen that, in the public space, many of the barriers to fathers' participation in family literacy programmes are intimately bound up in the social and cultural construction of gender and impossible to achieve ideals associated with hegemonic patriarchal masculinity. This is not to say that fathers do not participate in family literacy programmes. A range of flexible interventions have been situated within school and community spaces (Saracho, 2007) whilst others have involved home visits (Morgan et al, 2009). Some have been exclusively for fathers (Green, 2003) while others are open to fathers with their children (Saracho, 2007) and yet others include mothers, fathers and their children altogether (Bouchard, 2013).

A diversity of recommendations emerged in the literature about how best to attract and sustain fathers' participation in family literacy programmes. Some suggest that programmes should be scheduled to suit the work demands of fathers (Fagan & Palm, 2004) however McLeod (2008) notes that even when programmes are delivered in the evenings or on weekend days, fathers do not attend. Others recommend, much like for boys' literacy, that special attention be given to the 'natural' masculine interests of fathers when designing and choosing materials (Karther, 2002). Meanwhile Clark (2005) concludes that fathers will engage in children's literacy development when given the opportunities to do things that are interesting. This suggests perhaps that mothers are happy to work with more mundane and boring materials or that children's welfare alone is not sufficiently motivating for fathers. Considering such recommendations through a critical lens, one could conclude that fathers, like all adult learners, require a unique, learner-friendly pedagogy and process if they are to be attracted into family literacy programmes (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010).

Bouchard (2013) usefully reminds us that a further lens may be applied: one that examines the construction of gendered roles which produce socially expected, limiting behaviours and expectations in relation to mothers and fathers. Such constructs consign to mothers the everyday role of literacy learning careworker and this is reflected in their greater participation in family literacy programmes and activities. Fathers on the other hand are relegated to more familiar masculine fields, engaging in physical activities with children, enjoying fun activities, enacting a monitoring role about homework and involving themselves in school related disciplinary or performance issues (Goldman, 2005; Lloyd, 1999). Yet, the literacy experiences of children need not necessarily be within the exclusive domain and effort of mothers (Ortiz, 2004). Research shows that fathers can and do contribute to a literacy friendly family environment. When fathers learn the strategies and are given the resources needed to support their children, they will do this learning care work (Saracho, 2007).

Home visits by literacy support workers are associated with increased father participation in literacy support for children. Here the private comfort zone of the home protects men from worries about the critical gaze of others and may be a productive starting point for fathers' involvement in literacy learning care work (Raikes, Summers, & Roggman, 2005). Libraries have also been active in promoting this work running a variety of programmes and activities such as *Family Learning Weeks* to encourage family and fathers' involvement in reading to their children. One successful EU initiative, *The Big Book Share*[8] encourages prisoners to share books with their children through the recording of stories so that children hear their absent Dad's voices reading stories to them. These successful

[8] http://childrenofprisoners.eu/2003/04/15/big-book-share-project-launched/

projects show that change is possible and that given the right supports, fathers will engage in this learning care work.

Conclusion

In an equitable, just society, mothers and fathers should be best placed to equally nurture language and literacy development and prepare children for engagement with an education system which values the literacy and language use of diverse families. However, in areas of disadvantage, parents may have less time, energy, skill and resources to do family literacy work than their more privileged neighbours.

Whilst family literacy policy, research and practice are clear about the crucial role of parents in the development of children's language and literacy, it is mostly women who do this work. Unequal gender role construction allocates mothers, with 'natural' expertise in supporting the language and literacy development of children. Undertaking considerations of fathers' family literacy work without locating it in relation to inequalities of gender, power and the division of care labour provides only a partial glimpse at what is a complex issue. In the context of family literacy, constructs of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity consign deeply unequal care roles to mothers and fathers and this in turn impacts on children, families and communities. In relation to fathers' involvement in family literacy programmes, these same constructs create barriers to men's participation in this learning care work. Investment in gender equal family literacy interventions which ignore the wider unequal context are a wasted effort. They are doomed, like the stone that Sisyphus eternally endeavoured to push to the top of the hill only to have to repeat his efforts when it rolled to the bottom again.

On the positive side, when fathers do involve themselves in family literacy work they have much to gain, as do their children and families. In the intimate space of baby talk, of reading stories, of singing nursery rhymes, fathers and children spend time together. They get to know one another, to grow in the eyes of the other. Reading to their sons holds particular significance for fathers. It both creates and strengthens affective connection that has within it the seeds of a possibility of masculinity that is based around connectedness, closeness and care. In such a context, the very literacy activity is an act that disrupts and diffuses hegemonic patriarchal masculinity and may even be described as counter hegemonic. Greater gender equality matters (in this and other regards) to women who currently carry an unfair share of this work. In trying to include men, it is hoped to redress this inequality and in so doing contribute to a more gender just society.

Chapter 6

Methodology: Designing an engaging feminist research process

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline my feminist methodological standpoint and the congruent participatory and creative methods designed to answer the research question at the heart of the study: what is the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' experience of family literacy learning care work? A secondary concern of the research was to consult with fathers about their learning support needs from adult and community education.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the feminist research paradigm that underpinned research choices and my purpose in researching men as a contribution towards a more gender equal world is outlined. Central to this study is an awareness of the complexity of cross-gender research and learning from the literature on cross-gender empirical studies are presented alongside the implications for this study.

The implementation stage of the empirical research is outlined alongside a brief snapshot of the fathers who have generously contributed to the study. This detail will be further elaborated upon in the findings chapters when the men's stories will further unfold. Finally I outline a rationale for the conceptual tools used to analyse the empirical findings along with a descriptive account of the research design.

My twenty years experience in adult education and as a social researcher have imbued in me a strong belief in the importance of reflexivity and I believe this requires particular attention in innovative participatory arts-based research such as this. The learning from reflections and data that emerged from the research process are contextualised in the growing literature on visual methodologies in Chapter Seven.

A feminist ontology

The pursuit of gender equality informs and guides feminist research and I view this study of the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' involvement in family literacy learning care work as a contribution to this goal. I adopted a feminist paradigm for the research as it was the most resonant with my own life experience and value system. Thus the principles of democracy, participation and equality, all core to a feminist epistemological approach (Hesse-Biber, 2010), were at the centre of the research design and implementation.

Feminist research, as I understand it, is driven by the need for radical transformation towards a more gender just and equal world. This is a goal I have been working towards for most of my adult life. For me feminist research is emancipatory political research that addresses issues of gender power and inequality and as such is congruent with my own belief in the possibility of change. Like Reay (2010) I recognise the value of understanding not only the impact of our social structures on our lives but am also interested in the important role of how we experience and feel about how those structures influence our lives.

I am most interested in research that recognises our humanity and inter-relatedness as it is constructed in relationship with others, in creating intersubjective knowledge in a way in which the quality of the relationship between the researcher and the researched is essential to the process (Shaw & Holland, 2015: Sultana, 2007). As such, the making of good relationships with research participants based on shared dialogue, respect and presence (Byrne & Lentin, 2000) was core to this enquiry. The feminist process, unlike that of positivism, refuses to separate the development of abstract knowledge from the social and emotional lives of people (Barr, 1999). Feminist research is not only about thinking, it is also about feelings (Harding, 1991; Liamputtong, 2007; Oakley, 2000; Stanley & Wise, 1983). In fact, the emotional life of both participants and researcher are viewed as essential, providing rich data that is vital to the systematic understanding and creation of knowledge about the social world (Etherington, 2004; Gemignani, 2011; Stanley & Wise, 1993).

Feminist study of masculinities

Until recently feminist research has been undertaken by women and with women: 'Doing research as a feminist means focusing in detail on some specific aspect of women's oppression' (Kelly, 1984: 84). It aims to achieve an emancipatory goal (Barr, 1999; Liamputtong, 2007) and this goal is about creating greater equality and social justice for women.

For me as a feminist researcher many of the core principles and processes embraced by feminist methodologies were a comfortable and familiar fit for how I approached this study. However there was an obvious divergence from more traditional feminist routes in

that this study focused on men and their relationship with family literacy learning care work. Consequently, the methodology may be open to challenge by those who take a 'purist', separatist standpoint to feminist epistemology.

In my earlier years, I may myself have had some reservations about claiming a feminist epistemology for this project. I can almost hear my quizzical voice *'Men? Why focus on them? How can this be feminist research?'* Such a perspective, rooted as it was in a particular cultural and historical specifity, may have been appropriate at that moment in time, when separatist feminist activism in Ireland and globally was justifiably focused on issues of domestic violence and women's right to choose about matters relating to their reproductive rights. Reflexive practice has led me to a different position. I now adapt a more collaborative standpoint, that sees the value in working more closely with men to address the issues that mean that women continue to fear and experience male violence and where prescriptive patriarchal gender identities and unequal gendered structures continue to damage the lives of women, girls, boys and men (Barker, 2005; Connell, 2014; Kimmel et al, 2005).

At the same time, I am conscious that masculinities' scholarship carries much risk (Fineman & Thomson, 2013). In well-meaning efforts to redefine masculinities the biggest potential pitfall is the transference of the focus away from women and girls. There is also the potential for holding women responsible for men's harms in a way which solidifies old stereotypes and which overlooks the harm that patriarchy has caused for many generations (hooks, 2004). This gender harm has also oppressed men physically, emotionally and psychologically yet it is clear that those most deeply oppressed by hegemonic patriarchal masculinities remain women and girls and this oppression takes on

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fatal consequences when men's violence against women is taken into account. Any redefining of masculinities must have as its goal the dismantling of these patriarchal unequal gendered power structures.

Holding this feminist analysis is of particular importance in studies that focus on fatherhood and where changing norms relating to masculinities may be used to browbeat mothers (Dowd, 2010). Newly emerging 'superhero' fathers can overshadow the overlooked and often invisible, daily, routine, care work that mothers have been capably doing for centuries. Nevertheless, for me, a feminist study of masculinities makes good sense. It does not have an intent of shifting focus or resources from women. Rather it seeks to uncover and expose the harm that is inflicted by unequal gender constructs and to understand that those same constructs are used in complex ways to justify that harm (Fineman & Thomson, 2013). Gleaning a greater understanding of the oppressive mechanisms and systems which define masculinity and by inference impact on men, women and children, may go some way towards developing processes and actions which can lead to the de-construction of such draconian and harmful gender strictures.

Inequality damages everyone

The focus on fathers in this research project is not to ignore the hegemony of men (Hearn, 1996, 2004) where even the most oppressed men are imbued by patriarchy with more power, privilege, prestige and prerogative than women (Barker, 2005; Stoltenberg, 2004). Rather it is rooted in a belief that inequality is damaging to everyone both oppressor and oppressed (Freire, 1972; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

I deeply believe that a society constructed around feminist principles would be of benefit to both women and men. Hesse-Biber (2012) writes that feminism asks 'new' questions that place women's lives and those of other marginalised groups at the centre of social enquiry, that feminist research disrupts traditional ways of knowing to create rich new meanings. The research participants in this study are men who all have direct experience of disadvantage in terms of education and employment opportunities and live in communities that have been marginalised and stigmatised by wider society. Within the context of family literacy research, studies have predominantly consulted with women as this work has been construed as mother's/women's work (Luttrell, 1997; Reay, 1998; Rose, 2007). Viewed through a lens of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity, family literacy learning care work is consequently gendered work and, as such, construed as subordinate and of lesser value than the work of men. However, more recently and as a result of the economic crisis many more men are at-home with their children on a daily basis (Barry & Conroy, 2012). They are available to support family learning care work, yet their experience has mostly been unnoticed and unremarked. Consequently, this study is steadfastly rooted in feminist investigative principles of equality, participation, respect, recognition, reciprocity and dialogue in order to explore the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' participation in family literacy learning care work. It is hoped that this dialogical research will bring to light the rich new meanings referred to by Hesse-Biber (2012) and that these meanings will in turn inform the development and implementation of useful adult and community education support strategies for fathers. Furthermore, a more equal distribution within families and wider educational institutions,

of the burdens and benefits of what has been traditionally viewed as women's work, is a goal of this study.

A feminist infused research process

My search for methods congruent with the research topic, the envisaged needs of research participants and my own feminist position led me to design a qualitative research process which employed multiple methodologies including photovoice workshops and one-to-one semi structured interviews. Qualitative research has long been critiqued by those who take an 'objective', positivistic approach to research (Hammersley, 1992). However, feminists and egalitarians have similarly challenged the dominance of the positivistic approach to educational research (Harding, 1987; Lather, 1986; Oakley 1998). Whilst claiming to be scientific and value free, positivist studies in education are generally designed and funded by powerful groups within society and assume the integrity of the status quo (Harding & Norberg, 2005; Lynch, 1999; 2000). Such an approach overlooks the deep insider knowledge of research subjects, negates the value of subjective experience and ignores the emotional and affective domains of research participants (Hamilton & Barton, 2000).

The methodology employed in this study looked away from such a reductive process towards one which was rooted in Freirean and feminist pedagogy. Egalitarian principles and goals underpin the approach and a central characteristic is that it places its trust in people and their ability to think reflectively about their lives. It views human beings as intellectual workers with the capacity to make meaning of their lives and to contribute towards change and the creation of more just possibilities and realities (Reason &

Bradbury, 2001). From this perspective knowledge is no longer defined by more powerful elites, rather it is within and available to self and others through participative processes. Lynch (2004) suggests, that this approach to research may facilitate social change that is driven by the thinking of those most experienced in inequality. Yet such an approach is not without its challenges for researchers. If it is to move beyond rhetoric, finding ways to authentically equalise the power, information and expertise differentials between researcher and participants becomes a significant task. Etherington (2004) believes this requires the researcher to shed the role and status of 'expert' and to see the research relationship with participants as one of consultancy and collaboration. Such an approach, she suggests, encourages a sense of power, engagement and agency. In the context of adult literacy research, Fowler and Mace (2005) propose that collaboration with participants can be achieved through openness and sharing of the research question, process and outcomes. Such processes are supported by the co-creation of safe and inclusive dialogic spaces and 'feminist research is immersed in this activist, relational tradition' (Maguire, 2001: 63).

Drawing on Freire's work and that of feminist scholarship (Gilligan, 1982; hooks, 1989) the metaphor of 'voice' is closely associated with participatory approaches to action research. I do not suggest that research participants do not have a voice of their own, rather, like Connolly (2008) I believe that voice needs attention and care to draw it forth, for it to be heard, affirmed and valued. This relies on care-full and sensitive facilitation that is deeply attentive and empathetic to the emotional realities of our lives and to the affective needs of participants. It values the contributions of all those who give their time, share their personal memories and the meanings of their experiences to the research undertaking.

For those unused to having their voice and views listened to in a groupwork context, such an experience can be an empowering process. Expressing our inner selves, our thoughts, experiences and feelings in the company of others can support and increase individual and collective social capital (*Ibid.*). When individual participants articulate what they know and feel and critically reflect on the collective knowledge that emerges, they actively contribute to the construction of knowledge. I believe the feminist action researcher's role is one of supporting participants to link this personal knowledge to the often damaging structures and institutions that so intimately effect lives (Maguire, 2001).

In this study and located within a respectful facilitated space, fathers engaged in such critical reflections through the photovoice process (which is discussed in detail in the following chapter) and in subsequent semi-structured one-to-one interviews. I planned for these interviews because of concerns that the men's complex and many layered stories might not fully emerge in the group setting. In depth discussions about the influence of the men's families, their educational experiences and views on fatherhood and family literacy were all explored during these interviews. Interviewing is a highly skilled, complex, dynamic and relational event and it does not always go as planned and is dependent on many, often unpredictable, factors. In this case, the fact that men had already got to know me during the photovoice workshops, prior to interviews, helped to lessen any stresses or tensions which might possibly be present in the one-to-one interview. The participants and I had already spent some time together. I had been introduced to their families and home lives through their photographs. We had shared stories of growing up, of our own fathers and children and this had created a solid foundation upon which to further unpack experiences of family literacy.

Cross-gender research, experience from the field

As in life, power relations are an integral part of interviews. To be interviewed is to give up some level of control to the interviewer (Schwalbe & Wolkimir, 2001). It involves the opening up of oneself, one's life, thinking and experience to another's gaze. This is a daunting process for men who have been groomed by ideals of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity which demand of them that they are in control, that they are expert and that they display themselves as rational and autonomous actors (Connell, 1995). When the enquiring gaze is that of a woman, deeply felt gendered reactions and behaviours can emerge on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewee. Thus, gender has profound implications in terms of what is or can be discussed, disclosed, withheld, neglected or pursued in cross-gender research (McKee & O'Brien, 1983).

Schwalbe and Wolkimir (2001) suggest that questions about who is asking what of whom can shed light on cross-gender research. They assert that the gender focus of the research topic has significant influence on the research encounter. The gender focus in this research enquiry was on men's role as fathers, a topic that attracted the men. As fathers, they had already proven their masculinity credentials. However, and complexly, they were also men who were unemployed, working-class and who had lost their status as breadwinners. I anticipated that the impact of such changes on men's gendered identities were not inconsiderable. For men brought up in working-class communities, where masculinity is honed as macho and where one's identity is narrowly defined by the provider role, the transition to the private space of the home would, I imagined, be challenging. I was acutely conscious that I was entering into the lives of others during a time of particular social vulnerability. I am a middle-aged, middle-class woman,

representing the academy and therefore 'other' in many crucial respects to the men with whom I was planning to work. In the relational space of qualitative inquiry I would be asking them to talk in detail about their lives and this would require sensitivity and empathy from me. I did not want my listening to be compromised by my personal triggers. These reflections indicated to me the need to turn a critical eye on myself, to engage in researcher reflexivity work, before and throughout the research journey with the men.

This work was usefully supported by six-weekly counseling sessions with a psychotherapist as a way of structuring reflexive practice. Many discussions were concerned with helping me to untangle reactions relating to personal experiences of patriarchal oppression and injustice and which on occasion were activated during conversations with some of the research participants. The personal detail of that work is not relevant to this study but what is of importance is that having such a reflexive and supportive space enabled me to maintain clarity about boundaries whilst supporting my own wellbeing throughout the study. Researcher wellbeing was important to me as I was aware from previous research experience (Hegarty & Feeley 2010b) and from the literature that the very act of listening to the untold stories of research participants holds an often overlooked emotional cost to researchers (Liamputtong, 2007; Warr, 2004).

Stories of suffering, of physical and sexual abuse and of social injustices such as the ones shared with me during research conversations had an impact on me. In practice sleepless nights, eczema flares and tumultuous emotions were features not only of the face-to-face conversations with the men but continued through the transcription phase of the research when I was most closely involved in familiarising myself with the intimate nuances of the men's stories. I believe that my engagement in psychotherapy enabled me to 'catch' and

disperse these impacts as they unfolded. Having a programme of appointments meant that I knew that I had a secure space in which to discuss issues as they arose leaving me robust and free to develop deeply authentic relationships with research participants. This type of supported reflexive practice is commonplace in social work and counseling arenas where the impact of compassion fatigue has long been recognised (Figley, 1995; Kadushin & Harkness, 2014) yet is less so in the social sciences. My experience suggests that structured engagement in a skilled and accompanied reflexive practice can benefit and enhance not only the research process but can also support researcher wellbeing .

Cross-gender research, where researchers are female and research participants are male, illuminate particular issues of power inequality in the research encounter. These factors are played out in the wider social and cultural context and inevitably impact on the more intimate space of qualitative research. Studies have shown that the desire by men to exert compensatory control over the interview through inappropriate sexualising and the minimising of the interview process may be aimed at diminishing a woman researcher's legitimacy and power as an interviewer (Pini, 2005; Schwalbe & Wolkimir, 2001). In some instances this can give rise to concerns for the interviewer about personal safety and vulnerability (Lee, 1997). Tarrant (2015) cautions that it is important not to make assumptions too readily about male participants. She suggests that concerns about personal safety highlight the inherent inequalities between female researchers and male research participants and carry an implicit suggestion that men are likely to be violent and put female researchers at risk. Whilst it is fair to say that not all men are violent it is also true to say that many men are violent and as such I believe some personal care strategies are required in cross-gender research. A trusted colleague always knew of research

meetings I was attending, of their locations and the times I was most likely to finish. Following workshops and one- to-one interviews I would check in with her by phone. One-to-one interviews were conducted, for the most part, in the community or learning centres where the research took place. In two instances, due to summer closing restrictions, interviews were undertaken in the foyer of an inner-city university known to the men.

Age difference also intersects with cross-gender research relationships. In her work, Grønnerød (2004) found that being older than her research cohort empowered her, whilst Pini (2005) in her research into the under-representation of women in the Canegrowers' Organisation in Australia concluded that her youth and gender made interviews problematic.

The category 'men' is internally diverse (Schwalbe & Wolkimir, 2001; Hearn, 1996) and not all cross-gender interviews are fraught with power struggles between interviewees and interviewer. In her study with male musicians Grønnerød (2004) concluded that it was possible for women to interview men without feeling vulnerable, powerless or in danger. Beginning from an understanding that interviewees intended to be helpful, Gatrell (2006), in her research with parents found that men were as cooperative and articulate as the women interviewed for the study. Furthermore and despite the depiction of men as being unable and unwilling to express their feelings, men in Gatrell's study displayed no constraints when it came to discussing their feelings and emotions about fatherhood.

When trying to understand the challenging impact of gender during interviewing, Pini (2005) suggests that 'where' should be added to Schwalbe and Wolkimir's list of who is

asking what of whom. The 'where' referred to is not only the location of the research but also the wider gendered context of the research environment. Pini's study (2005) was situated in a context where women were completely absent from the leadership of the Australian Canegrowers' Organisation and where this gender segregation was construed as entirely natural. In this cultural context, women's role was rigidly defined as one of caregiver and homemaker, and therefore one that was entirely absent from the masculine workplace. When faced with a younger female academic researcher, the mostly middle-aged men drew upon powerful masculine discourses to display their patriarchal and hegemonic masculinity, their power, their importance and their heterosexuality. This gender performance, Pini reflects, was not only for the young researcher but also for one another. The external gendered context in which the study was undertaken permeated the intimate space of the interview and mobilised the gender dynamic of the interviews leading Pini (*Ibid.*) to conclude that gender plays a critical role in the research process. In this study, I observed that most of the men's performance of gender was aimed at other men. It was particularly noticeable in the first workshops with each group when it was as though men were compelled to display to one another their 'real' manhood, that is their heterosexuality, before settling down with one another and engaging with the process. These issues are further explored in the next chapter.

Reflexive practice

Feminist action research is 'excruciatingly self-conscious' (Stacey, 1988: 25) and reflexivity is a central principle of feminist research (Etherington, 2004). Defining and achieving reflexivity can be challenging as it is embedded in power relations and the exercise of power in the research process (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). However, thinking

honestly and critically about what one is doing lies at the heart of reflexivity (Etherington, 2004; Mason 2002). Such a process can help to identify and challenge dualisms such as rational/emotional, objectivity/subjectivity. I believe such internally focused care work has the power to open up new conceptual spaces which are a more accurate reflection of the messier and slippier experiences of life as it is actually lived. This can, in turn, lead to new insights and understandings of our subjective realities and identify the impact of less than perfect socially constructed gendered institutions on our lives.

Reflexive research makes space for the researcher, the research participants and the research process and aims to avoid the production of alienated knowledge. It is concerned with accountability; it brings into focus the conditions of knowledge production, recounting and reflecting on the story of how the knowledge from the research was produced (Etherington, 2004; Maguire, 2001). Uncovering the power dynamics at the heart of the research process is central to reflexive practice. This challenges the researcher to design a research process that is aware of the potential of research encounters to further oppress or dominate research participants. This is particularly the case in cross-gender research and my reflections about the emotional and physical impacts on the researcher of this cross gender research relationship are presented in the next chapter.

During the course of the study I used a research diary to capture my experiences and reflections about the research process and the feelings which underpinned my four year study. Early entries reveal my doubts about my abilities to complete the research. On reflection these doubts were rooted in my subjective experiences within a deeply patriarchal society. I learnt well and early about what was expected of me in my gendered

role as a young middle-class girl growing up in Ireland in the 60s and 70s. In those distant days I was schooled to understood that women's voices were inconsequential. The straight jacket of this legacy has taken much effort to deconstruct and on occasions it was supported through psychotherapy. This reflective work has supported my feminist analysis and voice to emerge and in turn enabled me to clear the fog of decades of gender grooming, freeing me to move towards my own subjectivity.

When I began this research I had internalised many assumptions about what the experience of working with men might be. My early reading of the literature further crystalised some of these notions and steered me towards an oftentimes fixed and negative conceptualisation of masculinities. I worried about being able to engage men in the research study; I worried about being in a room with a group of working-class men and talking with them about their identities; I felt anxiety and apprehension and yet I understood that these fears were linked to my intersectional gendered and classed socialisation and in that awareness I found some agency for myself. Just as the men in this study were involved in recalibrating their masculinity I also was recalibrating my subjectivity, chipping away at my gender and classed identity.

This reflexive work resourced me to more authentically develop my relationships with the research participants. I developed checking strategies with myself before ever entering into research spaces. These included ring-fencing time to reflect on assumptions I was making about the men and to check with myself the root of these assumptions. This work, alongside ongoing journaling of my experiences, helped me to move more freely into the space with the research participants, to authentically engage in the process and to see

each man as an individual with a unique lifestory which they had generously chosen to share with me, a stranger.

Supported by the adult education and photovoice methodology the collective stories of the men expanded my perspective about men and the social construction of masculinity. It deepened my belief in the importance of working in partnership with men to understand and deconstruct harmful, outdated gender binaries along with the social structures which facilitate and reproduce gender inequalities and which in turn limit and constrain women and men in their self-actualisation.

Theoretical framework
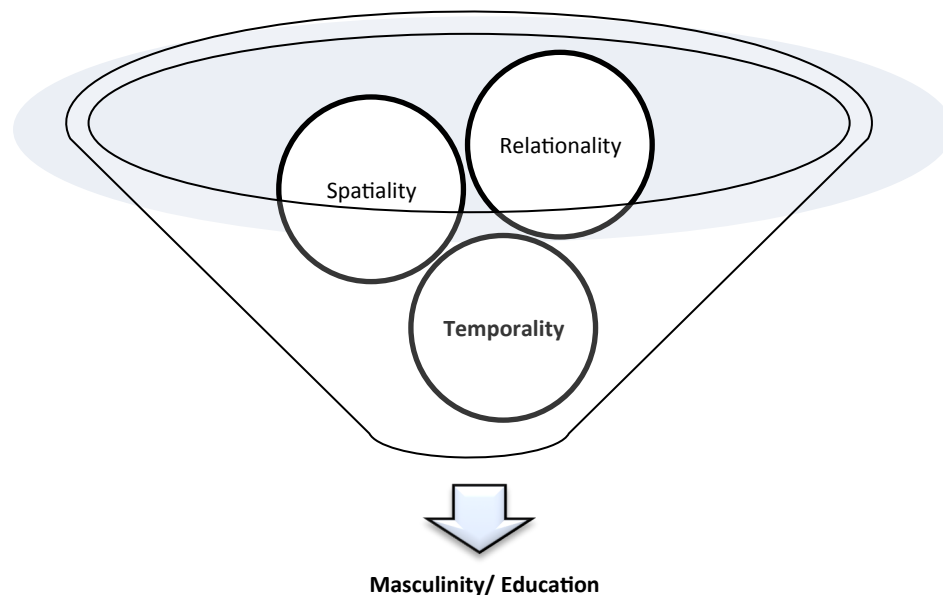
Model 1. Theoretical framework of analysis

The analysis of the empirical findings, presented in the concluding chapter, draws on Reay's (2010) interrelated tripartite framework developed to examine links between class and education. *Temporality (History), Spatiality (Geography) and Relationality* are used

here to trace the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' literacy learning

care work. The influence of the gendered patriarchal past impacts on our daily lives and

> ...the genders, far from being simple roles to be played at will, are inscribed in bodies and in a universe from which they derive their strength. (Bourdieu, 1998, 102)

This accumulation of history and the patriarchal structures that have been constructed,

over time, have shaped the sexual division of labour and frame the continued social and

cultural production of gender inequality. In this context the research traced the

intergenerational stories of families relating to the formation of masculinity and looked

back over the shoulders of research participants to view their families experience of

education.

In stretching the conceptualisation of place from a 'thing' in the world to a way of knowing

the world, its usefulness as an additional lens of social and cultural analysis becomes clear.

Considering place as an area of the 'rich and complicated interplay of people and the

environment' (Cresswell, 2015, 18) provides expanded possibilities about knowing the

world in its richly diverse and affective complexity. Cresswell (*Ibid.*) suggests that space

has a more abstract quality to it than place. Space can be understood as a realm without

meaning. It is only when space is invested with meaning and affect by people that it

becomes a place. As such, place frames how we see and understand the world. When I

recall the places in which the research took place, I can say that I carried a range of often-

negative impressions with me into these spaces. These sites held limited meaning to me. I

was aware that they were constructed by the media and city lore as being inhabited by

pathologised, dangerous and careless communities. When I think of those spaces now

they are populated by humanity, by the warmth and generosity of the fathers I met along

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the way. Their stories transformed those spaces into places with rich and multiple meanings that have allowed me to reframe how I understand the world of fathers from inner-city communities.

The construction of gendered identities is also powerfully connected to place (Rose, 1993) and its consideration is deployed here as a lens to explore the impact on the research participants of their physical and social locality. This includes their positioning in community landscapes, in the education system and in their private home places and as such human interactions in these locations are implicated in understandings of place (Fullilove, 1996). Just as place is influenced by what has gone before, place is also about the affective realm (Tuan, 1999). Place is not only about a resource poor community streetscape and the flats and apartments that are built there. It is also about the meanings that its inhabitants invest in these places. These meanings are, as I have learned, rich with life, with stories of love and loss, with care and nurture and with harm and hurt. Recognising that place has such emotional meaning for people, and indeed the ubiquity of the affective in our existence as human beings, allows an analysis of data which I believe is congruent with the feminist perspective that the personal is political.

Research design and implementation

As already discussed, a feminist methodology does not prescribe a single research model or framework (De Vault, 1990) rather it seeks to recognise the rich diversity of people's realities and to create emancipatory research processes congruent with and respectful of participants unique lives. As an experienced adult educator and community facilitator I have worked with many groups from vulnerable and marginalised communities and am

wary of research that takes a 'hit and run' approach, where researchers enter into communities, search for individuals and groups to take part in research projects and then leave 'with the goods', never to be seen again. Holding this in mind, I purposely set out to design an engaged and engaging research process, one which would be relational, reciprocal and emancipatory and which aimed to avoid practice that further deepened inequalities (Daly, 2000; Dockery, 2000; Lather, 1986; Liamputtong, 2007).

Having decided on these touchstones and guided by strategies suggested by Byrne and Lentin (2000) I began to create congruent feminist research approaches and tools to engage participants in the study. Byrne and Lentin (*Ibid.*) outline four considerations in planning a feminist study: the importance of taking time to get to know people; creating opportunities for mutual self disclosure and questioning; designing a process that ensures that there is the possibility for comments and feedback throughout the research process; being clear about the purpose of the research with participants and the avoidance of having a controlling list of topics to be discussed. These approaches and tools were not designed in a theoretical bubble, rather they emerged from my feminist ontology and twenty years experience of working creatively in the field of adult and community education. I had used photo elicitation and photovoice with literacy learners for many years and found it to be an empowering, rich and useful method of engaging those with unmet literacy needs. It was an engaging process that supported the emergence of sometimes previously unarticulated stories. In designing the study I also drew upon my experience of working with participatory research methods and facilitation skills (Hegarty & Almqvist, 2005; National Women's Council of Ireland, 2000).

Combining these experiences and skills I developed a series of three participatory, two-hour, family literacy and photography research workshops. Holding in mind the importance of relationship and trust building, I planned to meet and speak with all potential participants to outline the purpose and process of the study and my motivations for the research. Discussions about consent, confidentiality and the purpose and uses of the research were key elements of this first contact stage. In addition I designed promotional/information materials to distribute to those interested in taking part in the study (Appendix 1).

The three research workshops were planned to provide short taster sessions of collaborative and participative adult education groupwork and as a reciprocal encounter where participants would benefit from being involved in the study (Daly, 2000; Karnelli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009; Lather, 1986). Participants would have an opportunity to hone their digital photography skills; they would gather tips about family literacy learning care work from one another and from me the researcher; they would have opportunities to build confidence and social capitals through participation in a facilitated group context that looked critically at the construction of masculinity. Contributors to the research would also have a certificate of participation that could be included for accreditation purposes in learning portfolios. In return, they would give me their time and share with me their experiences and thinking about fathers' involvement in family literacy learning care work and contribute as experts to research in the field of adult and community education.

Ethical considerations

Finding ways of doing research the 'right way' lies at the heart of ethical considerations relating to social enquiry. One researcher's definition of the right way may vary greatly from another's and is largely dependent on the individual value system (Tracy, 2010). Developing a research practice and process, which seeks to do no harm to research participants and the researcher alike (*Ibid.*), is in my view the goal of ethical research. As such the importance of informed and voluntary consent, the rights of research participants to withdraw from the research at any time and safeguarding the confidentiality and anonymity of those who agreed to contribute to the research were key factors in the design of the research process (Denscombe, 2010).

The relational aspect of an ethical research process was of importance to me and I endeavoured to build relationships that placed care, collaboration, connectedness and human flourishing at the centre of my practice and as ethical touchstones to be reflected upon throughout the research (Christians, 2005). I was aware that qualitative interviews have the power to bring to the surface memories and experiences that can be unsettling (Tracy, 2010). With this in mind I planned that research venues would be in community premises already familiar to participants and where there was some previous relationship of trust with community education co-ordinators or support workers. In addition I compiled a list of support organisations that could be accessed if participants needed additional support resulting from their contributions to the workshops or the one-to-one interviews. As it turned out, none of these support mechanisms were requested by the men, however I did contact each man after the one-to-one interviews to check in with them and to thank them for their contribution to the research.

Research workshops: the plan

Groupwork is fundamentally a social interaction where the quality of the relationship, the interrelationships, has a profound impact on how individuals will experience, contribute to and gain from the group endeavour (Connolly, 2008). Potentially such relationships, when sensitively forged, can contribute to the accumulation of social and affective capital. As such, my goal in designing each of the series of three research workshops was centred on building an environment with contributors where collaborative and empowering group processes would support participation, confidence building, mutual learning and where the affective needs of the group would be recognised. I was fully conscious of the challenges men feel on first entering into a group-learning situation. For many men, early and negative school experiences result in high levels of anxiety and embarrassment in relation to their return to learning in groups (Bailey & Coleman, 1998; Corridan, 2002; De Brun & Du Vivier, 2007; Hegarty & Feeley, 2010a; Owens, 2000). Many express considerable levels of fear in relation to how they might be perceived by others, and by their male peers in particular (Kimmel, 1996). With this in mind, I planned to be present in the research centres for some time before and after each workshop. This would give me the opportunity to set the research space up in an appropriate and welcoming configuration for groupwork, time to warmly welcome participants individually and to facilitate their entry to the group through introductions, informal chat and on occasion cups of tea. Afterwards, I would also be available if needed.

The aim of the first workshop was to develop a good working relationship in the group, to support dialogue and to reclarify the research purpose, process and consent procedures. Following the group settling in stage, an in depth discussion about literacy and family

literacy was planned to ground the workshops in a shared understanding of these pivotal themes and to prepare for the responsible capturing of images of family literacy in practice. Activities relating to photography, camera skills and the reading of images made up the second part of the workshop culminating in agreements about the rights and responsibilities associated with taking photographs with a particular emphasis on ethics and consent procedures relating to photographing children. Assurances were reiterated that the photographs they took would be entirely theirs and that they would not be for public viewing. The 'mission' for participants at the end of the first workshop was to capture images of family literacy learning in their families.

Discussion and analysis of these images and the story behind the taking of the images was the focus of the second workshop. From these discussions the challenges and benefits of family literacy for men in their role as fathers were identified as was the sharing of successful family literacy strategies.

The third workshop was constructed around two interrelated themes. One focused on an exercise that aimed to identify where messages about masculinity and fatherhood came from and an analysis of the impact of such messages. A discussion identifying the possible support structures needed for fathers involved in family literacy learning care followed. The workshops concluded with the often joyful presentation of certificates of participation along with an invitation to participants to engage in the next phase of the research, a one-to-one conversation with me. An outline of the topics for discussion was shared with participants so that they could make an informed decision about taking part in this penultimate stage of the research process (see Appendix 2 for interview schedule). The topics included in-depth flexible conversations about early learning experiences,

discussions about fatherhood and its changing meanings, family literacy and a further discussion of support needs for fathers involved in this learning care work.

A final research meeting with participants was planned. Here emergent themes would be presented and discussed in order to strengthen the trustworthiness, accuracy and validity of the analysis of the research data (Karnelli-Miller et al, 2009). Communication with the men continued throughout the data gathering phase of the study in the form of text messaging updates about the progress of the enquiry, and advance indicators of plans for the final participant verification feedback session to all of the men who contributed to the research. This communication loop served to maintain the relationship with the men, many of whom responded to the texts with messages of good will and continued interest in the project.

Following the collection and transcription of data, I took some time to immerse myself in the stories generated through the research process. Many long walks with headphones and the sound recordings of the men's voices in my ears helped familiarise me with the ebb and flow of narratives, with the nuances of the men's tone of voice and with their differing energies when recounting their stories. I used MAXQDA to analyse the data generated from the workshops and the one-to-one interviews. MAXQDA is a comprehensive computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) programme that supports the identification of emergent themes and the rigorous organisation and analysis of data. The transcribed data was imported into MAX which facilitates the creation of a coding tree that is dictated by the data rather than a preimposed framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The initial headings for the coding tree were organised around the main themes of the research: adult education, masculinities, fatherhood and family literacy.

Two supplementary themes, the context and the research process were also examined. Data were sorted under these general headings and then into descriptive emic codes. The quality of the coding was then checked with an experienced colleague and some fine tuning resulted from this process in terms of the labeling of data.

Research implementation

Table 1: Empirical research timeline, January 2014- September 2015

2014 – 2015	Actions
January –March 2014	• Design empirical research workshops • Design and distribute publicity materials for pilot workshop • Recruit for pilot workshop 1 (W1) • Finalise 1/1 interview schedule • Initial introductory meeting with potential participants and agree dates, time and venue for workshops • Finalise W1 preparation • Recruit workshop 2 (W2)
April – June 2014	• W1 delivered and completed • W1 1/1 interviews • Review/ evaluate W1 • Telephone introductions and research information shared with potential participants W2 and agree dates, time and venue for workshops • Finalise W2 preparation • W2 delivered and completed • W2 1/1 interviews • Transcription
July – September 2014	• W2 1/1 interviews completed • Transcription

October – December 2014	• Recruit W3
	• Publicity materials for W3 distributed
	• Initial introductory meeting with potential participants and agree dates, times and venue for workshops
	• Finalise W3 preparation
	• W3 delivered and completed
	• W3 1/1 interviews completed
	• Transcription
	• Recruit workshop 4 (W4)
January – February 2015	• Publicity materials for W4 distributed
	• Initial introductory meeting with potential participants and agree dates, times and venue for workshops
	• Finalise W4 preparation
	• W4 delivered and completed
	• W4 1/1 interviews completed
	• Transcription
March – September 2015	• Finalise all transcription
	• Code data
	• Code photographs
	• Preliminary analysis of all data
	• Recruit from W1, 2, 3, & 4 participants for participant verification focus group
	• Plan focus group
	• Focus group completed

Accessing research participants

Having designed the research process I was excited to embark on the empirical stage of the research project. I arranged a series of information meetings with prospective research participants. These were organised through my existing networks within the

adult literacy and community education sector in and around Dublin city. In total, twelve telephone conversations took place with representatives of community-based projects. These included a national literacy organisation, nine community education projects and two primary schools. Seven information meetings followed. All of those to whom I spoke were interested in the research topic and confirmed for me the invisibility of fathers from family literacy programmes and activities.

Following these meetings three projects agreed that I could come and meet with interested fathers to discuss the research. These meetings took place in the premises of their host organisation, with which the participants were already familiar and 'at-home'. The purpose of the research was outlined in a clear and open way (Bravo-Moreno, 2003) and voluntary participation was stressed. One anomaly here was a group who were recruited by a home school liaison organiser, with whom I had worked previously. She agreed to promote the research with fathers in her school area. From these conversations she gave me the mobile numbers of 14 fathers who were interested in being part of the research. Of those consulted, six attended the research workshops and participated in the follow on one-to-one interviews.

Consent process and procedures

The principle of informed consent guided the research process and every effort was made to ensure that participants were clear about its purpose and the process of the study. As such, informed and ongoing consent (Miller & Bell, 2002) was negotiated during each distinct phase of the research. It was first discussed during initial information and recruitment meetings and during telephone conversations with potential research

participants. Consent forms (Appendix 3 and 4) were discussed during the first workshop with each group. Prior to the one-to-one interviews and the final focus group consent procedures were again discussed and agreed.

Prior to the photovoice workshops initial meetings with potential research participants provided an opportunity for the researcher and participants to get to know one another, to hear about the motivations for the study and to gauge interest in the topic. Consent procedures, permission to audio record discussions and plans to maintain the anonymity of those who would take part in the research were outlined during this first meeting. During the second workshop participants chose their pseudonym for use in the written study, and subsequently I assigned pseudonyms to all those mentioned in the data by the men. Plans to ensure the security of data were further discussed at the beginning of the workshop phase of the research. This was done verbally with all of the groups as no assumptions were made that participants could read the information independently. Particular attention was given to discussions about the ownership of photographs. Potential research participants were assured that they would have full control over any images taken and that photographs belonged solely to them. During this first workshop, additional opportunities arose to discuss consent in relation to taking photographs. The participants themselves would be mirroring the consent procedures of the research study in that they would potentially be negotiating consent with photographic subjects, some of whom might be children of other parents. Procedures were agreed to ensure that all those photographed, and their parents or guardians would be fully informed of the use of the photographs and that they would be clear that the photographs were not for public viewing and would not be reproduced. Consent to be photographed forms and

information leaflets about the project were provided for all participants to circulate amongst photographic subjects (Appendix 5).

A snapshot of the research participants

Twenty men generously volunteered to take part in the research (Appendix 7). Between them, they had fifty-seven children ranging in age from twelve months to forty-one years. As such they had a wealth and diversity of experience of fatherhood to draw from. The youngest participant was twenty-seven years old whilst the oldest was sixty-five. Eighteen of the fathers were born in Ireland whilst the remaining 2 were born in Morocco.

Table 2: Fathers' family living arrangements[9]

Non-biological father living part-time with child	1
Living with second families (in contact with first families)	3
Not living with children, daily contact	1
'Week-end Dad'	1
Living full time with children	13

One father was the non-biological carer of his partner's child. Six fathers (including the non-biological father) were not living full-time with all of their children and had come to a variety of arrangements with their children's mother in terms of continuing to care for and be involved in their children's lives. Three of the 5 were living with second families, whilst continuing to have various degrees of contact with their first families. One father was what he described as a 'week-end' dad whilst the remaining dad of the 5 did not live full-

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[9] This table records living arrangements of the 19 fathers. One participant from the pilot group had no children.

time with his children but visited with them every day. The remaining 13 fathers lived full time with their children.

The men lived in some of the most disadvantaged and demonised areas of the city. These areas are characterised by multiple levels of inequality and state neglect that is evidenced by high levels of long-term unemployment, educational disadvantage and ill health. The research participants had first hand experience of such social harm, including drug and alcohol addiction, sexual and physical abuse, imprisonment, damaging experience of institutional care, homelessness and mental health issues.

Table 3: Participants' educational awards

Primary certificate	Junior certificate	Leaving certificate
10	8	2

Seventy-five per cent (15 men) of the research participants left school aged 15 or less. Only one of the fathers interviewed was employed whilst the remaining men were all long term unemployed.

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the feminist methodological viewpoint that guided and supported the methods chosen to investigate the research question. In focusing on fathers' role in family literacy learning care work my intent was to contribute to the promotion of gender equality. The feminist research methodology aimed to provide a critical space for men to share their life stories, and reveal their lived experience.

The creative research methods chosen sought to support the development of non-hierarchical relationships and lead to greater levels of participation, confidence building

and empowerment. The process of critical reflection and analysis of emergent dialogue was designed to support the creation of new knowledge and understandings about family literacy and masculinities. The study design and implementation hoped to facilitate individual and collective change and to promote social justice informed by the expertise and realities of those who have lived experience of inequality.

The chapter that follows will further explore and reflect upon the photovoice method used in this study. It will present some of the growing literature on visual methodologies and reflections on the use of photovoice in the context of this cross-gender enquiry. This will set the scene for the following chapters that will present findings and analysis relating to the research question.

Chapter 7

Photovoice, facilitating fathers' counter-narratives of care

Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed my feminist approach to research and gave an account of the detail of the research process that supported the gathering of the empirical data. Photovoice, a methodology conducive to supporting vulnerable men to speak fluently about their lives (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007; Slutskaya, Simpson, & Hughes, 2012) was a core methodological strategy in this enquiry. Following an introductory workshop, men were given cameras and asked to take photographs of family literacy in their own families. These images then formed the focus of group discussions that were recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed. As such, the participants were at the heart of this research process. Here, I outline my rationale for choosing the method alongside some critical reflections about the process. As such this is both a methods and a findings chapter in one.

The chapter begins with some discussion of the origins of the photovoice methodology. I then discuss the literature that points to the method's suitability for use with vulnerable men. Reflections on the fieldwork phase of using the method in a cross-gender context precede a further introduction to the research participants. Greater familiarity with the men will follow in the findings chapters. This chapter then turns towards a description of the process of using photovoice from the pilot phase to the completion of the data gathering. The method's power to support the emergence of richly affective narratives,

amongst men who are most often depicted as reticent in sharing their inner emotional lives with other men, is next revealed. Finally some reflections on the links between adult education and photovoice and its possibilities in contributing to transformational adult learning bring the chapter to a close.

Photovoice roots

The photovoice methodology brings together the problem-posing educational work of Freire (1972), feminist education scholars and activists (hooks, 2000a; Lather, 1986) with a participatory approach to documentary photography (Wang, Cash & Powers, 2000). The term 'photovoice', was coined by Caroline Wang following her participatory research into community health with rural women in China (Wang, Yi, Tao, & Corovana, 1998). It has developed to become a powerful photographic technique and a flexible and participative action research strategy. As a research approach, photovoice has been used extensively across a diversity of disciplines such as anthropology, education, sociology, psychology and cultural studies and has recently given rise to 'an explosion of participatory media research' (Luttrell & Chalfen, 2010, 197).

Participatory visual research has strong methodological links to participatory action research (Oliffe, Bottorff, Kelly & Halpin, 2008) and is rooted in a desire to decrease social and cultural power differentials between researcher and research participants (Packard, 2008; Slutskaya et al, 2012). The methodologies source in a Freirean and feminist tradition recognises and acknowledges the expertise people have in their own lives and is rooted in a belief in the ability of people to name their world in their own terms. Participants in photovoice have autonomy of choice and revelation in relation to the images they choose

to take and to share with the group. This contrasts with more traditional one-to-one interviews where research participants may be in a more passive, purely responsive role. In photovoice there are no 'wrong' interpretations of a research participant's photograph. The one they offer is valid. Individual interpretations can however be puzzled over in the collective space and images can be a starting point for discussions about diverse topics which are evoked by the image itself. The viewing of the photograph and its interpretation gives rise to the active co-construction of knowledge.

Reading photographs

The arts have the power to open up our imagination and the visual image can connect with deeper levels of consciousness than is the case with words alone (Harper, 2002). Thus, visual imagery has the potential to tap into diverse perspectives, values, emotions and memories giving rise to the emergence of rich and multiple meanings (Luttrell, 2012). This potential and these meanings develop from initial dialogue that emerges from the viewing of an image. However, critical visual methodology is more nuanced and complex than the boundaries of such discussion. The photographic artefact is itself a product of the research encounter and is closely linked to relations between the research participant, the researcher, the potential audience and, if present, the people represented in the photograph itself (Drew & Guillemin, 2014). As such, and with resonances of Diane Reay's (2010) framework of analysis: temporality, spatiality and relationality, the reading of images is a subjective, complex and multi-layered process. It is closely bound up with the readers' own unique social and cultural experience, with their life story, with their hopes and imaginings, their identity and even the identity they wish to display. The space in which the photograph is viewed is also significant. The location will have its own particular

cultural practices and these will in turn impact on how an image is seen (Rose, 2001). Thus photovoice is not merely about taking 'nice' photographs, its purpose is to illuminate and problematise the social conditions of people's lives. It is not only about a passive viewing of an image but it is rather an active, dynamic process where the visual image is of significance because of its intimate connection to the photographer, to social and cultural practice and the power relations in which the image is embedded (Rose, 2001).

Arts-based methodologies: a different way into a research question

For groups who may be reluctant to participate in more traditional research processes, image and arts-based methodologies can sometimes be more engaging as a research method (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). Such approaches provide opportunities to hear from valuable voices that may be overlooked (Luttrell & Chalfen, 2010). For those who have unmet literacy needs, and as a result experience a lack of confidence around the written word and self-expression, arts-based methodologies have been found to be an empowering, inclusive way to articulate individual and collective stories (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007: Slutskaya et al, 2012). Research has highlighted the challenge of encouraging men, in particular, to fully participate in enquiries where they reveal their emotional selves (Sattel, 1976; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). In the literature, and in this study, photovoice has been shown to support men to discuss their intimate emotions, giving rise to open talk and deep levels of reflective thinking (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007).

Photovoice: facilitating unique research dialogue with men

Whilst photovoice has predominantly been used with women and children (Frohmann, 2005; Luttrell, 2012, 2013; McIntyre, 2003) the method has also been found to be male

friendly, supportive and empowering in research with men (Oliffe et al, 2008; Slutskaya et al, 2012). Men are traditionally depicted as being more likely to engage with interview material that encourages a display of masculinity and to be less forthcoming where the masculine self is under scrutiny (Schwalbe & Wolkimir, 2001).

Photovoice was used by Oliffe & Bottorff (2007) in a study into men's experience of prostate cancer. The researchers found that the method supported the participation of men who would otherwise be viewed as a marginalised subgroup within constructs of hegemonic masculinity. The process of taking photographs helped in thoughtful discussion of the 'taboo' subject of prostate cancer. Photovoice offered 'a new form of witness and terrain that can facilitate unique dialogue' amongst men who are often portrayed as unwilling to talk about their health and most intimate feelings (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007, 56). The method elicited fascinating, rich empirical data that provided unique insights whilst also empowering participants. Such richly expressive data was also gathered by Slutskaya et al, (2012) in their research with working-class butchers. Participants used photovoice to capture images of their working lives. The images were a conduit for sharing experiences and feelings with the researchers. Discussions emerging from the showing of the photographs revealed the men's pride and emotional connection to the production of what they perceived as really beautiful cuts of meat and, reflecting the goal of qualitative research, supported the uncovering of hidden dimensions and surprising themes that might otherwise have remained concealed as a result of restrictive gender norms.

Gaining acceptance: moving from the margin

Despite the growth in the use of visual methodologies, arts-based research is still relatively new territory in terms of accepted scholarly inquiry and as such is undergoing a process of theorisation. Some time ago now, Harper described (2002) photovoice as 'a waif on the margins rather than as a robust actor in a developing research tradition' (*Ibid.* 15). Later, Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, (2005) argued for the recognition of arts-based research as methodologies in their own right. Others strongly resist the call for concise definitions of a research methodology that seeks to disrupt traditional modes of scholarship and knowledge production. They decry any such containment as a move towards complicity with positivistic methodologies of research that seek to scientifically quantify, analyse and prove immutable singular truths (Slattery, 2003).

Rationale for choosing photovoice

I had used photovoice in a research project in the past (Hegarty & Feeley, 2010b). That study was also about family literacy but the focus was on parents generally rather than fathers alone. Reflecting the reality that it is mostly mothers who do this learning care work, research participants in that project were predominantly women. I had found the methodology to provide a highly engaging process. Collective discussions about the women's photographs were free flowing and revelatory of their experiences and understandings of family literacy. Participants collectively problematised the topic and fascinating, rich data emerged from their stories.

This experience, combined with my determination to undertake this research within an adult education model and a curiosity about its use with men led me to choose

photovoice as the central methodology in the research process. Following a three-day training course in London, I was further convinced that the methodology would be congruent with my feminist position and my view of adult education as a participatory and collective process of conscientisation. Given the literature about the use of photovoice with vulnerable men, it seemed like it would be a good fit with the SAHFs who would be participating in the research. Furthermore I hoped that my reflections and experience of using the method with an under-researched group (working-class, unemployed, SAHFs), during a time of momentous upheaval would contribute useful knowledge to the Irish research context and illuminate gender inequalities in the field of family literacy learning care work.

Fieldwork experience: cameras as status symbols

Research participants were loaned digital cameras for a week to capture images of family literacy in action. The cameras generated excitement and anticipation and the quality of the cameras caused much comment. A valuable camera added status and was associated with wealth and celebrity. Badboy, recently released from prison and determined to rebuild his relationship with his son, brought the camera with him when visiting his mother. She admiringly remarked that he was being trusted to look after such a camera, contributing to a new and enhanced perception of him as someone trusted by his college, a site imbued with high status and authority.

The monetary value of the cameras gave rise to jokes about the pawnshop, to worries about them being stolen, or, in some cases, confiscated from participants by a garda, who might assume they were stolen property. These comments revealed lives where it was not

unusual to be stopped and interrogated by gardai, where men had to be watchful in case their belongings were taken from them and where they continually scanned their environment for threats of any kind. Letters verifying the men's participation in the research project were distributed to those men concerned about gardai checks.

Snapshot of photovoice workshop

Six men, sitting in a circle around a central table, myself amongst them. We all are dressed in similar clothing, jeans, sweatshirts or tracksuits. Tea and sandwiches are on a side table. Camera bags and cameras are on tables around the room. A projector and screen is to the side of the circle. Some of the men are sitting back in their chairs, balancing on two legs, chatting to one another. Others are leaning forward, focused on the screen where one man's photograph of three children has just been projected. The colour photograph shows children sitting with their heads close together. A boy is in the centre flanked by his two sisters. They are seated at a kitchen table, which is strewn with colouring pencils, sheets of drawing paper and a pile of newspapers. The children are intent on their drawing. In the research session the father of the children presents their image, which is displayed before the rest of the group. The discussion begins. The first question is posed: Why did you take that photo?

Cross-gender research: performances of hegemonic masculinities

Cameras and photographs were closely associated with pornography by the men and sexually loaded remarks, which objectified women, were sometimes exchanged. Remarks made by individual men were inflated by much laughter, which signified group affiliation and the construction of a mutuality of masculine understanding (Grønnerød, 2004).

There were distinctive differences between the four groups who took part in the research. The group who were involved in the pilot session had been together for some time. They had an established and shared culture where homophobia and misogynistic attitudes were normalised and where competitiveness and hyper masculinity were much in evidence. In the initial consultation phase with this first group, I learned that five of the six men had children, one man was single. Three men had children living with them, and two

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had grown up children who lived independently. I knew that the group was not the perfect match for the research but the men were keen to take part and I was also eager to pilot the research. The men were interested in the topic of family literacy and in using cameras. We agreed that those who did not have children living with them would contribute experiences through reminiscences.

Working with this group gave me first hand experience of hegemonic patriarchal masculinities in action. Here, photovoice worked only in a somewhat limited way. Two older men policed the group. One group member took photographs of family literacy, while others took snapshots of parklands, an evening in the pub. Three participants, two of whom were the group leaders, took no photographs.

In the unfolding of this workshop, many distractions were used by the men to postpone the revelation that they had not taken photographs. They exerted control over the research process through jokes, through leading me to believe that they had indeed taken photographs. Despite being an experienced facilitator, I began to feel uncertain and vulnerable (Pini, 2005). I worried that I had been unclear with the men about the project, that I was wasting their time and my own. I began to doubt my capacity to do the work. What I perceived as the sabotage of the research left me feeling uncertain about the project and its viability. These were all feelings that uncomfortably surfaced for me during this pilot session and are indicative of the challenges of cross-gender research (Pini, 2005; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001).

The one man who took photographs did not attend the workshop where photos were shared and discussed, but later took part in a one-to-one interview. He was portrayed, in

denigrating tones by a participant as being *'the only good boy'* in the group. The absent man, I later learned was a full-time SAHF, a former champion boxer and as such had high status within the community. He already possessed robust masculine credentials. His photographs showed two of his children doing their homework on the living room floor, another older child was working on her tablet. In the private space of the one-to-one interview the man was eloquent about the love he felt for his children.

In hindsight and within a context where men were so constrained by deeply embedded ideals of hegemonic masculinities, it was perhaps naïve and even arrogant of me to expect that they would reveal their affective caring natures in the publicly revealing space of a group of familiar peers and to a little known female researcher. Thanks to the learning from piloting the research, I was able to make some changes to subsequent research processes. When recruiting participants I was clearer that they should have children in primary school and that fathers should have regular contact with their children. The prompt for taking family literacy photographs became more accurately defined and time for discussions amongst participants to plan to take photographs was integrated into subsequent workshops. I also approached the men differently. The piloting of the research showed me something also about men's vulnerabilities. I noted their constant checking out of their masculinity performance. The men's banter was predominantly relating to their assertion of themselves as 'properly masculine' men whilst simultaneously undermining other men's masculine image. In discussions about how life had changed for men from working-class communities it was clear that they had experienced a loss of status that led to a seismic shift in their identities as working men.

These reflections supported me to engage differently with subsequent groups. I began from an assumption that because men had volunteered their time to participate in the study that they were already interested in the topic and that as such they would be helpful and co-operative (Gatrell, 2006). I undertook to check my assumptions about each group before I worked with them and to meet and connect with each man as an individual who, like me, had vulnerabilities and weaknesses and who, also like me, was interested in family literacy learning. Grønnerød (2004) concludes that it is possible for women to interview men without feeling vulnerable, powerless or in danger and in the context of this study this was my experience with the remaining research groups. These groups were formed specifically for the purposes of the research. Many of the men were strangers to one another and it was noticeable that their 'banter' and competitiveness was less sexually loaded and undermining of one another than those in the pilot group. However, that said, performances of masculinity that were congruent with ideals of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity continued to be enacted albeit alongside emerging performances of masculinities which were more calibrated towards care and its expression.

In the background of workshop audio recordings, some men were heard boasting to one another of their sexual prowess. In so doing they were engaged in affirming their heterosexuality. These ongoing references to heterosexual masculinity distanced the men from the fear of appearing gay, of being weak and feminised in the eyes of other men and signified the exaggerated masculinity referred to by Kimmel (1994). It is important to acknowledge that not all men made these remarks. Displays of hyper masculinity (*Ibid.*)*,* and robust masculine selves (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009) were most often directed towards other members of the group rather than the older female researcher. They were

situated in a wider context where men instinctively looked to one another for respect and recognition (Connell, 1995).

My own responses to these remarks varied greatly. As a reflexive feminist researcher I am cognisant, like Etherington (2004) and Gemignani (2011) of the rich learning to be gleaned from the researcher's personal responses. In this instance, I found myself making a pragmatic decision not to challenge sexist, misogynistic remarks but to make the 'patriarchal bargain' (Kandiyoti, 1988, 275). However this decision had a cost for me and my feminist subjectivity. I often felt uncomfortable and vulnerable about the comments I heard and indeed some were deeply offensive to me. Casually sexist and homophobic remarks are not only heard within the research relationship. They are part of the wider everyday patriarchal soundscape in which gender is performed. As a woman, in my daily life, I have found many strategies to live with, to block out and to challenge this patriarchal din, as appropriate. Within the research relationship, I mostly handled such comments with humour or on occasion I appeared to ignore them whilst refocusing conversations on the research topic.

My dilemma as a feminist researcher became one of setting research participants display of 'patriarchal dividends' (Connell, 1995, 79) aside whilst trying to see and relate to each man's unique subjectivity. I believed that the men's stories and experiences were of value and I wanted to honour their voices. In recognising my own humanness and vulnerabilities in the research relationship, I similarly chose to recognise and relate to each man's authenticity (Etherington, 2007). I sought to understand through dialogue the underlying gendered experiences that had led to the men's worldview.

This approach, I argue, allowed me to continue to develop research relationships with the men, and to support the emergence of 'many layered stories' (Etherington, 2004, 23). In giving voice to their experience in a collaborative adult education setting, I hoped that participants would gain useful insights into their new realities as at-home fathers. Furthermore, I believed their stories would make a valuable contribution to understandings of men's gendered experiences as fathers involved in what has traditionally been viewed as women's work (Reay, 1998; Rose, 2007).

Viewing photographs: building connection

Collier (1957) described the compelling effect of photographs on research participants and this was verified in the research data. Men were heard in the audio recordings to be excited to show the photographs of their family's literacy work. They were curious about one another's photographs and eager to comment. The men interpreted one another's images. They participated. There was laughter. Some expressed worries about having taken the '*right photo*'. Others described their pleasure at having '*mastered*' the cameras. Participants were asked to choose three photographs to share with the group, and in so doing they set the agenda for what was to be discussed. The photographs were displayed on a large screen with discussion guided by key questions facilitated by the researcher (Appendix 6). These discussions built on the conversations of the first research workshops which focused on gathering up and puzzling out meanings of literacy and family literacy with research participants. These discussions provided a solid context for the capturing of the images of family literacy learning and for the analysis of the photographs during the second workshop.

Sitting rooms emerged as the most popular location for photographs of family literacy and it was most often depicted as a solitary pastime that involved reading. Nevertheless the photos showed children involved in many activities: reading books, playing football, working on computers and iPads, smelling flowers, banging drums, attending Tae Kwando. Some children were alone; siblings surrounded others. Partners and wives were present, sitting beside children doing homework, hugging children and doing their own studies. Home settings included kitchens, sitting rooms, bathrooms and children's bedrooms. External and community settings showed a boxing club, a park, a garden, and a local streetscape. The images provided a window into the lives of the men and uniquely helped to bridge the gap between the lifeworld of the researcher and the research participants (Harper, 2002). The men chose those photographs which they believed best showed their families alongside their engagement with family literacy learning. They were conscious of the images they were displaying and discriminated between photographs which presented the most pleasing representations of their family lives. Jerry, rejecting photos of his daughter with a snotty nose, chose only to show images of his daughter 'at the right moment, lookin' happy', Messi drew attention to his newly decorated garden, many others responded with pride and expressions of love and affection to the images they shared of their children.

Photos were pored over, discussed, interrogated and served to act as a spark for wide-ranging discussions which revealed intimate, hands-on knowledge of children's lives; worries about children's diets; whether they were regularly washing their teeth; the demands of consumer society on fathers who were struggling financially; the men's desires to be good fathers; to '*do it right*'; concerns about whether the levels and intensity

of housework the men were involved in was 'normal'; all were voiced alongside collaborative interrogations of the meaning of family literacy. These stories expanded outwards. The photographs acted as a springboard for conversations, for reminiscence and yielded fascinating data as well as empowering and emancipating participants by making their experiences visible (Hurworth, 2003).

Fathers spoke of the enthusiastic participation of children in the research. Children were '*excited*' to be involved. They got dressed up. Wives and partners joined in. Photographs were later displayed on bookshelves, and on walls of participant's homes. Badboy's son loved getting his photograph taken. Batman took his son (and camera) on a day-long outing to visit his parents, from whom he had been estranged. Jack and his son spent an evening together trying to compose a photograph that would show his son holding the setting sun in his hands. Messi, a father of ten, captured an image of five of his children around a kitchen table working together on their homework. Albert, a man who had grown up in institutional care took his family to the local park where his male neighbour commented on the pleasure of seeing a family spending time together. Rory planted seeds with his two-year old daughter. There was a sense of photovoice bolstering families and allowing the research activities to ripple out beyond the core conversations involving the researcher.

Loading photographs to computers from digital cameras takes some time, requires certain skills and is reliant on equipment that works well. My painstaking pace caused much comment from the men. Some encouraged me to join them in their computer classes; others took the role of reassuring me and encouraging me. 'Tecky spaces' provided an opportunity for the men to talk informally to one another about their photographs, their

children and their lives. In the foreground of the audio recordings I can be heard working with cables, projectors and computers. In the background, different conversations can be heard. Men shared experiences of access arrangements to children, concerns over children viewing pornography, praise for children and their sporting achievements. In these moments connections were being made, mutual understanding was growing, relationships were being formed and these all served to contribute to the collaborative, creative and affirming peer learning research environment. Importantly, the research process was itself a replication of the experience of adult education. We were all constantly learning.

Counter-narratives of masculinity

Men, who told me they were unused to talking about themselves as fathers, spoke fluently and tenderly of their children and of their family learning care work. The displaying of the photographs in the collaborative and collective space, the viewing of the images on the large screen, seemed to free men from fear of what Connell describes as 'the constant careful scrutiny of other men' (Connell, 1995, 128). The photographer had full authority over his images, he owned them, and could confidently talk about them and respond to questions with assurance. Men engaged in self-revelation, they spoke of their children and of their emotions. They invited others to encounter them in new ways. Men unselfconsciously demonstrated to one another an alternative masculinity, one that allowed their emotional and vulnerable selves to be glimpsed. They risked the display to one another of transformed subjectivities. It was in these moments that the strength of photovoice as a method became apparent and where the *'shield'* of masculinity, as it was

termed by Badboy, began to soften. Such deep revelations, I contend, would be less likely to emerge in response to more traditional one-to-one or focus group interviews.

Stars are yellow, hearts are red, and the tree would be green

Effort toward mutual understanding, empathetic listening and supportive interjections were all features of the puzzling out of the men's images. Conversations supported the emergence of the meanings men held of family literacy work and of their changing role, from breadwinner to care giving, at-home father. The men bore witness to the dilemmas and delights they faced as fathers, as men, doing this care work. They shared strategies, they admired and praised one another's photos. They spoke of the pride they felt in their children and the hopes they had for them. They encouraged one another in their roles as fathers. These were revealing conversations, where the shield of hegemonic masculinities further dissolved and where caring, nurturing masculinities were tentatively displayed.

Batman spoke eloquently of the love he had for his seven children and of the particular attention he devoted to his seven year-old son who had mild autism. He described his own return to education as being one part of his supportive efforts. The fathers in Batman's group had experienced high levels of social harm: two were recovering drug addicts, one was an ex-prisoner, others had experienced extreme levels of violence as young men and two men had left their North African homeland in search of economic opportunity in Ireland. These experiences had honed masculinity, which was hard and tough, where expressions of vulnerability were often decried and conceptualised as a feminine and therefore subordinate trait. The transcript, which follows, exemplifies an

alternative, reflective masculinity enabled I believe through the combination of photovoice and an engaging critical adult education process (Freire, 1972; hooks, 1984).

> Batman: Being around him all the time, see, I do loads of work with him. Constantly. That's why I'm doing this as well. It's specifically for him. Also me other daughters, but they're grand see I want him to be able to lead, like us here, a normal life…[*Interrupted*]
>
> John S: …that's all he wants.
>
> Batman: See I don't want him to think he is hampered because he has autism. We don't bring it up to him about…[*Interrupted*]
>
> John D: …you don't mention it?
>
> Batman: I don't. There's nothing wrong with him and it's not his fault an' anyhow. If he starts they'll all help him and they don't treat him like he is special and they never say to him whatever. They're just normal around him…[*Interrupted*]
>
> Badboy:..so he can be himself!
>
> John D: An' would you notice if he came in here?
>
> Batman: It's not that you would notice it. It's just that he has a few little things that he does. Like he tenses himself like this. He does do that when he is happy, do you know what I mean? Or he would jump around for a minute. Now if he's happy he'd run around, over into the floor and run back…[*Interrupted*]
>
> John D.: …that's good!
>
> Batman: And just do a jump, that's how he shows he's…[*Interrupted*]
>
> John D:. …happy?
>
> Batman: You know enjoyment. That's just one of the things he does.
>
> Badboy: That's the way he shows excitement. Like being happy?
>
> Batman: Yeah. See he takes everything in. He's not like me two daughters. He has a great memory.
>
> John S: He absorbs everything, yeah.
>
> *Transcript Group 3*

Prompted by the viewing of his photograph, Batman's sharing of this story connected the men. A bond was formed. Their tones and listening were empathetic. They were involved in the small interactions of real dialogue as espoused by Freire (1972). They were affirming Batman's efforts to be a good father. The photograph, its discussion and Batman's own willingness to share his lifeworld (Habermas, 1987) with the other

members of the group, their responsive and attentive reaction, all contributed to a reflective environment where men opened up to one another (Oliffe & Bottorff, 2007). Stories shared revealed intimate family lives. In speaking of themselves as involved and caring fathers they made themselves vulnerable, they allowed others to see them (*Ibid.*). Showing fragility involves emotions and requires of men that they give up some control to others, that they open themselves up to connections, to relationships (Kimmel, 1994). In so doing they demonstrated the fluidity of masculinity (Connell, 2011; Reeser, 2011) and challenged current constructions that can preclude the loving enactment of fatherhood (Morrell & Richter, 2004). Supported by the photovoice process the men transformed their identities (Mezirow, 2000), at least for a time, from macho men to involved, caring fathers. Reconfiguring one's gendered identity in a group setting can be a risky business (Connolly, 2008). It can open one up to denigration and critique by peers. In this creative adult education context this did not happen. The mask of hegemonic masculinities further dissolved (Connell, 1995). The discussion progressed. Batman proudly described the cards his children were making in the photograph.

> Batman: Like, am I a lovely drawer? You're all missing that! He wanted hearts and stars and a couple of bells down the bottom. Little Emma there, I done her one. Then see, when he seen them bells on that he wanted them on his and he asked me what colours to do so I told him stars are yellow, hearts are red and the tree would be green! Then I done a bigger one for him that was about that size for him, you know double pages and he had good fun colouring that one!
>
> *Transcript Group 3*

Batman felt comfortable enough to give voice to a different type of talk, one which was imbued with affection, with whimsy, and where gender norms were disrupted. In other contexts this might have posed a threat to him, opened him up to ridicule and attendant

feelings of shame (Sattel, 1976). In this context, photovoice and an engaging pedagogy (hooks, 1994) bridged a divide between a private and public gendered self, bringing both together, revealing the intimate lifeworld (Habermas, 1987) of a loving and involved father.

Photovoice and adult and community learning

The photovoice process is rooted in what Connolly (2008, 55) posits is the 'Golden Rule' of adult education: the process begins with participants' lived experiences. Dialogue and trust building were the foundation stone on which the research relationship was built. This supported rich reflection and often revealing stories to emerge. Participants' collaborative viewings and collective conversations about their photographs uncovered new understandings and helped to create an open dialogical culture amongst the men. Conversations and critical thinking became a conduit for reflections on the men's roles as fathers and brought to light the impact of confining constructs of hegemonic masculinities on men's lives. The borders of self-understanding shifted. Such transformation, Todd (2014) argues, is not only the hope of education, it is the pedagogical act of living *par excellence.* Through this critical feminist adult education process, photovoice participants came to view their individual experience as linked to a wider structural context. In so doing, a new view of their social existence was articulated and their subjective realities were fortified (Freire, 1998; Harper, 2002).

Mirroring hooks' (1994) engaged pedagogy, the photovoice research methodology was described as highly absorbing by the men. Many talked about their involvement, their families' involvement in terms of fun, of enjoyment, of '*craic*'. One father described his

participation as having his *'brain on the go'*. Within a context where working-class experience is most often discounted and disparaged in educational settings (Giroux, 1992), participants in this research process described enhanced personal and social capital. Their experience of adult learning as a positive empowering process is of particular significance when one considers that the majority of participants had harm-full experiences of childhood education.

The study had a material presence through photographs displayed on fridges and elsewhere in the men's homes. Furthermore, there was wide participation on a range of levels; personal, group, family, extended family and community. Photovoice promoted a model of research in working-class communities that visibly involved adult and community learning for transformation and raised the profile of family literacy learning care work.

Conclusion

I argue that prescriptive and confining patriarchal gender identities and structures cannot be deconstructed if they go unnamed. Freire (1972) reminds us that naming the world is the first step in transforming it. Photovoice, the images produced and the collaborative discussions surrounding them ably supported the men in this research enquiry to name their world and challenge dominant and damaging (mis)representations of fathers from inner-city communities.

Men involved in the research were affirmed in their role as caregiving and involved fathers. They grew in status in their families and their communities. As such, on the one hand photovoice was congruent with patriarchal constructs of hegemonic masculinities and gave recognition to men's role as fathers. On the other hand, it transformed

individual men's prevailing notions of masculinity that prohibit the display of emotions, of what one participant termed their *'soft spots'*, to other men. In responding to the photographic images, men retrieved the language needed to speak of their emotional and caring selves and to engage in collective reflection and self-disclosure (Freire, 1972). In so doing they opened themselves up to vulnerability with other men and the female researcher thus challenging taken for granted ideas of men as inexpressive and reticent. Counter-narratives are defined by Andrews (2004) as 'stories people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives' (*Ibid.* 1). A counter-narrative to that of hegemonic masculinities emerged, one that presented masculinity as infused with tenderness and care.

Through a Freirean, feminist pedagogical, adult education approach, photovoice has illuminated the social and emotional lives of men. Furthermore it has supported men, who were poorly served by the education system, to engage in a collaborative, affirming and transformative adult learning process where their experiences were valued and their emotional and affective selves acknowledged and supported. New understandings of unequal, gendered roles emerged through a process of conscientisation (Freire, 1972). A commitment to be more involved in the care of their children's language and literacy development was an articulated outcome of their participation in the research. This in turn lightens the responsibility on mothers to engage in this role and has the possibility of contributing to greater gender equality at a micro level. Transformation such as this is congruent with feminist and Freirean endeavour. The men's wholehearted engagement in the research process provides hopeful evidence that men are interested in discussing gender issues in the company of other men in an adult education context.

Connell (2009, 137) reminds us that intimate politics underlie more public politics. Reflections on the impact of institutions, such as the family and education, on gender formation reveal the influence of gender inequality in the wider social context and can expose the ways in which the patriarchal gender system can oppress both women and men. These insights are the first steps in bringing about transformation at a macro level, strengthening individual subjectivities, critically naming the world, identifying connections between the personal and the political and planning collective actions for change in order to bring about a more gender just society. Some such movement was undoubtedly begun through this photovoice study.

Chapter 8

Empirical findings: Masculinities

To be honest with you, half the men in the flats are doin' the same thing. My mates hang their washin' out. Washin' their own washin'! It's just mad like. When I first done it, it was like it's takin' me manlihood away. But it's just I think you have to do it, or something. Andy

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data about the formation of the research participants' masculinity. It brings to light the impact on the men of the patriarchal institutions of the family, the education system and the media. Through retrospective accounts of fathers, of mothers, of home places and school memories, the men, a heterogeneous group, emerge as individuals with rich and precious stories. These individual narratives hold within them 'the individual trace of an entire collective history' (Bourdieu, 1990, 91). They are full of feeling, of humanness. These same stories reveal the impact of intergenerational inequality and violence on masculinities as they are constructed. As young children the men learned of the disregard of the education system for them. Outside of school walls they were faced with an equally abusive streetlife. Here they learned that to stay safe they had to develop a tough carapace. Within their own families many witnessed the abuse of those they loved by those they loved. Many learned that the way of their world was cruel and violent. This was their norm and this norm was not created within a vacuum. It did not rise up from the local community within which the men's lives were situated. Rather it was situated within a wider unequal context where

some people and communities are privileged and valued more than others and where the construction and daily experience of patriarchal masculinity harms everyone, girls and women, boys and men.

In the telling of these stories the men opened up their lives to me, the researcher. A connection was forged. I could readily conjure up the sound and intonations of their voices as I read through the data. I could recall their facial expressions and gestures. In these findings chapters I wanted to do justice to their unique lifestories. I did not want to objectify or essentialise the men. I did not want to be judgmental of lives so different from my own. These were the dilemmas I faced in the multiple readings of the data. It was a complex situation and one that I have carried throughout the journey of the research. As a feminist, I am hyper conscious of gender inequalities, of socially constructed power differentials between men and women, of oppression, male domination and the hegemony of patriarchal privilege. At the same time, through the stories and images the men shared with me, they were no longer other to me. They were flesh and blood individual human beings who strongly desired to make the best lives possible for their children. In sharing their photographs with me they showed me into their homes, they introduced me to the minutia of their families' daily lives. How they spoke about the photographs and the people in them enlivened them. Their families were no longer strangers to me.

The stories which emerged from the viewing of the photographs and the follow on one-to-one interviews allowed me to glean an insight into the embodied harm that was done to boys and men within a patriarchal gender order that both privileged and harmed them. In sitting with the men, in hearing their vulnerabilities, I chose to temporarily lay aside my

usual feminist reactions and judgments in order to honour the many layered stories I was hearing.

Reeser (2011) reminds us that to study masculinity we have to examine how it is articulated, the stories we tell about our lives, the language we use to define the reality that we experience. The stories of these men's lives were rich and redolent with such experiences and illuminated much about the construction of their masculinity. The stories were not linear, rather they wove forwards and backwards, recounting earliest memories as small boys and their later experiences as adult men. The tellings were not filled with political correctness. There were many things said to me that I disagreed with: misogynistic and homophobic remarks were freely stated and these reflected the invisible yet wholly tangible patriarchal privilege which the men seemed to effortlessly carry.

I begin the chapter with a glimpse of what I am calling the mercurial nature of masculinity as presented in the data. The men's reflections on the impact of the institutions of the family, the education system, place and culture on the formation of the men's masculine identities follow. Themes of power and vulnerability are explored alongside the men's response to unemployment and the loss of their breadwinning identity. Finally, in efforts to rationalise their new status as SAHFs some of the men resort to backlash rhetoric against women and data relating to this conclude this chapter.

Mercurial masculinity

In discussions with research participants the mercurial, elusive nature of masculinity and the multiple meanings it evokes became apparent. It was as though masculinity existed in a liminal space, slipping betwixt and between definition. Masculinity was defined by the

men in terms of being a hard-man, a man who was emotionally stoical, invulnerable and disconnected from those around him. At the same time, masculinity was closely associated with being a father and part of a family, albeit where partners and wives were oftentimes viewed as men's possessions. Most men maintained a patriarchal stance where the ultimate responsibility for protection and provision for family lay with them. Upon reflection, understandings shifted in shape and texture as men described the changes that had been brought about by the economic recession and their enforced move from breadwinners to SAHFs. They spoke of more men being at-home than ever before. In this context it was notable in the data that discussions about being a man moved between being a father and being a man, being a breadwinner and being a SAHF. The men present counter-narratives to hegemonic ideals of masculinity. The masculinity they spoke about was paradoxical, ever-changing, reshaping to fit new circumstances and locations. Arguably, it was articulated in order to represent themselves as maintaining their privileged masculine status in every context.

Whilst this chapter focuses in the main on the men's stories of the formation of their masculine identities within the institutions of the family, the education system and in the context of unemployment there is some inevitable overlap in the men's stories, between their interconnected identities as fathers and as men. In this regard the data reflect Connell's (1995) description of multiple, fluid, hierarchical and conflicting masculinities.

Shaping masculinity

Family

The most significant institution where children learned about gender was the family. This is where boys first learned how to be men in the world. Messages learned from fathers, mothers and other family members were later expanded with further layering of masculinity training by the education system and the wider social and cultural context in which boys lived their lives. The men's recollections of the influence of these different socialising systems were discussed here and began with memories of their fathers and what they learned from them about being a man.

Fathers played a key part in shaping masculinity. Reflecting the power of men in the wider social context, Tommy and Pado described fathers as the biggest influence on how men became men. The stories about fathers varied greatly and were situated in the cultural and social beliefs of a time when men's lives were mostly lived in the public sphere of the workplace. Then too, the role of men was narrowly defined as one of distant, unemotional breadwinner and as the main protector of families. Just over half (fifty-three per cent) of fathers (eight men) who took part in the one-to-one interviews had fathers who had been present in their lives. These men's fathers were described as dependable, as disciplinarians. They were not expected to be demonstrative or affectionate, they were expected to work and provide. Their dads were free to participate in sports, to socialise in the pub, they had the wherewithal to treat their children with sweets if they so chose. Underlying the memories of the men there was a wistfulness, a hope and longing that their fathers would have openly acknowledged the love they had for their sons.

We always waited up to see your Da and on a Friday evening he used to come in and he would have a pound of lemon sweets in his pocket and he'd give us all sweets as a little treat. I mean times were hard and money was tight. I don't know if they were brought up to be affectionate or caring. Men were expected to do something else. They were expected to get out and work and earn money. *Rory*

Work, work. That's all I seen, me Da was goin' out to work and that was it. He was sound, just bein' a dad! He was a footballer, he played sports, he loved football and we all got that side of him playin' sports and football. *Messi*

My father was a very strict man. He doesn't know how to give a hug. Only my mother. *Azziz*

He was a good father. It was great like, but he was a man's man like. He just worked and came home from work and go and have a few pints at the weekend. *Jerry*

Similar threads arose in group discussions.

Damian: I know when we were growin' up my dad wasn't always givin' me a hug and kiss and all that, but in ways I would have been lost without him.

Ann: Yeah.

Damian: In a way, like. So we always thought we knew where we stood with my dad. He wasn't always goin' to give you hugs and kiss and all that, but at the end of the day if we were ever in trouble or somethin' like that, he was there.

Jerry: Same as my own. My own dad got me out of a few holes. I never heard him say all my life 'I love you, son'.

Damian: It doesn't bother me now, like, but still, you know what I mean, I hope on his deathbed…

Jerry: He might…

Damian: It's the only time I'm ever going to hear from him – 'I love you, son.' Do you know what I mean?

Transcript group 4

The seven other men had fathers who were absent from much of their lives. In these men's fantasies about fathers, the dad's role was idealised as one of protection, as authoritarians who were in a position to guide sons. In reality, without a Da, men believed families were made vulnerable. Both absent and uninvolved Dads were powerfully yearned for figures in the lives of their sons.

George told of the impact of the death of his father when he was fifteen. He lost all interest in school and began *'messin'*. Badboy spoke of the brutal violence he had experienced in his family home and of later failed efforts to re-engage in the relationship with his father. He longed for a different type of father, one who would love and support him. Andy's father was imprisoned, leaving his *'ma to be his ma and da'* and leaving him to develop a tough macho persona.

> I had to be that type of macho person, don't care. I had to be that sort of growin' up, don't care about anyone. I didn't want people walkin' over me 'cause I had no one there to back me up. The likes of me friends always had their da's, their da's were there like. *Andy*

Andy's reflection highlights a key paradox situated between ideals of masculinity which seek to groom men as macho and to disconnect from others and the heart of the human condition which seeks connection. Developing a macho persona was defined by Andy as the opposite of caring for others. In later reflections he defined the experience of becoming a father as awakening care thus further capturing the dilemma that lies at the heart of the conflict between fatherhood and ideals of patriarchal masculinity. These tensions are further elaborated upon in the following chapter.

Albert had never known his father and learned about masculinity whilst living in care. For him masculinity, honed without the support of a father, meant doing things on your own, unsupported by anyone. Jack's father left him and the family when he was a teenager, and, like George, this prompted him to start *'messing'* in school. John Smith's father was fifteen when he was born and John grew up in his Grandmother's care believing she was his mother whilst his father lived with him as his older brother. The men whose fathers had died spoke of the longing they had for their often idealised fathers. Their guidance

was missed when they themselves became dads. The other men, those whose fathers were absent through choice or circumstance told of their desire to be different fathers for their own children and of the importance to them of being present for their children.

Batman had flashbacks from the times when he tried to stop his father's violence. He remembers vividly his mother bringing him to school wearing her dark glasses to hide the damage to her eyes. His relationship with his father had broken down for many years however he had a very clear idea of what a father's role should be in relation to a son.

> I don't think I ever even got a hug off me Da, that's bein' honest with you. I can never remember my Da sittin' down and sayin 'I love you son', never, never like. I know in me own heart and soul he never said that to me. He must have said it to me when I was a little baby, that size or somethin', but he never said it to me when I was able to understand. Never, never in my life. *Batman*

The desire of Batman (like Damian and Jerry) for his father to articulate his love for him was deeply felt. Batman's wish to hear his father speak of his love for him was finally fulfilled. This followed the death of his paternal grandmother and what Batman described as his own public emotional collapse before his father. His granny's death and his ineffable, embodied grief resulted in him damaging cars because he could find no other way to express his feelings of anger, grief and loss. Whilst he had been homeless his granny had been his only remaining connection to his family. She had never stopped supporting him.

> Like when I was homeless, there's not many people I'd go to in my family, if you get me? But, you see, she would never turn me away. She was brilliant. She was just deadly, if you get me? So when you lose that an' all. I just thought wow, it's like you know, your heart being ripped out of your stomach. *Batman*

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The public collapse, where he *'fell to pieces'* finally called out his father's response. Here, the hold of the ideal of emotional stoicism on masculinity was disrupted in the face of the extreme distress and vulnerability of his adult son. Batman's father finally connected with him in the way that he needed.

> I know he loves me. He told me. If you get me? Eventually. It only took him 42 years. *Batman*

The withholding of the expression of love by fathers was not the only form of abuse that was described by research participants.

> I was abused as a child as well by me father. I had a bad upbringin', you know? So there was a lot of stuff goin' on in my life. A lot of counselin', a lot of family stuff. Me Ma was only separatin' from me Da because me Da used to beat her up. There was a lot of violence and a lot of grief, a lot of pain, a lot of misery there. *Badboy*

> Me father wasn't around. He was in prison for eight or nine years of my life. I was young, like I hadn't got a father figure in my life till I was about ten. So me Ma was me father figure and me mother figure. Maybe that had a lot about not goin' to school, cause he was in prison like. Not havin' a Da to guide you like. When he got out of prison it was a bit weird it was. Do you know what I mean with him comin' into the house tryin' to tell you what to do. It was like 'Who are you?' I didn't even know him like at one stage. I always remember one day he came to collect me out of school and like I took a fit and the teachers had to hold me till me Ma came cause there was just this man comin' up tryin' to take me! I remember seein' him a couple of times but I remember him just comin' to the door, 'I'm your Da'. That's a lot to deal with when you are a kid. *Andy*

The men's fathers had been socially constructed to show care by bringing in resources. Their family contribution was money, not nurture. Their fathers had the power to be generous, though they also had the power to choose not to be. They were imbued with patriarchal authority to guide and support children. From this perspective the role of men was essentialised. Men left their homes and went to paid work. Consequently they had little need to be involved in hands-on care of children that remained the unpaid care work of women.

The men's stories of their fathers shone light on what they learned about the power of men to come and go as they pleased. They learned that men were autonomous, free and sometimes without sanction. As young boys some of the men learned about male violence and power. They saw that men could be violent to, and controlling of their wives and children. They could disappear for long periods of time, return and from their privileged male position reassert their socially given role as head of the family. Boys learned that it was acceptable for fathers to love children in narrowly defined ways. They also learned that fathers did not speak aloud of the love they had for their children. The stories revealed the poignancy of the yearning men had for their fathers to show and speak of their love, the longing to have meaningful, expressive and emotionally satisfying relationships with their fathers. These experiences impacted closely on how the men wanted to construct their own fathering practice and are further discussed in the following chapter that presents the findings on fatherhood.

Although their mothers were much less evident in the men's stories of the development of masculinity many spoke of their strength, courage and devotion. Mothers were most often at home working in traditional gendered roles of caring for children, cooking and doing housework. This caregiving was not conceptualised as work.

> I just remember me Ma being in the house all the time. Me Da would be workin' all the time. *Messi*

One older participant, Rory, a father of two families and two generations of children, the youngest of whom was three whilst the eldest was forty-one, remembered how much his Ma loved working outside of the home,

> My Mam didn't have time to read, there were ten kids! I remember she got a part time job in the evenings, somewhere in one of the factories around Unidare in Finglas, anodysing I think it was. That was like an escape for her, I think, she loved it. *Rory*

Mothers were described as strong and present for their sons. They were also protective of sons and the dangers they might face on the streets. This construction was set against fathers more adventurous and authoritative parenting approach that was to let sons run free.

> I suppose that's the way I was brought up like. Me Mother probably 'Ah, keep them in'; me Dad would be 'No, let them out. Let them know what's goin' on in the street and learn.' In a way it was a bad idea, but… out runnin' amok. *Damian*

For those with no father at home, mother's filled the role of both parents. They protected children from school bullies, encouraged school participation, provided and cared for their families.

> It was always the Mammy. The Mammy looked after the kids and that was the end of it. I just always went to me Ma for everything. *Andy*

> They created a dunce in the class. I remember gettin' the smack by it too. I went to Scoil A, which was a Brothers' school. I remember them puttin' a dunce hat on me and puttin' me into the corner over messin' in the class. And he hit me with a ruler. And me Mother come up. I mean, mother of Jesus, she leaped on him - she leaped on him – 'Don't you ever hit my son.' *Badboy*

Badboy spoke of this incident where he was hit by a ruler and humiliated by the wearing of a dunce's hat as though such an assault was an inconsequential happening in the school life of a small boy. Too many of such incidences of corporal punishment were shared by the men and these are further discussed in Chapter 10 .

The stories the men shared of their mothers, revealed women as strong, supportive, caring and hardworking women. They were defenders of families; where no father was in

evidence they became breadwinners, albeit breadwinners who were also hands-on care givers.

Education

The data shed light on the relationship between working-class boys and the education system that was complicit in the formation of young boys' masculine subjectivities. Here the focus was on such masculine identity formation in particular, while Chapter 10 picks up this thread with an explicit focus on the men's stories of their literacy learning.

It was notable that sixty-seven per cent of the research participants (ten men) who took part in one-to-one interviews had harmful experiences in their time in school. What was surprising in the data was that some of the experiences of the men were so recent. Damian, the youngest of the research participants was 27 years old whilst Johnny Cash was the eldest at 65. When asked about their school memories research participants described a system of brutal school discipline. Boys were beaten, bullied, humiliated, whacked and leathered and this had an intimate effect on their developing sense of themselves and their masculine subjectivities. The education authority structure that the boys resisted against was one of the structures of the state and as such a powerful introduction to young working-class boys of how they were valued by that same state (see also Connell, 2000; Reay, 2002; Lynch & Lodge, 2002). The learning care they described was far from any ideals of care. Rather they encountered a system of discipline and control that humiliated, alienated and traumatised them and the authority structure of the school became the antagonist against which their masculinity was honed. Eleven of

the twenty men (fifty-five per cent) in the study left school before they were 14 years old, and many left without their literacy and learning needs being met.

Andy and Rory both referred to the significant power of the school within their families. They learned as young boys that their families did not have the power to challenge the authority of these state and religious institutions.

> One fellow there, he was a young brother, I'll never forget him. A real babyface. God he'd be foamin' at the mouth when he would swing back, I was on the end of it sometimes. I don't know if we told that at home. *Rory*
>
> I got hit by a teacher or two. I used to be hit with a ruler. That was traumatisin' like. No wonder I didn't like it. You'd have your hands on the table like that and he used to smack you on the hands with the ruler, do you know what I mean? If you went home and told your Ma, they'd believe what they'd say, not what you'd say. I used to hate going to school. It was just people like were just nasty to you all the time. *Andy*
>
> Yeah, because they used to hit you down in S. Street, you know. They were Christian Brothers, so you got battered – like really…, you know, for the slightest thing. That only stopped… It didn't stop. That was right up from, say, five, six years of that. They'd pull your jumper over your head and batter you, you know. Yeah, but it mainly put me in line, you know. I went in there and I got me first hidin'. *Johnny Cash*

Johnny Cash's encounter with the education system silenced him for most of his life. He left school with his confidence shattered. He believed he was 'backwards', that he would never be able to read or write. He haltingly recounted a memory of being asked to read aloud by a teacher. He couldn't and was ridiculed by other boys in his class. He went to church every day before school to pray that he would not be asked to read aloud. He described how, this public humiliation combined with physical punishment, had a lifelong impact on him, silencing him, stripping him of his confidence and leaving him fearful about his abilities to this present day.

> Johnny Cash: Well, I was backwards and I was… [*pause*] the fear, you know, the fear of going to school. I'll never forget the first day. Miss… This is the one, right? I forget her name now. And I was sitting down and I was so fucking…[*pause*] I did not realise. She just went, whack!

Ann: And what age were you Johnny?

Johnny Cash: About seven. I still get that feeling. It's very hard to speak up. Although at one meeting, an AA meeting I spoke up, and I spoke in school one time. I wrote a little thing, and I said to myself 'Come on, you're over sixty. Come on.' But I was still nervous, you know.

Physical punishment and humiliation was not only the experience of older research participants. Albert (thirty-nine) grew up with his sisters and brothers in state care. He spoke of several instances of physical punishment that left him feeling as though he would never be able to learn.

> I didn't know what a quarter and a quarter was, I just couldn't do it for the life of me. And Sister P had a nail that length and she used to be poking it in there [his head] and you'd be cryin'. You'd be sobbin' and she used to say, 'Get that into your head, get that into your head', and that used to drive me batty, you know what I mean? *Albert*

Violence was not only enacted by teachers, it was also replicated in the school yard where boys had to learn to stand up for themselves. Albert learned that the only way to manage his emotions was through violence.

> I remember the lads so well like. Mark and his three brothers and every day I used to come out of school and they'd say 'What's the story, come on and fight with us.' And they'd know like I was going to say 'No' like. But one day I turned around and I said 'Yeah' and all their faces dropped. So it was kind of, we went into a field and I suppose so much years of anger and I kicked him up and down the field. The only way I knew to let out my anger was fightin'. *Albert*

Jerry (33) hated school and couldn't wait to leave it to get work. He told of the lasting damage a teacher had done to his self-belief and described how he, like many of the men, ended up taking refuge in a persona of toughness and violence. His experiences in the education system left him feeling abandoned, obliterated and hopeless.

> Jaysus, I had a Christian brother, and he was a bastard. God forgive me. I think it was six months, he just turned the desk, you know the old desks you used to sit at? The wooden desks we had, he turned it to the wall for six months and left me there. He didn't even give

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me anything, he just left me there facin' that wall and he was a fucker. I remember low little things he said stickin' in my head. 'There'll be no dole when you're sixteen and you'll never get anywhere in life. You'll never be nothin'. And it's only now… [*pause*] It was only a couple of years, I was thinking of what he's sayin'. That fuckin' bastard sayin' that to me like. And I didn't know what he was talkin' about at the time, you know…[*pause*] I started fightin' and all in school. I'm not into fightin' at all, like…. [*pause*] Jesus, I'm a very placid person. But yeah, that's primary. It was a fuckin' mad time in my life, it was. *Jerry*

Jerry came to believe he would never learn, that he had inherited a faulty gene from his mother that meant that he would never be literate. Jerry's encounter with the education system taught him he was valueless and transformed him from a placid boy to an angry boy, one who chose violence.

Batman who had witnessed much violence in his own home as a young boy could not bear to see other boys being bullied and decided to become the champion defender of those who were being picked on by other boys. His defense of bullied younger boys resulted in him being suspended from school.

I killed the bullyin' anyhow. I was happy about that. I bet up the bully from that school. When they [*younger boys*] came into our school he started on them and I killed him in that school. I actually got suspended. 'Well,' he said, 'you're no better. You're after killin' him behind the bike sheds.' I said, 'Do you know what? He deserved it. Send me home. I'd rather not come to school.' I mean, if you're told to watch out for the young students and you look out for them… And I know I shouldn't have to turn violent… But bullies… Oh, no. No way. *Batman*

Batman spoke of the efforts the school made to control and discipline him. He was left-handed and a teacher tried to retrain him to use his right hand by tying his left hand to his waist. Another teacher had humiliated him in front of the whole school by leathering him over the public intercom. These experiences had evoked coping mechanisms that included both resistance and violence.

You'd be walkin' around the class and the teacher would be behind you and if she sees you swappin' over – smack with the ruler. I had that loads of times. Ah, yeah, but I used to

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give out to them. I said, 'No, I'm not goin' to be right-handed. I'm left-handed. You're not makin' me be left-handed.' What I used to be in school was I was... See, I don't want to use expletives but I was one of them that... I don't mean I didn't like being told what to do, but like hittin' me is not goin' to get you anywhere, do you know? And I'd be honest with you. Sittin' here in front of you I've hit probably four or five teachers in my time. Now, I don't mean... I'm not proud of that. I'm not sayin' that like in a braggin' kind of thing. But you'll only hit somebody so much and they're goin' to snap. Well, what do you think? You're goin' to sit in the classroom and let somebody come over to you...? Look. I mean, I wanted to kill the person. Even to this day I reckon if I seen that teacher that whacked me over the intercom, I'd probably hit him. *Batman*

The litany of emotional and physical abuse and violence described by the men in relation to their learning experiences as young working-class boys were a significant and powerful indictment of the inequalities of the education system. For these boys schools were not places of positive learning. They were fear-full places, where they were hurt and humiliated, where they were excluded through isolation, through being turned towards blank walls, literally locating them outside of the educational space. In resorting to violence, teachers used the ultimate argument of power on the bodies of young boys. Signifying powerlessness, young boys' bodily integrity was taken from them. In experiencing being hit, whacked and leathered by those who held power over them, these young boys felt the deepest disrespect of the system for their lives. Such dehumanising violence is the fundamental act of *othering* and etches lasting damage on fragile subjectivities. Those in power, the representatives of the state, conveyed that it was permissible to dominate through the use of violence. As such, in the 'care' of these state and religious institutions, boys were being socialised to believe that violence was a normal and seemingly acceptable way of establishing social control, woven into the version of patriarchal masculinity which society was constructing for them. Patriarchal culture required of boys and men that they shut down their emotional awareness and their capacity to feel. Within this construct, the only acceptable emotion for boys was that of

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anger and this message was surely one that these boys learned whilst in the care of the education system. Such learning was carried from the school out into the wider community and Batman spoke of his lifelong efforts to control his anger.

> See, I'm sittin' sometimes, you know you're holding back…[*Pause*] what's the word? Not a devil. It's not even that. I'm stoppin' myself. But it's like that. Like I've mentally, it's even hard to explain. You know if you want to hurt somebody? Maybe I shouldn't….[*Pause*] It's even not the conversation. But it's just hard for me. Like I have to stop myself physically, if you get me? Like I know I have a certain…[*Pause*] obviously I know now. Even when I was younger, I suppose. And it takes a lot for you to get to that point where I want to be, you know?......[*Pause*] This is the truth. I feel if I get angry enough, now if I get to a certain point where I am so angry, you know, like if I start to hit somebody, see I won't stop. I'd see that red mist or whatever you want to call it. And I know people don't think there's mist. But I'm telling you there is. *Batman*

Anger and violence signified alienation from others and threatened to extinguish the emotional lives of boys leaving them disconnected and affectively bereft. Summoning the willpower to reject the violence which they had experienced was an agentic act. It pointed to the critical subjectivity that young boys and men had to summon if they were not to resort to violence. Without opportunities to reflect on their masculinity, men can endlessly replicate these damaging patterns of gender construction thereby perpetuating inequalities long into the future. However whilst individual change and resistance is admirable, even necessary, the critical examination of the role of the wider patriarchal social context and its structures is required if real, sustainable change is to happen.

Place

Gender practice was influenced by and performed in physical places. Many of those who took part in the research highlighted the need for developing what they described as a specifically hard and tough masculinity if they were to survive the dangers of streetlife in their communities. Being a *'wuss'* or being seen to be weak would attract unwelcome and

sometimes hurtful attention. Jack was a full time SAHF of three children, two girls and one boy. He was tentatively negotiating his new identity and was particularly anxious about how others might view him in this new and unfamiliar role. He believed that a particular masculinity was needed to survive his local streets.

> Well, you can't drop your guard here. You couldn't be soft. You couldn't be seen as soft. *Jack*

Similarly, Messi, the father of ten children, had lived in the same community all of his life, as had his father and grandfather before him. He too viewed his locality as having a particular influence on the shaping of young boys masculinity.

> I think it's the area Ann. This area, in particular, inner-city areas. If boys show any kind of weakness they'd be picked on right away. *Messi*

Masculinity was thus embodied. It was about knowing that the critical gaze of others was permanently fixed on you, judging your performance. The men lived in some of the most resource impoverished communities in the city and inner suburbs. These areas had experienced many decades of state neglect and social harm which were rooted in wider structural inequalities and evidenced by high rates of unemployment, poor health, early school leaving, drug misuse and higher levels of imprisonment than other communities. These issues and the disregard of the wider more privileged community caused great personal harm, stress and emotional pain to many of those living in such environments and again highlighted gross and widespread inequalities at the heart of a highly structured, rational and authoritarian state. There was evidence also of the impact on the performance of masculinity at the intersection of gender and social class and an acute awareness amongst the men of these stark social inequalities.

Batman who had experienced homelessness for a number of years was keenly conscious of class inequalities and the privileges which others had access to by right of birth. For him the area you were born in could shorten your life.

> Batman: Like I always think it's nothin' to do with this thing about men's men. It's areas as well. Definitely. See the way I could put it to you is to say how I feel all this has changed. See drug culture? It dragged families that you'd think would never have been…. now I don't mean my family. I was never into heroin. But I grew up around the eighties when it all went bad, because I'm from the flats. Now I could be not sittin' here. I seen my friends, they're dead by fifteen, you know? Workin' class families, poor families. The people that were well off would never experience half the shit that the lower class of people would have felt.
>
> Ann: Yeah, sure.
>
> Batman: But there's still a lot of rich people, there were drugs in them families. But the kids were brought up a completely different way. Some kids don't have to be told go out and fend for yourselves.

The data alluded to the significance of the pub's influence on men's masculinity. The pub was presented by the men as an important social space where the construction and evaluation of masculinity was performed. In their fathers' time, '*It was straight from work to the pub'.* Whilst women were perceived to have many places to socialise, men only had the pub. The pub was a man's space where *'men's men'* congregated, where men went to get paid by their employers and where men could be together without any suspicion about their sexuality. Badboy hinted at the historic limits that were placed on men's emotional and physical relationships with one another and which kept men apart from other men.

> A girl could go on a walk with her friend and say, 'We'll go down the beach and have a walk'. If a man was to come around and say 'Look it, do you want to go on a walk? We'll walk down the beach.' You'll say 'What the fuck is goin' on here?' Do you know what I mean?' Well. We're basically, well, 'I'll go to the pub with you and have a pint.' That's a man's man. *Badboy*

Whilst their fathers were described as having spent much of their free time in the pub, these men had different aspirations for their own children and the memories they might hold of them. They did not want to be remembered as *'pub daddies'*. John Smith, another full time SAHF, has three children and he had also recently returned to education to support his children's learning.

> I didn't want to be that type of Dad. 'Where's your Da? He's over in the pub havin' a few pints with the lads'. Do you know what I mean? Because that's the way it was when I was growin' up. We were brought to pubs all the time. *John Smith*

Men, today, wanted to spend time with their children, to be present and do things with them that their fathers had not done with them. Fathers spoke of the greater demands on them by partners to share in care work compared with their fathers' time. These demands meant less time for socialising in the pub.

> You're helpin' the Missus out and you're helpin' the kids out. You're not just bein' selfish for yourself. You're not just goin' out and watchin' football matches in the pub with your mates. Like you have to grow out of them days, you know what I mean? *Messi*

Messi marked a cultural shift towards shared parental care. He spoke of this in terms of letting go of selfishness that signified an understanding and empathy towards *other,* something that was not commonly associated with traditional ideals of masculinity. Shared care was not construed here as equal responsibility. The construction of parenting as one where women were helped out by men in the care of their own children was a cross cutting theme in the data and is further discussed in the next chapters on fatherhood and family literacy.

There was evidence too in the data that the policing of gender was not forgotten about in the pub. The evaluative gaze of others was directed towards men, further intensifying feelings of vulnerability for those who were no longer breadwinners.

> If the man is not workin' he is not a good provider. That's the way it is looked at. You are a bad provider for your family. It's not even that anyone has to say it to him. People know like. Maybe you're sittin' down in the pub and you're drinkin' and you hear people whisperin' and sayin' 'Ah Jaysus, you'd think he would be at home with his family or out looking for a job'. *Jack*

Jack's vulnerability, his fear of the whispering of others within the public space revealed an insight about the changing role of men whilst also affirming the power of the normative and unspoken inner knowledge held in the community about men's role as breadwinner. His imaginings about how he was being judged included the pairing of breadwinning and being with family a pairing which one might deduce would not have been made during his father's time. This hinted at a shift in the traditional positioning of men and one that gave rise to social approval. Men were being newly located in the home place amongst family, a position once only associated with women.

Culture

The men observed that the media and popular culture had a role in the formation of masculinity. They noted that the images of masculinity had changed over recent times. Representations of the hard-man were disappearing to be replaced by images that portrayed a gentler masculinity. This was epitomised by the sports men David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo. These modern day icons, were admired by the men as strong, successful sportsmen. They were viewed as rich in social and economic capitals. From their powerful position they were also happy to be portrayed as *'soft'*, as men who looked after their appearance, who plucked their eyebrows, used sunbeds, wore sarongs and

moisturised. What were once believed to be the grooming habits of women were now being portrayed as acceptably masculine and participants suggested this had a trickle down effect, impacting other men and young boys in how they were constructing their masculinity. There were mixed views about whether this 'softer' image of manhood, which was most generally spoken of in disparaging and distancing tones, was a positive development for men.

> Johnny the Keg: Well a fellow gettin' his eyebrows done and the sunbed and gettin' his nails done is a bit..
>
> Pado: That's a fuckin', that's a… That's a feminine man.
>
> Tommy: I think men are probably lookin' more for a men's man you know? A role model of a man's man these days. We were talkin' about it earlier. Pluckin' their eyebrows and fuckin' sunbeds. They're all metrosexuals and all this. But they're not men's men.
>
> Roy: But they're just showin' their feminine side! That's a good thing. I think you see it on [*TV*] programmes. Men are shown a bit softer, not just goin' out working like. They're takin' care of the kids. They're doin' a bit.
>
> *Transcript group 1*

The changing representation of masculinity was unsettling for the research participants. Fixed forms of recognisable masculinity were no longer in view as long held beliefs and representations of masculinity changed.

Reflecting widespread debate about how men/fathers were depicted in the media, George commented:

> You see ads and men are bein' portrayed as bein' kind of stupid. Especially around the house. They can't work the washin' machine and they can't do this and they can't do that. They are just there for takin' out the rubbish. *George*

The stereotypical depiction of men by the media as incapable buffoons impacted on how masculinity was perceived and enacted. Culture was propagated through such images and could become understood as cultural truths which gave rise to narratives of masculinity

whereby men were essentialised as senseless brute bodies (see also Reeser, 2011). Thus these images had their own power and just as stereotypical and damaging images of women stood in the way of gender equality so too could disparaging images of men.

Masculinity

Power

The men in the study spoke of being able to cope, of being fixers, and doers. These men had learned that being a man was about autonomy, power and control. The men had learned to look after themselves, to present themselves to the world with their hegemonic patriarchal masculinity mask in place, without ever asking for help or admitting their vulnerability. Albert was the father of two children, one of whom lived with him and his partner. He grew up with his four siblings in state-care in rural Ireland. Like many others who experienced state 'protection', his early life was marked by experiences of physical and emotional abuse. Albert left state-care when he was fifteen and described himself as independent ever since. His attachment to independence marked his understanding of masculinity.

> To man up is more or less like, you know, to be able to cope with the tough stuff if it needs to come to the tough stuff. If things are hard in the house or if somethin' is wrong and it needs to be fixed. Then I need to man up and I need to fix it. You can't just be sittin' there and think 'What am I goin' to do? You have to stand up on your own two feet and think with your own head 'cause nobody else is goin' to do it for you. *Albert*

Badboy, who was first introduced in Chapter 7 had only recently been released from prison when he joined the research group. His health had been severely compromised as a result of drug addiction. His legs were hugely swollen making it difficult to walk and he told me during the one-to-one interviews that his liver and kidneys were failing. When we

first met, he was filled with resolutions and hope about getting his life back on track, getting fit and he expressed a strong determination to be a '*good da*' to his son. He had very definite ideas about how he was to present himself as a man.

> You don't actually have to be a hard man. You have to be a man. And a man is a man that can look after his woman, girlfriend, wife, whatever. And be there for them as to the fact of lettin' them know they are safe. *Badboy*

Here masculinity was defined in terms of men's agency. Badboy distinguished between 'man' and 'hard-man'. Men did not have to be 'hard', they had a choice to be different. Both Albert and Badboy made no reference to shared responsibility with others. They presented themselves as having sole responsibility and as in control. Men were there to protect and look after women. They expressed an underlying patriarchal assumption that women were not safe, they must be protected by men. Women were weak and men were strong. This view held that women were in need of protection whilst it also reaffirmed men's power. It suggested that women did not have the power to protect themselves and located men as more powerful than women who were construed as dependent on men for their safety. In this view of the world women could not be the equals of men. Such a perception was honed in an unequal gendered social environment where women may feel insecure because of the threat of violence from men. As such this view suggested that women were the possessions of men, in a fixed subordinate position and was indicative of a deeply inscribed and widespread conception of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity.

Vulnerability

Shame is a core emotion that everyone experiences. It is related to feelings of unworthiness and the fear of being rejected (see also Brown, 2007; Jacupcak, Tull &

Roemer, 2005). In this study, shaming boys emerged as a critical tool in the shaping and policing of masculinity. Feelings such as shame were associated with vulnerability and the feminine and were to be avoided in terms of being a man. Thus part of being a man was about hiding vulnerability, being tough in order to defend against possible humiliation in the eyes of others. This overlooked that vulnerability is a universal characteristic of being human and is bound up in the ability to connect with and care for self and others. To fulfill the masculine role men learned they had to maintain the appearance of invulnerability for fear of a loss of status and power. They had to maintain a tough carapace in the eyes of other men so as to appear capable of protecting others in their care. There was real fear in the loss of such a persona in the eyes of others.

> You don't want to come across as soft, vulnerable, weak. Because you're afraid that other people will think that you're vulnerable and then, you know. That man's man of bein' tough on the exterior, of anythin' happens to my son and my family, I'm goin' to be the man. You feel like that would be taken away from you. So you sort of say to yourself, 'Well I can't be vulnerable'……sometimes you put on a front, the hard-man front. It's an image. You have to keep that image and people say 'Oh, he's a hard-man. He can handle himself'. And then, you know you can. But deep down inside you get sick of doing it and you don't want to be doing it. But it's all you know. *Badboy*

Despite Badboy's desire to be invulnerable there was much evidence in the data of the vulnerabilities he and other men experienced. Constructs of masculinity imposed gendered vulnerabilities on the men. Doubts about adequately displaying to others the traditionally masculine qualities associated with hegemonic patriarchal masculinities, being strong, successful, capable, reliable, and in control were at the heart of the vulnerabilities spoken of by the men. Jerry, Johnny Cash, Roy, John Smith and Albert had all left school with their literacy needs unmet. They told of the fear of being unable to fill in forms, of not being able to answer their children's questions, of not having the

confidence to speak in a public setting. Jerry spoke of having to rely on his girlfriend to accompany him to the dole office to help him complete social welfare forms. His partner bolstered Jerry's vulnerability.

I have that voice in my head 'They're waitin' for you to mess up, mess up. *Jerry*

How others saw them was of deep concern to the men. They were fearful of not measuring up to the masculine ideals reflected in the constant critical gaze of others.

Batman: I just wasn't right to see the kids and I didn't want to see… like if they seen me when I was found by me friend…the way I was. [*Pause*]

Ann: Yeah.

Batman: They wouldn't… You know, they wouldn't think it was me, if you understand…it would have been… not that I don't have… I do. But I was – wow… if you get me. Look, I'd never want them to see me.

Ann: Okay.

Batman: Like even on me dirtiest day coming in from a job on a building site I wouldn't have been that bad as I was.

Ann: Okay. Yeah.

Batman: And I wouldn't like them to have a picture in their brain…

Ann: Yeah. Sure, of course.

Batman: So in a sense I was still thinking of them, you know…even though the way I was.

Ann: Yeah.

Batman: But that's not a nice thing, you know.

Jack captured the fear of the critical gaze in the public space of the front of his house.

Well I hang the washin' out the back, so its not that bad, they can't see it. [*Laughter*] But the windows are out the front like! *Jack*

Breadwinning

The breadwinner norm defined men's identities and men were typically judged to be successes or failures on their ability to provide for families. Being unemployed heightened feelings of vulnerability for the men in the study. Most had no sense of a future in full-time paid work and many felt left behind by the technological revolution which had made their manual work superfluous. Physical strength was no longer viewed as an advantage to men in contemporary times. Many of the men felt outrun by trends in education and work leaving them feeling like they had missed out.

Roy had two grown sons, Andy was the father of three and Pado was a lone parent and father of one. Tommy had no children.

> Roy: The way the education is now you know you really need it. Most of us now do manual work but it's all IT work now. That's where we would probably, at a certain age like – our age you know? We've missed out on that like because you look at it now and they are talkin' about jobs being created but there's none in the building [*trade*], it's all in the IT, in hospitals and places where you need computer skills, readin' and writin' and everything else. Like most of us can hold our own in conversations but if you were to put us like, we'll say….[*interrupted*]
>
> Andy: …..at a desk or somethin' like that….[*interrupted*]
>
> Pado: ……any of us like, because we earned our livin' through workin' with our hands like. Yeah, it's all about usin' the bottle now!
>
> Roy: Yeah, you know "What do you want, a pound of meat?" There's no problem there. You can do all that like. You can't transfer that into an office environment you know.
>
> Tommy: But we are competing with a lot more people now for that unskilled work.
>
> *Transcript group 1*

The 'natural' order where men were the breadwinners was disrupted and this was in turn unsettling leaving men feeling powerless. The men spoke of changes in the world of employment and the reach into their daily lives of a neoliberal globalised economy. This

had resulted in precarious employment and the erosion of employees working conditions and rights.

> Yeah, you have to make sure you are physically fit to go into work. You're not goin' to get paid if you don't. Employers now can basically get away with anythin' once the recession is mentioned. They think they can do anythin' they like. If you need a job now like the companies are callin' agencies. You won't get a job for the rest of your life. Now it's agency work, I only want you for two days. That's what you get 'Sure there's a recession out there'. Employee's rights are gone. No one wants to give you a long-term contract of work with a pension or paying if you are sick. Sure I have a great job but the money is shite. The money is absolutely brutal. You have to pay your own pension and you get no sick. So if you are out sick you get nothin', only off the labour. *Messi*

Others expressed their deep sense of disappointment at being made redundant *'some men had lost everything'*. Men were shocked at being betrayed by the system. They had complied with the imperative to be workers yet the expected rewards for this had not been realised and only disillusionment remained.

> And like I just… I worked for so many years and I've got to be honest with you I've nothin'. I worked for… I just worked. I done 17 years and I still have nothin'. *John Smith*

The construct and promise of patriarchal privilege, of the social contract where men were expected to be care free, to earn and serve the market, where women were meant to stay at-home and care for the family was disappearing for these men and their partners. Alongside the promise of work, the traditional model of family life as described by Pado had all but vanished from men's sight.

> Basically men are supposed to go out and work and earn the money. The women were supposed to stay at-home, wash the house and do the cookin' and that was the way it was, wasn't it Johnny? As far as they were concerned their job was to go out to work, earn the fuckin' few bob, give her x amount and the rest was for the boozer. *Pado*

The familiar gender order had changed utterly. The once privileged position of men, where they had the largesse to decide how resources were divided and the power to claim

leisure time for themselves whilst partners maintained home and family life, was crumbling before their very eyes leaving them unprepared and unknowing in an unfamiliar landscape. Johnny the Keg had five children and was separated from his wife.

> Johnny the Keg: Men years ago would have, they would have went in and give their wages to their wives and she would have had to pay rent, buy the food, pay the bills.
>
> Pado: She paid, yeah.
>
> Johnny the Keg: And the rest was in his pocket.
>
> Pado: For his few pints. But I don't think it was that they wanted to have power. It wasn't a thing of a power trip, right? It was tradition. It was something their fathers, it was generation after generation. It was passed up. There wasn't a lot of men going 'Hang on here, look here, I'm earning and I have the power'. It was just something that they thought was normal. And it was normal. Do you understand what I mean? Men didn't take any responsibility in rearin'. And it wasn't through being a bad father or anything like that. It was just a way of life, wasn't it Johnny?
>
> Johnny the Keg: It was the way of life.
>
> Pado: It was the way society was then. But it has moved away from all that.
>
> *Transcript group 1*

Having power was so normal and unremarkable for these men that it had gone unrecognised for generations and not having to think about gender was one of the patriarchal privileges of gender inequality. Men had no responsibilities in bringing up children as this was women's work and this was an unequivocal way of life.

Masculinity and disruption

The model of family care, which emerged from the data, was in transition. Men were newly located at home looking after children whilst women were working bringing home the wages. In this context, men spoke of the disappearance of '*manly men'*. Gendered fears about being involved in home and childcare work were having to be recalibrated and left behind by men through necessity. The global economic crisis had contributed to

changes in patriarchal gender relations that had lead to a rupture in gender performances.

Power dynamics in the private sphere were being disturbed.

> Pado: I think sometimes men think that they don't feel happy in theirselves, cause their wife or their partner or whatever is earning more money than them? Do you know what I mean?
>
> Johnny the Keg: They are at-home husbands, you know what I mean? So they're doin' the housework. They have to go to get the pocket money off the wives where the wives had to get the pocket money off the husbands, you know.
>
> Pado: It's true John. I don't think there's a man's man left anymore is there? It's like if you were with your mates in the pub, six or eight of your mates years and years ago and you done somethin' your mates would say 'Are you for fuckin' real? Let her do it', do you know what I mean? That's the attitude that was.
>
> *Transcript group 1*

This transition was not without its problems for the men. They spoke of the difficulties they had in moving from the valued public/male space to the undervalued private/ female sphere. They were familiar with the world of paid work that had been clear and predictable to them. It was filled with other people, with familiar structure whilst life at home was obscure, isolating, and uncertain. Men had not been prepared or educated for this life.

> Well, financially it was a big hit and I think there were days especially during winter time you'd be saying 'What am I getting up for?' I think I painted the house about three times just to be doing something. I know I felt sometimes that I wasn't doing anything. *George*

Men's sense of control over their lives was diminished. Familiar socially constructed gendered identities were slipping from them and this gave rise to uneasiness and discomfort. Feelings of weakness and loss of control were in conflict with hegemonic ideals of masculinity. There were some doubts expressed about whether what they had learnt about being men would ever be of use to them again. For the research participants their world of work had changed completely. The borders of their understandings of

themselves and their lives were no longer fixed. Much of what had been learned before

was inappropriate in their new context and they were deeply uncertain of what lay ahead.

They found themselves in a liminal place of awkward in-betweeness, time rich with no

learning opportunities to ease their transition.

> It happened, first of all I couldn't sit, the sittin'. It was hard sittin' in the house at first, after being out every morning, mixin' with different people, bein' busy and lookin' forward to comin' home. And then, so, it was hard to sit there, to sit on your own in the house after doin' the cleanin'. It takes you an hour to clean up and then, and then put on the dinner and then you are sittin' there and you are watchin' the same shite on the telly and sayin', 'What do I do now like?' You know what I mean? So, yeah it's hard. Hard for the mind. It's kind of a bit of a shock. Is it goin' to be like this all the time? *Jack*

Jack's vulnerability, his isolation and shock at the situation he had found himself in was

immediate and painfully raw. George, Albert, John Smith and Jack all refer to *'sittin'*, to

the shock of having time on their hands and not knowing what to do with it. They, like

others were surprised to be doing '*women's work'*, something that would have been

'*mad*', unconscionable and emasculating in the past.

> To be honest with you, half the men in the flats are doin' the same thing. My mates hang their washin' out. Washin' their own washin'! It's just mad like. When I first done it, it was like it's takin' me manlihood away. But it's just I think you have to do it, or something. *Andy*

> I clean the house now and she'd be out earnin'. Yeah, it's totally different. Sometimes you feel a bit, you know, mmm like out cleanin' the windows and all and you're sayin' 'What the fuck! Should I be cleanin' windows?' She's out and people would be sayin' he should be out workin' and gettin' money, you know what I mean? But that's the way it is. It's just the reality of the recession. When it hit a lot of fathers lost their jobs and mothers were left out workin'. Someone had to get the money. *Jack*

> Nearly every fella just gets stuck in now, does the cookin', not afraid to hang out washin', not afraid to change kids nappies, everything! So to me that definition of a man's man is gone. That's my belief. *Pado*

Here was an indication of the beginnings of a significant cultural shift in the reality of

working-class men's lives during the recession. The data suggest that men were involved

in doing women's (subordinate) work. Men were integrating practical domestic care work in the form of housework and cooking for families into their subjectivities. Undoubtedly there were worries expressed about this shift. These were situated in a context where men had been ascribed the role of breadwinner. They voiced concerns about the level of social acceptance for men when they were no longer breadwinners and were seen instead to be doing '*women's work'*. Andy was reassured when he saw other men doing the same work as him. Doubts about his disappearing *'manlihood'* were diminished in solidarity with others. Rather, he now felt a moral imperative to do this work. The same moral imperative for George to share in family care work was also rooted in a belief in fairness, in gender equality.

> Yeah, well I think you have to share these things you know. They are my kids as well, even if sometimes I don't want to go and do these things, you have to. *George*

There was uncertainty about their new status. The men sounded vulnerable when they spoke of it and this was a feeling that was incompatible with ideals of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity. During the workshops, Jack could be heard tentatively checking out with the other dads whether they were doing the same amount of housework as he was. When he heard that what he was doing was not unusual he could be seen to relax and to talk more freely about his household chores, albeit with a sense of wonder that he was now doing this work.

> Jack: Yeah I'm cleanin' now, yeah.
> Albert: Are you?
> Jack: Yeah. Would you get up and clean the gaff now?
> Messi: It wouldn't bother me at all.
> Jack: Me neither. I love cookin' now.
> George: I never remember my father doing anythin', anythin'.

Jack: Yeah, same here.

George: My mother used to cook, clean, wash us, decorate the house, paint, wallpaper and me da would be sittin' there.

[*Laughter*]

George: His view was he was out workin' and he came home.

Jack: That was the view years ago, he was the bread earner so when he came home he sat down. It's changed now. It's since the economy crashed.

Transcript group 2

Here the men tracked the intergenerational change which had been played out in their lifetimes and which had been disrupted by malfunctioning economic structures that lay outside their control.

Men's participation in household work brought new understandings of the intensity of the work which women had traditionally been expected to do.

Well you need to sometimes step back into that [*women's work*] to just see how the other half is gettin' on. If you just use your own perspective and look at them, it just gives you that look at what they are. But when you step into that role you say, 'Jaysus, how do they manage this?' I must be a right so and so. *Messi*

Maintaining privilege

It is noticeable in the data that alongside the recalibration of identities, the men also sought to find ways of holding onto their privileged status by salving and inflating their fragile egos through the denigration of women and their gendered care work. If patriarchy construed care and nurture as women's work, when the men involved themselves in care they were compelled to find some way of rationalising it. They inflated the value of their care work in order to differentiate it from the care that women did. Creating a hierarchy, where father care might be construed as superior to that of mother care, helped the men

come to terms with their changing identities. The denigration of women and their work was one way of achieving this.

Seventy-three per cent (11 of the 15 men) who took part in both the workshops and interviews spoke negatively at some point about women and girls. The discrediting remarks about women were often cloaked in laughter, as though this lightened the meaning behind what was being said. Comments made by one man about the selfishness of young girls, their disloyalty and general *'bitchiness'* were agreed with by two other men in a group of six. Young women were only interested in having babies as a way of securing accommodation; they would readily leave children with grandparents to go out partying.

> The woman. A woman, what she do? Woman, she'd want to leave the children with her parents. She want nightclub to popping out. Maybe she want to be going with different men. You know what I'm saying? Like, for example, she have three, four kids and different kind of fathers. What you think? I'm not call a woman a woman, to tell you the truth. To me I call her prostitute. *Azziz*

Whilst men were depicted as changing for the better in that they could now be hands-on with their children women were characterised as changing for the worse.

> Johnny the Keg: I think the generation that's comin' up now, women, the girls comin' up now need an awful lot. Where it was just somethin' in a woman years ago when we were growin' up. Now some of the girls don't even know how to cook. I have a daughter now who works in the Coombe[10] and she does have to show girls how to change a nappy, how to bathe a newborn.
>
> Ann: So you think before that women just knew how to do that?
>
> Tommy: Yeah!
>
> Samson: Yeah they did.
>
> Johnny the Keg: Yeah. That was just natural, cause your mother was there. Their mother's were there.
>
> Pado: Yeah, everything was passed down.
>
> Roy: Nowadays, these young girls….[*interrupted*]

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[10] The Coombe is a maternity hospital in Dublin.

Samson: ….most of them they're just havin' kids to get apartments now. That's the way I think. I know a girl and she got an apartment for free!

Johnny the Keg: Yeah, most of them get them off the Eastern Health Board.

Tommy: That's what I mean!

Transcript group 1

Some boasted of the superior quality of their cooking compared with that of their partners. One father joked that he had been better at nappy changing than his wife. Others suggested that their children were closer to them than to their mothers.

For example, I give my child love more than her mother do. *Azziz*

I probably have a better bond with Jane than her Mam. *Damian*

When I go out from home, he cry like a girl. Sometime I think because he is with me all the time. I'm not working, I'm with him always. I am all the time with him. All the time you ask him who loves you the best? He don't say his mum, he says me! *Najibcassa*

Fathers, in line with ideals of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity, knew more of what was happening in their children's lives than mothers. Some described a competition with partners, one that they were winning.

I know all the teachers. I go to all the meetings with teachers. I'd know more about what's happening than Ella [wife] would. I do all the meetings. *Andy*

Fathers boasted that without them their sons would never learn to play football, ride bicycles or learn Tae Kwando. Women *'sneakily'* helped children with their homework, giving them the right answers. Women were the butt of cruel remarks and of self-aggrandising unkind laughter. Women had more social outlets than men, they had the school run and the local shops. Women were essentialised as being by their nature more

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chatty than men, more socially orientated. They *'get involved in stitchin' and bitchin'.*

These remarks were most often made in the group situations. Being one of the top female

footballers in the country provided no protection from deprecatory comments. There was

an implication here that without the rough treatment meted out to her by the local boys

she might never have been the success she was. Her success was due to men.

> Well we had the all time women's top goal scorer here. She played football with us. We
> actually, we used to kick lumps out of her! It toughened her up! And then she went on to
> be a top scorer. *Messi*

Azziz, coming from a very different culture was in dispute with his Irish wife. He was

critical of the freedom and rights women had in Ireland,

> Yeah, it's not like now they give her too much like freedom, too much… I think the
> government they don't do the job properly. Too much power. For example, women have
> too much power than a man. You know what I'm saying? You have a kid, for example.
> Who have a right to keep the kid? The woman. You know what I'm saying? But the men
> now is heartbroken because he wants to see his kids. He doesn't have a choice. You know
> what I'm saying? *Azziz*

Conclusion

This chapter has presented data relating to the shaping of the research participants

masculinity. It brought to light the impact of the institutions of the family and the

education system on their developing sense of what it meant to be a man. It was clear

that the men's collective experiences taught them that they must hide their emotions,

that within their working-class communities they could not afford to appear 'soft' in the

eyes of ever watchful others. If a fracture was found in their developing masculine identity

then they might be made vulnerable and such vulnerability attracted the possibility of

shame or violence. These messages about how to be a man were of little use when they

became fathers. Fatherhood cracked their masculine carapace and their capacity to feel care for others was unlocked (The men's reflections on fatherhood are further discussed in the next chapter).

Within their families and reflecting the cultural and social beliefs of the time, those who had present fathers learned that men's role was one of distant provider for families. Fathers had the power to punish, to withhold and give love as they wished. They had considerable autonomy in that they could journey between private and public spaces. Many of the men experienced and witnessed their fathers' violence. Those with absent fathers learned that women could stretch gendered roles and ably take on the multiple roles of protector, provider and carer.

The men's memories of the education system and their learning about gender roles were interwoven with narratives of physical and emotional abuse. The brutality and humiliation they experienced left its legacy in the bodies and minds of many of the men. Young boys learned that violence was a legitimate way to handle disputes and this in turn reproduced the idea that men and masculinity were inherently violent. Alongside this they learned that those in power in schools could harm them without sanction, that violence was a normal and acceptable way of controlling others. These were harsh messages for young boys who lived in resource poor communities and signified something of the lack of regard that the state institution placed on their lives. Schools expected and received deference from working-class parents. Teachers' status ensured they were trusted over and above young children.

Within the men's stories there was evidence that the impact of the collapse in global markets and the changes in trade and technology had significant consequences for them, their gender identity and their families. Furthermore, partners' expectations of their involvement with family life were also influential. Unemployment brought with it feelings of vulnerability and an unfamiliar landscape where men were uncertainly located in the private home space whilst women occupied the public space earning the wages. Changing representations of men in the media added to the cumulative sense of unease. The male position of privilege that they had come to expect was slipping away from them, it was no longer possible to present oneself as 'the hard-man'. Masculinity as they know it was being rewritten in the social and cultural sphere leaving them in an awkward liminal place. Yet, even within this poorly lit place, deeply inscribed scripts remained etched on the men. The data provided evidence of the deprecation of women and the care work they did by many of the research participants. In so doing, and reflecting patriarchal masculinity in action, elevated father care over mother care and in so doing they oppressed women in order to hold onto privileged status.

The data discussed here, in the context of masculinity, described conflicting identities undergoing transition. There was evidence that those men who were full-time working at home were tentatively taking on care roles. They were no longer fearful of doing 'women's work', in fact they were making it 'men's work'. They were integrating care work into their masculine identities. A moral imperative to do the right thing in terms of supporting working partners with this work, as well as a need for a new purpose in life was motivating men in this shift. Yet men's participation was often viewed as a gift to

women, one that deserved recognition and gratitude, while women's work remained unrecognised and thus rendered invisible.

The next chapter will present the data relating to the men's views on fatherhood and will provide further insight into this reported transformation in masculine identity.

Chapter 9

Empirical findings: Fatherhood

It changed my attitude, my way of life. Like caring about people. At one stage I never cared about anyone like. I went out and I took drugs, I drank. I done everything. I done a lot of things, do you know what I mean? Like I've been really bad like, do you know what I mean? And as soon as she was born, that was it. It was too hard for me at first. But it was about 'Do you want that life or that life?' I want that one! And bein' a dad that's what changed it. If I hadn't had a kid I probably would be in prison to be honest with you. Do you know what I mean? But it's grand now, it's goin' all right so far. I have loads of hope now. That's it. I have loads of hope now that's all you can do. Andy

Introduction

In their conversations, the men in this study spoke eloquently of the impact of fatherhood on their lives. Their stories elaborated themes that enliven contemporary fatherhood discourse and its focus on unequal patriarchal gendered constructs. Such discourse has traditionally placed breadwinning and caregiving at opposite ends of a hierarchical parenting continuum. Fathers and their financial contribution to family life were placed in a more powerful position than mothers and their contributions of love labour. The data showed that for these men and their families this continuum had been disrupted by a combination of the economic crisis, their partners' altered expectations and circumstances alongside the influence of changing cultural norms.

Opening the chapter, the men reflected on their dads' influence on their fatherhood describing efforts to shape practice congruent with traditional beliefs and desires about what it means to be a father within the contemporary context. Highlighting the transformative impact of fatherhood, the men's recollections about becoming fathers are

explored and provide insights into the pull between what at first appear as competing constructs: masculinity and caring fatherhood. Data relating to the disruption and opportunities which unemployment provided are next discussed and the chapter concludes with the concerns and hopes the fathers held for their children.

Re/shaping fatherhood

The previous chapter highlighted the impact of their fathers on the men's developing masculinities. Now, in reflecting on their fathers' parenting style many recalled fathers who were distant in both a physical and an emotional sense. Damian reflected on the generational legacy of fatherhood within his family, one that he was determined to reshape.

> He was never close. I think it was just the way they were brought up. Like I know my dad's father he wasn't a nice man. He was meant to be a horrible man like. I suppose it was probably the way he was brought up too. And it went the same way with my Da. Like the way I am probably with Jane [stepdaughter] is different. I take her out and, like I said before, she'll tell me ten times a day how much she loves me and if I don't say that back to her, well, she'll keep on saying it and saying it until I say it back. So I never… I don't think I ever had that sort of bond in a way… *Damian*

In their fathers' time men worked and provided, mothers looked after and cared for children. Fathers were the disciplinarians in families and the moral guides. Participants' own fathering practice had been influenced by such experiences and many were determined, like Damian to change the patterns they had learned.

> They hadn't probably got as much relationship with their kids 'cause they were out workin' all day. They did work hard as well like. I know my father worked hard and obviously everyone else's here Ann. So when they weren't workin' they were straight in home havin' a bit of grub, into bed, up to work the next day so they just didn't have that much of a relationship with their kids growing up. *Messi*
>
> Batman: He would have been raised that way. He was probably brought up the hard way. You know what I mean?

Ann: Hmm.

Batman: Whatever the hard way is. I was brought up that way. But I aint bringing mine up that way. Yeah? I'm doin' everything that he done wrong right, if you get me. That's what I want to do.

Rory believed that his father had been deprived of the joy of affectionate connection with his children because of the demands of work.

> He knew nothing about affection, we were taught nothing about affection. His generation, certainly never learned about it. Kids should be seen and not heard, I heard my Grandmother saying that. *Rory*

Azziz, the father of one daughter, described his father as '*a hard workingman*' who did not have a bond with him whilst George felt that there had always been a barrier between him and his father. Andy, whose own father had been imprisoned and later abandoned the family spoke of the importance of fatherhood and presence, a theme which arose many times in the data.

> A Da should be there to guide you and tellin' you which way to go like. Being at your back. *Andy*

The data affirmed the view that fathers should be there to give praise, support and love and these fathers were determined to integrate these qualities into their own fathering practice. Some had role models to draw from whilst others did not. Reflecting men's greater power in the wider social context, some relied on male peers rather than their female partners for guidance. Badboy, whose father had been violent and disappeared when he was a young boy looked to himself and other fathers for inspiration about his role.

> I want to give him what I didn't have. I do see other families and other daddies the way they do be with their kids and stuff and… It's a learning curve…..I want to give him something that I never had. I never had a father. I'm giving him that. And I learned how to

be a father myself because I never had a father to learn from. Everything is compared to what I hadn't got. *Badboy*

In the conversations with the men it was the determination to be 'better' fathers than their own fathers that shone through. Being 'better' was primarily equated with the affective realm, with being demonstrative and caring fathers.

> I was talking about… well, I was just telling my kids I loved them and all that. Because I never got that off my dad, so I want to change that circle and let my kids know how much I love them. I want to break that cycle. Do you know what I mean? *Jerry*

> I suppose they are able to come to me and talk to me whereas I wouldn't really have spoken to my father about anything really. The relationship, I think it is much better with myself and my two children than I had with my father. *George*

> Bein' a father, from your own father, you'll always want to do somethin' different. Make it better all the time. From what you had from your own childhood, from your own father. You want to, you just want it better. Well as best you can. *Messi*

During group discussions, fathers spoke freely to one another of the importance of showing love, of '*soft hearts*', affection and care. They reflected on the importance of spending time with their children, of developing relationships of trust and reciprocity. They wanted to know their children in a more intimate way than their fathers had known them. Prompted by the viewing of the photographs and their collective reflections on fatherhood, they externalised and articulated an unequivocal determination to develop demonstrable connection with their children. They were tentatively including care in their masculinity, developing emotional and affective resources whilst in turn bolstering their children's emotional reserves (see also Nowotny, 1981).

> It's just that I give them what I never had. That's it. I never had love or anything. I tell me kids I love them everyday. Everyday without fail. Love is the main thing, isn't it? I didn't want to be like him like. That's what it was like. I think I was being like him at one stage but then I really didn't want to end up like him, no bleedin' way! *Andy*

> I know my young fella is thirteen now. But there is one thing I always do. I always tell him I love him. I have it embedded in his brain. *Jerry*

> There's Leo, eight years of age and still wants to hold my hand walking through the park. Now I think it's just so cute. You seen me at eight? I'd be going 'Wha'?' No way would I be holdin' me da's hand. I'd be embarrassed to fuck….even the big ones give me hugs and that's brilliant, I think that's cool. That's a proud moment. *Batman*

In this, they were role modeling for their children a style of fatherhood that was paradoxical from the one they had learned. These fathers valued and encouraged the expression of feelings, emotions, communication and relationship.

The fathers demonstrated their fluency in the language of love and care in the way they spoke of their children. It was notable that they were aware of the reciprocal nature of their relationships and that they too were gaining emotionally.

> The children they show you the love. For example, 'Daddy, I want you to be my horse.' She jumps on your back and run a circle…stupid things. I never in my life meant to do things like this. But this [*is*] for her. She be happy, I am happy. *Azziz*

> What I try to teach Cal is basically just be yourself. Be happy, and he is. He's always…..they call him smiley in school because he doesn't stop smiling. He's always smiling. If someone says something to him he'll just smile at them! He's just like that. He's a nice little bloke. He's my super star you know. *Albert*

> I give him more love. I think love is the main thing, isn't it? Givin' someone a bit of love, like bein' there for them. I'm just….. I'm there for me child if he needs me, I'm there……you get great feelin's out of it. *Andy*

> You have to teach him your love. To show him how you love him. To show him how you're good for him, to play with him. To make him feel good. Yeah? I come to play with him toys. Sometime asking me to do something with him. Yeah, I can do with him. To show him your love. You have to talk to him always. 'I love you, you are best son, you are good.' You know? He can feel that it's good. *Najibcassa*

> And he blows me a kiss. He's just so bubbly you know? And he doesn't call me Da, he calls me Daddy, which I love…..it's so cute. Still hearing it from him, you know? *Badboy*

Dowd (2010, 9) suggests that 'non-marital, non-cohabiting fathers are present and desire to be involved in the lives of their children but have great difficulty doing so'. Badboy, Jerry and Batman, were just such fathers and they spoke of the challenges and efforts of maintaining close relationships with their children. Jerry lived with his girlfriend and baby

daughter and his two sons lived with their mother. His youngest son was a baby when the relationship with his first partner ended. The couple did not want their children growing up in an acrimonious environment. With the passing of time they agreed that they would put the children's wellbeing at the centre of the relationship and when the research was taking place the ex-couple were on good terms and had worked out a cooperative care schedule for their sons. The boys lived with Jerry and his second family every second weekend. He was in daily contact with them. The birth of a baby, a step-sister for the boys brought with it some readjustment within the extended family. Jerry spoke of how much of this had been managed in collaboration with his ex-partner and through ongoing communication with his young sons that aimed to assure the boys of his presence in their lives and of his deep love for them. It was clear from Jerry that he was aware of the pain and hurt experienced by his children as a result of the separation and he told of the complexity of managing relationships with them.

> Finn said to me a few months ago, Finn Is only six. He said 'Daddy it'd be great if you lived back in our house again, wouldn't it? And we're all family.' He said, 'And I'd really help. I'd help do the dishes an' all if you lived back here'. I got a lump in my throat. And I love my son. I didn't know what to bleedin' say. But I says, 'Son, some families they live separately.' I says, 'I'm always there. You can always ring me. You do see me at weekends.'
> *Jerry*

Jerry was acutely conscious of how difficult it was to meld his family together yet he was determined to do so and to remain an actively involved, affectionate and present father in the lives of all his children.

Batman also spoke movingly of his resolve to remain connected to his children. Despite seven years of homelessness, he had maintained some presence in their lives with the support of his mother who had ensured that the children received birthday cards from

him over the years of his absence. At the time of the research Batman was living separately from his children but spending each evening in his ex-partners house cooking for them, practically supporting and encouraging them with their schoolwork and being present for them.

Badboy had separated from his partner when his son was four and had since spent five years in prison. During those five years he had only seen his son twice. He was now determined to rebuild the relationship and he had care of him on alternate weekends. He desired to be more than a '*weekend daddy'*. He wanted a good relationship with him, one that was the opposite to what he had with his abusive father.

> And he's me first priority before I do anything for myself now. They [*friends*] know not to ring me when I have him because I literally haven't got a minute when he's… Because, as I say, I only have him for the weekend. He does be joined to me hip, you know. I look around, he's stuck to me, you know. *Badboy*

Whilst Badboy, Batman and Jerry are not representative of all fathers these dads and their partners have developed creative and flexible ways to maintain caring, connected relationships with their children.

Becoming fathers

Themes of care, affection and connection continued through the men's narratives of the impact on them of becoming fathers. On the one hand, becoming a father marked the end of the freedom to live what men described as wild, carefree and sometimes risky lives. Becoming a father crystalised for many their gendered dispositions to be breadwinners. On the other hand, it brought with it an awakening of care and a new understanding of the needs of others.

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Messi, Jack, Azziz, Jerry, Batman and Albert all spoke of how young and ill-prepared they had been when they became fathers. There had been no plan to become a parent. It had just happened. Many were *'shocked'* to hear the news, others felt trapped, immature and unready for their new realities. Some felt they had not grown up themselves. Dreams of travelling the world, doing exciting things were permanently halted. The freedom to come and go as they pleased was also curtailed; no more nights out with the mates; no more coming home at all hours of the morning; no more going to football matches; no more nightclubs.

Like many of the fathers, Azziz had not planned to have children. He had hoped to travel, to work in many different countries.

> Life started new. Like, [*I was*] a different person. I wasn't like I was before. I have someone to look after. I have a child to looking [sic] after. It is my responsibility. A very good thing about being a dad for example is a child will bring you light in the house. *Azziz*

Messi was 16 when the first of his twelve children were born.

> Eh, it just happened so quick. We weren't expectin'…. it wasn't planned. We were only 16, me and the Mrs. *Messi*

The birth of his first child meant the end of going out with friends and the beginnings of a life of responsibility for others.

> You weren't goin' to football of a Saturday anymore and you weren't like…you had other things to be doing like. Friends wouldn't have understood at 16 unless they were goin' through it themselves. But I know a lot of young people too around that age who had kids like that and the fathers didn't stick around. Like they were gone and they wouldn't have the responsibility, you know? It would have been easier sometimes to just run away instead of facing your….But thank God I stuck it, I stayed in there Ann. *Messi*

Becoming a father connected him to others, ending pleasure seeking days of his youth whilst replacing them with a life of purpose and meaning. Recalling the death of two of his

children Messi reflected on fatherhood and its role on his journey from a brief period of

carefree youth to more care-full maturity.

> We buried Aodhan and Lily so, hold on [*pause*]…. we had five girls and seven boys but I have six and four at the minute. And that was hard burying them two as well. Sure we were only young as well, me and her. Lily died in 1994 and Aodhan in 1998. Lily was a cot death, four and a half months. Aodhan was in Great Ormonde Street Hospital in London getting a heart operation. He was eighteen months old. So it was hard. The hardest thing ever. It makes it all the more special when you go through a bereavement like that especially when it's a young child. And then, you have more there, you know what I mean? You just have to keep goin'. You can't stop. It keeps you goin'…..[*pause*]…. even when you are wondering what its all about, do you know what I mean? I suppose it just keeps you going. It's something you just do as a father. I don't know how you get into doing it. You just pick them up and if you enjoy it and you're helpin' out, you're helpin' the Missus out and you're helpin' the kids out. You're not just being selfish for yourself. You're not just out watchin' football matches in the pub with your mates. Like you have to grow out of them days, you know what I mean? *Messi*

Jerry also spoke of making the choice to stay with his pregnant girlfriend. He believed that

in becoming a father he had discovered the freedom to express his emotional and caring

self.

> Jerry: I could have just walked away. A lot of blokes do at that age. But I had to grow up quickly. It's changed me for the better. I'm a better person for it, I think.
>
> Ann: In what way?
>
> Jerry: Because I'd give anything for them, you know that way? My last pennies. You know that way? I don't know which way to explain it. I'm more….I think if I didn't have kids I wouldn't be as affectionate.

Some of the fathers felt they did not have the language available to them to adequately

describe the depth of their feelings on becoming fathers. Messi and Jerry described a

sense of agency and power in their choice to stay with their partners and to take up their

role as fathers. The same power to choose was of course unavailable to their partners.

The men referred to the benefits they accrued because they did stay.

Becoming a father had opened up possibilities of the trying on of new identities for the men. They were no longer solely focused on the self but rather they were connected to the needs of others. Becoming a father brought with it an expanded capacity to care and disrupted patriarchal constructs of distant authoritarian fatherhood.

> It made me realise that I can't be thinking of myself all the time. Before I had him, basically I didn't care what anybody else was going through or the trivials [sic] and tribulations in life, hard times. It was basically all me, me, me. I was working. I was self-employed at the time. I was a supervisor of a company. I had everything going for me. So when I had him I had to put everything on the line. Partying, and all. And it made me realise that I have somebody else to look after now. It's not just all about me. *Badboy*

> It has quietened me down a lot. I suppose the last fifteen years I am a lot more responsible for what I have to do. It's not about you anymore. You could go to the pub, buy new clothes, do whatever you wanted to. It's not about you anymore. It's about you and your family and that's the way you have to look at it. Like cause if you don't you won't have a family for long. *Albert*

Andy, the father of three children, a champion boxer and a local community activist was 18 when his first daughter was born. Her birth was the catalyst for him to make new choices for himself and to embrace new subjectivities. Becoming a father gave him the impetus and motivation to turn away from a life of petty crime to one where he could speak with hope of his future.

> It changed my attitude, my way of life. Like caring about people. At one stage I never cared about anyone like. I went out and I took drugs, I drank. I done everything. I done a lot of things, do you know what I mean? Like I've been really bad like, do you know what I mean? And as soon as she was born, that was it. It was too hard for me at first. But it was about 'Do you want that life or that life?' I want that one! And bein' a dad that's what changed it. If I hadn't had a kid I probably would be in prison to be honest with you. Do you know what I mean? But it's grand now, it's goin' all right so far. I have loads of hope now. That's it. I have loads of hope now that's all you can do. *Andy*

Nothing had prepared the men for fatherhood and the care of dependent children, and as one father described it like being *'thrown in at the deep end'*. The birth of a child brought with it a sense of responsibility that was rooted in a default position for men, the

gendered identity of breadwinner. There was an underlying patriarchal assumption that was so much taken for granted by the men that it went completely unremarked. They would not have to provide hands-on care for babies, because they expected their partners to fulfill this role whilst they provided.

> When girls are young they are given dolls and taught how to deal with babies and stuff. Whereas boys aren't. First thing they know about them is when they arrive! And it's what am I supposed to do with this? Girls are taught to nurture. We are kind of winging it. We were never even shown how to change a nappy. *George.*
>
> Jack: Are you sayin' what are the messages we get before the baby is comin'? You are brought up town and you're told there's a pram there. A thousand pounds! That's what you're told.
>
> Albert: You'd better have money in your pocket! Exactly.
>
> Jack: You are the bread earner. Yeah.
>
> George: Responsibility.
>
> Jack: Responsibility. It's huge.
>
> *Transcript group 2*
>
> It made me realise I have to, I have to work. I have to go out and earn because I have to provide for this child. Then when another one came along, you had double the job. So I suppose a lot of my focus was on the job. Because I needed it and I had to do it and there was good money to be earned. There was no life balance. It's great this time around as I have loads of time. I don't have as much money but I have loads of time. *Rory*

Rory was retired and had a second family. His own father had instilled a love of learning in him and he wanted to pass this on. His father, Rory said, knew nothing about affection, deprived of the joy of this by the expectations on him about earning money. Rory had followed this pattern with his first family and now retirement allowed him to change the pattern with his second family. He was, he told me, *'an old dad'*. The first time he became a parent (1974) there were no structures in place to support him to spend time with his children. The impetus on men was to earn as much as possible to support the family and this had led to him missing out on the early years of his children's progress. His second family, a son aged 12 and a daughter aged two, had, he said, benefitted greatly from the

time he had been able to spend with them. He, in turn, had benefitted from getting to know them in a different way to the children of his first relationship. He loved the opportunity to be there for his young son and daughter. He knew them well, spoke confidently of the minutia of their lives, of their likes and dislikes of vegetables, of television programmes, of homework and of travel with them. Unlike his father, and as a result of retirement he was not deprived of the experience of the joys of affection.

> Just the joy of having them…..when your two year old comes over, just comes over and runs at you and just gives you a hug. That makes your day. You know you are doing something right. *Rory*

Assuming the identity of breadwinner was not only related to the economic wellbeing of the family. It was also closely linked to an ideological and cultural norm that placed the father at the head of the household. Being a father had social standing in the community and lent status to a man. It signified successful masculinity.

Damian who had a history of being in trouble with the law, and the only non-biological father in the research group, had to *'cop on'* to himself when he first became involved with his partners' daughter. He chose to put aside old freedoms. In return he spoke of the status he gained, not only in the eyes of his daughter but also in the regard of the wider community.

> Like we have her communion coming up there now next year. So I'll be a partner. So we'll go out and buy her dress and all that. I suppose like, well we were at a wedding there last year and everyone's like 'God, is that you're Da?' And it was just a nice feeling. *Damian*

To him being a dad meant taking on the role of provider, of responsibility for another. The love his daughter had for him helped him to view the world differently. This new perspective encouraged him to be other centred for the first time in his life.

> It makes you cop onto yourself. It's not just about you anymore. Whatever I do now will reflect on her. If I bring trouble to the house or something she's going to notice that and everybody else is going to notice it. Before I had no responsibilities and I could do whatever I liked. *Damian*

When describing what it was like to be a father it was notable that Damian's answers focused on how his sense of himself was affirmed by what he perceived to be his daughter's view of him.

> I suppose in her eyes, the way I look at it, I can't do any bad. I'm her hero. Like to her the world revolves around me and she has opened my eyes to a lot of things. *Damian*

Najibcassa, Jerry, and Badboy framed fatherhood similarly to Damian. There was a contrast here from the fathers who spoke of fatherhood in terms of more other-centred practice.

> Ciaran and Fin are wrapped up in me. Daddy, Daddy, everything's about Daddy. I'm the apple of their eye. *Jerry*
>
> You have to make your own family. You know, you have to make your family to be around with you. Because especially when you're getting like, getting old. You need support from your kids. To help you when you get old, you know? For the future also. *Najibcassa.*
>
> I like how he makes me feel. He makes me laugh. I could be having a bad day, depressed, like as I say I suffer from depression. And he just makes me smile. He just brightens up me world. He just brightens up everything. *Badboy*

For these men having children was a rewarding and fulfilling experience. They were the beneficiaries. It strengthened their sense of themselves, provided a buffer against the future and affirmed them with heroic qualities in the eyes of their children. Being a father gave them new and more hopeful direction and focus. When set against the background of how their masculinities were shaped by their fathers, families, communities and education system it was perhaps remarkable that the men could so clearly summon their agency and express the tenderness and connection they felt for their children. Ideals of

hegemonic patriarchal masculinity allows for no such vulnerability or weakness to be displayed. On becoming fathers, these men asserted their caring identities and therefore their vulnerability. They reimagined their identities as fathers and men. In amending their scripts, however, they have not completely erased traditional notions of fatherhood and data concerning this construct follow.

Traditional fatherhood

Included in the men's conceptualisation of fatherhood were traditional duties that mirrored the messages they had learned about fatherhood in their own families and in the wider community. Men spoke of the responsibility and challenge of providing materially for children; of their role as guides for children's moral development; of their role as protectors and disciplinarians. Fathers did not want children to make the same mistakes they had made. Through material provision, fathers saw an opportunity to give children the type of childhood they had wished for themselves. This was identified as a further element in being a good dad. In the data below, there is evidence of the comfortable fit of a familiar patriarchal approach to the role.

Discipline

In the past it was acknowledged that a father's return from work was sometimes awaited with apprehension. Fathers enacted the role of disciplinarian and therefore they were the ultimate authority in the household. Mothers were thereby construed as being unable to control families without this male support.

> When you were being reared and when I was being reared your mother would say 'Now that's it now. Wait till your father gets in.' You had this thing. If you got a box off your father you had a fear of your father. You had fear. *Johnny Cash*

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> Mary did a little bit but she would have been naturally 'Wait till your father comes home'. That was always the husband. That's part of it. *Roy*

These fathers acknowledged that other strategies than physical punishment were needed to build respect and discipline. Systems and structures, which did not include the physical punishment of children, were devised. Najibcassa's son had to earn points for good behavior if he was to get treats such as being brought to football or swimming. Albert's son earned money for compliance with his father's wishes.

> Well I do a routine with my son every week. I give him a fiver. I say to him 'There's a fiver every Saturday for you but I have disciplines in the house. You make your bed. You make your own breakfast. You get dressed, get washed, brush your teeth'. All simple things. *Albert*

Fathers continued to view their position as one that entitled them to the respect and obedience of children. Children had to be put in their place, to be controlled. In the data, this was construed by the men as intrinsic to their gender role.

> And now that I'm out of prison and I'm back in his life everything's rosy. He's up there, he's growing. Like he's bold because I haven't been there. He tries to get away with a lot with me. So I have to sort....I was away for a few years. That doesn't mean that I've after getting soft! I have to put him in his place and there's rules and regulations there. And I do punish him and I ground him, you know? And he's kicking and he's punching the doors and you know? But that's part of being a parent. You know? *Badboy*

> I mean I'm strict. I'm from an old school in that I believe that you should show a certain respect for your parents and if you are asked to do something you do it. But that's not the way of the world now. They question everything. Even my two year old questions things. *Rory*

Protect

Fathers, like the mothers in Kusserow's study (1999) described a strong instinct to protect their children from a range of social, cultural and emotional threats. Concerns expressed included bullying, sexual abuse, emotional upheavals, violent encounters and cyber

bullying. Homophobia underlay the fear that allowing boys to feel will make them gay (see also hooks, 2004). Whilst many of the fathers wanted their sons to be able to express their feelings, they were keen to encourage such expression safely within the private sphere of the home whilst discouraging it in the public space where boys could be the target of bullying. Albert articulated this concern when he told of his son's upset after being teased by a classmate during a school outing. The aspect of the incident which had upset Albert and his son most was that he had cried in public.

> I said 'What feelings came up for you?' and he said 'I was very hurt and I was cryin' on the bus'. He said the most hurtful thing was cryin' on the bus. *Albert*

The men spoke of visits to schools to fight the causes of their sons and daughters, of forays into the street to defend children against bullying and of rows with neighbours over other children's behaviour. They spoke up on behalf of their children, they went to battle for them.

> Like my children tell me they're bullied or whatever I'm straight on it. I don't leave it. I don't wait. I'm right there. And if the school that I go to, where my kids are, don't do anything about it I actually go to the parents of the children. *Batman*

Johnny Cash who had been frightened and silenced during his school days was determined his son would have a different experience of education to his own. In defense of his son he was prepared to use his voice to ensure this did not happen.

> Only one day Larry got into trouble. I forget what it was about now. But I lost the head. So I went down. The girl teacher, and I said 'Listen, it's not right. He came out crying' I said. Don't let that happen again. She went, 'What?' I said 'I'll tell you what I see. When I was at school I used to be beaten around the place', I said. 'He's not going to be like that'. We called it quits. And I said 'Do you understand what I'm saying to you?' She said 'Yeah'. That was it. No more trouble. *Johnny Cash*

In the context of an escalation in drug culture in resource poor and neglected inner-city communities fathers worried about their children's safety.

> I mean at nine years of age it is very hard for me to talk to me child about drugs. But I think if you don't, it's so easy in this area….. in this down and out area. It's so easy to fall into it, especially if you don't know what you are doing. I think it's important that he knows that, do you know what I mean? *Albert*

> I'm just makin' sure they're not goin' down the wrong road, you know what I mean? Cause you know the way the world is now. I don't think it was as bad when I was growin' up. It's crazy today. It's madness. The amount of stuff that's goin' on. Like my kids, my little young fella sees actually sees them there sellin' drugs. He's nearly eleven and he came in and told us, 'Them people over there are sellin' drugs'. The kids know all this. *Andy*

Children's involvement in a variety of sports was viewed as essential. Sports taught discipline, self-control and useful defense techniques. The fathers spoke of their busy weekly timetables of accompanying children to extra-curricular pastimes, most of which involved participation fees that were loading additional stress on family budgets. The men noted the shutting down of summer projects during the recession.

> In the summers, like the summer projects and that a lot of them have gone now. There's nothing here for the kids. *Batman*

Summer projects had kept children occupied and engaged in useful activities in the past and many fathers believed they helped to stop involvement in trouble and local gangs.

Fathers were particularly concerned for their sons. They were actively encouraging communication with them to try to protect and guide them.

> He came back home two weeks ago, he was down the docks and there were syringes and all down there, the whole lot and I was saying 'Son I hope you didn't touch any of that?' And he said 'No Dad, I done what you told me I just walked the other way'. I said that's good, you know. *Albert*

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The escalating nature of violence in their communities was also of deep concern. Youths carried blades, *'young fellas'* carried guns and sold drugs to other young people. Street gangs held power. This knowledge impacted closely on how they saw their role and this was particularly so in relation to sons whom they were determined to physically and mentally equip for survival. Jack, the father of one son and two daughters, was teaching his son boxing in order that he would be able to protect himself.

> I just want him to be able to defend for himself. That's all, do you know what I mean? I don't want him to be bullied. *Jack*

Albert, the father to one son and a daughter, had installed a punch bag in their living room so that his son could become strong and find a way to vent the anger he felt when he was bullied or teased by school mates. Najibcassa, a Moroccan man, brought his only son to Tae Kwando so that he could learn discipline and defend himself when he needed to.

Just as their fathers had sought to shape their masculinity for the streets of their communities they, in turn, were intent on supporting their boys to *'man up'* in order to protect them. Their role was to fix appropriate masculinity into their young sons and to prepare them to be independent and self-reliant, traits that are synonymous with ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

> Messi: They have to absorb all this in one go like. Take all this and learn to man up.
>
> Ann: What does that mean?
>
> Albert: It means to stand on your own two feet and to be able to stand up for yourself. Really. I know they are only kids.
>
> Messi: It's essential.
>
> Albert: It's essential that they learn that now because at least then you know that when they get older they are able to stand on their own two feet.
>
> *Transcript group 2*

Fathers' concern for daughters lay in the realm of gender and the harm that men could do to girls and young women. Daughters learned that they would be/needed to be protected.

> Messi: I think you look after the girls a bit more, don't you, when you're a father. I'd be a bit more strict on the girls, I'd say. I'd have a different approach to them now.
>
> Ann: And why would you be stricter do you think with the girls?
>
> Messi: I don't know. Probably so they wouldn't meet someone like me and have kids at sixteen. I know who is out there. Stay away! Boyfriends, no way!

Samson attended two of the workshops. He was the father of two children.

> Samson: I have a boy and a girl. I'd be more protective of the girl.
>
> Pado: Yeah. I'd be more the same. You'd be more protective of a girl. I mean boys can look after themselves a little better than girls can.
>
> *Transcript group 1*
>
> Her mother was abused when she was younger. So I know what happened there. I suppose knowing all that, what she went through and looking at her like. Well I have to be more protective. *Damian*

Daughters were portrayed as being unable to look after themselves and as weaker and more dependent than boys.

Provide

The pressure to provide for children was referred to by many fathers. A strong consumer culture, characterised by demands for instant gratification impacted on the material desires that children had. This, in turn, caused feelings of stress and inadequacy amongst fathers, the majority of whom were unemployed. In a gendered context where success as a breadwinner equated with success as a man such feelings were challenging for dads who described the guilt they felt when they failed to live up to the material expectations of children.

It's pressure for you now to provide for the kids. They expect things, instantly now. That's the way it's gone. It has to be there now. And you're the worst in the world if you haven't it. But they make you feel more guiltier cause you are the worst in the world like. That's it! *Messi.*

Well, down here a good father, around this area, it's all about clothes and what you give your kids. And havin' a nice house, havin' the best house on the road. Yeah, and the pressure behind that is unbelievable like. That's what I get out of it. And then the young fellows over there is lookin' at the role models goin' around in their new clothes, and everyone knows what they're doin', they're not up to any good. I don't want that for my young fella, you know what I mean? *Jack*

What I learned, if you have kids you make sure that you have everything they always need. You know? And teach them as best you can. *John Smith*

Much of the drive to provide lay in the pride of creating a better childhood for their children than the ones remembered by the men.

That's one thing about me. I worked. I always provided. I was good like that. I done my duty, you know? Things are tough like, you know? They just don't understand but then again, you don't want to put them down. You give them what they want cause you never got it. You can't let them down. And then you're lookin' at them, are they goin' the right way? Are they goin' the wrong way, you know what I mean? *Jake*

Ann: So your role as a dad, part of that was…

Batman: ….to give them everything that I had never had. It's just one of them things. And you see other kids… Like I didn't want me children having to split one bike through the whole family, if you understand?

Ann: Surely.

Batman: I wanted each child to have a bike themselves. There's tellies in all my kids' rooms.

Ann: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Batman: Like the girls have their own, the boys have their own. They don't even have to come down the stairs if they want. They have all… I'm sitting here telling you I spoil my kids.

Ann: So your job as a dad…

Batman: To spoil my kids…

Transcript group 3

Guide

Reflecting traditional views of fatherhood and ideals associated with masculinity many saw themselves as authoritative moral guides. They wanted to build moral character in their children. They spoke of their role in teaching children right from wrong; of the need to respect others; of the importance of caring for those weaker than themselves; of learning about self-discipline through sports activities. There was also evidence in the data of fathers teaching children about the centrality of learning how to make relationships. They spoke of wanting children to make good relationships with people in their community, with other children in school, with teachers and with themselves.

> Well there is a lot of pride. Making sure that he grows up respecting people. I like to hear him saying thank you. *Albert*
>
> You have to teach him nice. How to respect people. How to go to people, don't fight with people. I can talk to him. Because I know him when I talk to him. When you're teaching him from small every time, every time talking to him, this is good, this is not good. *Najibcassa*
>
> To teach good behavior. Yeah. And teaching you to be human, to respect the human. That is how I want to raise my kids. *Azziz*

The fathers saw themselves as influential role models for their children. In this context they particularly referenced their sons in the narratives. Phrases such as *'bringin' out the best', 'doin' my best'* are embedded in the data signifying the dads intention to be the best fathers they can be within their circumstances.

> I'm a good dad. I give the best with what I have, do you know what I mean? I do the best with what I can, with what I have, do you know what I mean? Does that make sense? I can only do the best with what I have at the time. *Jack*

Messi draws on his instinct as a father to prepare his children for life. This instinct is rooted in an understanding of the world as a tough place, one where it is easy for kids to

fall. During the final verification feedback session to the men Messi spoke of his pride in the fact that none of his 10 children had ever brought trouble to his door. For him one element of being a dad involved being *'hard'* and *'strict'* with his children. He was keenly aware of the world in which they will grow up, a world where children have to learn to stand on their own two feet.

> You have to be hard with your kids for a simple reason – you just know yourself. It's like instinct as a father. You know what they are going to face when they are growin' up. And you don't want them to go through it unless they have all these skills and just preparing them and get them ready as best you can until they are adults. And you don't want them to fall. *Messi*

Drawing from his experience Badboy was also acutely conscious of how easy it was for young people to fall. He was aware of how important it was for a father to be there if a fall happened. He spoke passionately of his determination to put his son on what he believed to be the right *'man path'* in life.

> Badboy: I think that's very important for me. To put him on this path. The right path, as a father, the man path as they call it. So when tunnels are dark just to show him there's light at the end of it. Because I never seen the light. I just seen the dark side of the tunnel. I went through a lot in life and I done a lot of life. I've plenty of experience. So I can bring him up right.
>
> Ann: And what's on the man path?
>
> Badboy: The things that are on the man path? It's all about bringing him up to respect elders. Respect himself. Getting him into a working environment. You know? Keeping him away from gangs. Keeping him away from drugs. If I can. If I can't, well. I'll try my best then. You know, just keep him on a path the way he doesn't end up in prison…..you know, basically keep him on a path and not the same path I went on. I'll try me hardest. I'll try me best to put him on that right path you know?
>
> Ann: Yeah.
>
> Badboy: And then if he goes off the right path and he takes a left turn or a right turn and whatever turn it is….and if it's a wrong turn I'm still goin' to be his dad. I'm still goin' to be there for him.

Raising children was no longer the sole role of mothers, and men who were now at-home had more opportunities to participate. They saw they had the power to influence children.

> Your kids' upbringing is to do with you. The way you bring them up as well. If you bring them up bad they're goin' to turn out bad. Sometimes they don't. It's a fifty-fifty cash back kind of scenario. But if you bring your kid up decent and you have confidence in yourself he's going to grow up with confidence and he's going to have that in him as well as the love of his friends or her friends. *Badboy*

Badboy also referred to the differing influence of mothers on the lives of sons.

> They always seem to stay with their mother so basically we don't have the same amount of time that they have to set them on the right path. Cause they look at the male figure, you know. It's a lot of what you learned in life, what you done in life, what you are takin' away from life. It's important. It is and it's important as a man but also the vibes from being a woman, a mother I think it's totally different. But the kid lives on both sides while you're tryin' to put him on the path. *Badboy*

Fathers' role as guide included elements of the policing of gender ensuring that boys were not overly influenced by the 'feminine', that they were properly heterosexual. Jack was worried about his son and his creative tendencies.

> Yeah, well I leave the girls to Sue, so, because she's a girl obviously but I…. with Jack I try to play sport with him. Do hurls or a bit of football with him. Yeah I bring him with me, mmm, the way I talk to him an all, do you know what I mean? Like cause he's around girls I do be sayin' to myself I don't want him growin' with girls, you know? Not with girls all the time, too much girls, because then you think 'Hang on a minute'. You know what I mean? He'd become too much feminine. So you try to pull that back, every father….but if he did it would be still ok, I'd still love him as a son but you know what I mean? *Jack*

As a father Jack was clear that his role was to counteract and limit any feminine influences. Messi tried to reassure him about his sons' masculine credentials.

> Jack: What's that? Billy? Billy Elliot comes to mind, did you ever see that film? I do be sayin' to me young fella, you're not to be… she does be havin' him dancin', 'You're not to be dancin' '. The young ones do be trying to dress him up and put make-up on him and I say 'No you're not to be doin' it'. I was tryin' to teach him boxin' you know?
>
> Messi: So they're like tryin' to stop him from bein' a man?

Jack: Yeah I want him to be a boy. He's always around women, with his Ma and that and he's changin' and he used to be a bit boldish, like knock this fellow out and knock this one out and now he's after kind of changin' like, he's gone good.

Messi: He's a great footballer!

Jack: Yeah. He's a great goalkeeper. I was teachin' him boxin' yesterday, we had a bag and I was tryin' to get him to hold his hands up, little things like that but he got very annoyed then.

Transcript group 2

Others alluded to worries about their sons sexuality rather than saying outright that they were worried about them being gay.

Messi: Sayin' that my youngest fella Jake, he loves to do arts and crafts and drama, he asks for knitting needles, he loves all that and he has his little box of tricks and his little pony and his little brush and he'd be brushin' him.

Albert: Yeah, that's creative.

Messi: He's only six, what can I do?

Jack: Yeah, my young fellas the same, brushin' the hair of the doll and I used to take them off him.

Messi: Yeah it's his creative side but?

Jack: But then again I thought, but it's a creative side, but nip it in the bud.

Transcript group 2

Some were playing with girls' toys, others were *'arty'* which was worrisome for fathers. Jerry and George were the only ones who spoke openly of the possibility of sons being gay, voicing support for whatever choices they made.

Disruption

Unemployment had left men with much time on their hands and participants spoke of the greater visibility of dads in their communities. The journeys of their fathers were described as being to and from work or to and from the local pub. Their fathers demanding work lives had left them with little energy for family involvement. In the

evenings they were reportedly fit only for the pub or the sofa. They would never be seen

in the public space pushing a pram.

> Pado. It's a massive change. You'd never seen a man pushing a pram years ago.
>
> Johnny the Keg: Jesus no!
>
> Ann: Why was that?
>
> Pado: It was woman's thing and if you done that you were a woman. If a man done it, if a man was seen pushing a pram like. I remember years ago you done certain things and you were called a faggot you know what I mean?
>
> Johnny the Keg: Yeah they'd say he should be wearing the dress in that house.
>
> Pado: Exactly, John. Yeah. That was the generation.
>
> *Transcript group 1*

In contrast to their fathers' lives, research participants' performance of masculinity in the

public space involved family care work. They were walking children to school in the

mornings and collecting them after school; in supermarkets they were seen doing the

family shopping; today's fathers were seen accompanying children to extra curricular

activities in local communities. Men's presence in the company of their children was

notable in communities. It was becoming the norm for men, *'the way things are now'.*

Men were seen in public doing the previously invisible family care work that only women

once did. Elements of the men's gendered dispositions were expanding allowing for new

presentations of the self.

> Jerry: Fathers nowadays seem to do a lot more with their kids. Like a few of my mates have kids and they're there in their life. But they bring their kids to school, collect them. The mothers are out working. We're feedin' them, things like that the mothers would do, like you know that way? Yeah, just times are changing like, big time.
>
> Ann: Yeah, yeah.
>
> Jerry: For the better.
>
> Ann: Do you think men benefit from the change?
>
> Jerry: Yeah. Well they're around their kids more seeing them growing up. A lot of men, years ago, didn't see their kids growing up because they were always out. They'd come in

from work wrecked, have their dinner, probably veg out in front of the telly then. It's just the way things are in Ireland now, you know what I mean, where there's feic all jobs.

Transcript group 4

Fathers were seen doing a lot more with their kids, they were present and actively participating in their lives in the way mothers had always been.

Andy: It's just tradition now, it's just weird if you don't see a man out wheelin' a pram.

Roy: Now it's goin' fellas are at home like. The wife's out and it's up to fellas to take over the parentin' there. If you go to school now there's an awful lot of fellas pickin' up their kids.

Andy: Yeah all the time. That's cause the Mrs. is out workin' now.

Roy: Yeah. That's what I'm sayin' yeah. Roles have reversed you know. It's happenin' now that fellas like to do the supermarket run or whatever. And you would talk. But like my father wouldn't have probably done it or your father probably?

Johnny the Keg: He wouldn't have been caught in a shop!

Roy: You know unless it was for his fags or something, you know what I mean? You only did sports, pub and work. That was basically it. Where women had the whole lot. They had the school run, they had the other bits and pieces you know?

Transcript group 1

Women had *'the whole lot'*, they had the care of the children in the private and public space, they had the care of the house, *'the bits and pieces'* that held the family together which supported men to be freely involved in the world of work, and indeed to have the leisure time for sports and socialising. Men, in their father's time, were only seen in the female space of the local shops when they were looking after their own needs.

Whilst roles have been described as reversed, the use of language here exposed how entrenched patriarchal attitudes persist. On the one hand gender norms had been disrupted, *'wives'*, *'the Mrs.'* were out working now and *'fellas'* were taking over the parenting. Yet on the other hand mothers were presented in association with their legal status as *wives* of men whilst fathers were presented as *fellas* which carries with it

connotations of youthfulness and being carefree. Roy spoke of *'the taking over of parenting'* by fellas, framing the move by fathers into the primary caring role once occupied by mothers as a takeover. This resonated with feminist concerns about the emergence and valorisation of super-hero fathers who will be lauded as doing parenting even better than mothers (see also, Dowd, 2010, Lynch et al, 2009).

Whilst some disruption of gender roles was in evidence in the public space, the strength of traditional models of gender normative behaviours had not entirely disappeared. Rory reminded the group that not all men were supportive of the changes in gender patterns and the 'second shift' remained relevant in the lives of many women.

> Well I'm sure there are a lot of men still there, whose fathers, like my father who went to work, there's a lot of men out there who still think a woman's place is in the home. I see a lot of it around me, a lot of men not working, their wives are working and they have to come in then and do all the cooking and everything else. Mind you I done all that, I had forgotten all that. I changed nappies and done all that. I'm back to doing it all again. I don't mind you know. Maybe it stems from our past where men weren't involved and they weren't expected to be involved. The woman was expected to do everything that concerned the kids. *Rory*

The challenge of changing gender norms and the tenacity of the breadwinner construct of masculinity and its impact on older fathers was also remarked by some of the men. From his already secure masculinity as the father of two sons, George now had no problems pushing a buggy or providing care for his children. Since being made unemployed five years ago he had become a full time SAHF and carer for both his sons. Whilst he did not choose this role he had come to appreciate having the opportunity to be close to his boys, to be a hands-on dad engaging in every day care activities. He positioned himself as a more modern man than those who he considered as old fashioned.

I suppose some men would see it as 'Well that's not my job'. I'd say there are still a lot of old fashioned men out there who would see themselves as the head of the family and the breadwinner, even if they're not. That's their role. They have to be seen as strong and hard, 'Oh I don't want to be doing somethin' like that'. I think it is just an old fashioned thing, especially around here. The men around here were always tough, you had to be tough. You had to be seen to be out doing, working for your family. Pushing prams is only in the last few years here. I remember when I first saw a man pushing a pram, well I thought what the hell is he doing? You know? To be honest I thought he was a bit of a wuss, but then things change and you have to do it. I mean I had no problem doing it , 'This is **my** child!' *George*

George believed that men were now free to display care-oriented masculinity, even in streetscapes and areas that were tough. George, Rory, Albert, Messi and Jack agreed there was an imperative on fathers to do the care work which mothers had previously been expected to do whilst also referring tentatively to a father's right to be involved in looking after children.

George: It shows the difference between my mother and father's life. My mother was the main one in the house because my father was always working. And with myself and my wife we kind of share everything between us, be it sitting down doing homework or reading or cooking or whatever you know? I think you have to do that nowadays. I think I'd feel guilty if I was just sitting around and my wife was up and doing the cooking and the homework and the cleaning or whatever and me sitting there saying 'When's dinner ready?'. I know I'd get a shoe in the head, you can't get away with that now.

Rory: No, there is more expected of us now. And probably maybe rightly so. To a degree men were shut out.

Messi: It's so different now though. The more hands-on a role we have the more we flourish cause if we are not being allowed to, not, not being allowed, but not being involved it kind of puts you into a shell on your own, it just locks you away.

Albert: I can understand now why like, a lot of women wanted to get out of the house years ago. I can understand now why they wanted to be out of the house so much, even if it was for two or three hours like.

Messi: Meself and George were only sayin' that, just to even get that. We just want that peace. The women want to get out. It can be hectic in the house at times, cleaning, cooking, ironing as George says you get up and you give a hand, you have to. You have to be enticed to get up off that chair.

Transcript group 2

Benefits of being SAHFs

In collectively reflecting on the changes in their families the men had gleaned a new understanding and empathy toward the work in which women had routinely been involved. Messi commented frequently on the opportunity the research had uniquely provided for men to think about themselves as fathers. In their discussions the men identified one of the costs of patriarchal privilege. In construing men solely as breadwinners patriarchy had shut down opportunities to develop their nurturing capacities: it had limited their opportunities to flourish emotionally. Patriarchy had isolated them and locked them away in what Messi describes as *'a shell'* on their own, denying them the chance to connect fully with those closest to them. The research had provided a welcome opportunity for the men to collaboratively reflect on these issues. Through their experiences as SAHFs they developed agency and discovered that they could be different types of fathers to their fathers. In spending time doing care work with their children they learned they could develop a masculine script for themselves which allowed vulnerability and which in turn benefitted the men, helping them to connect with and to more intimately know their children.

> The Da can get involved as well and the Da doesn't have to be that strong interior type. He can be the strong interior type as well as be a vulnerable caring parent. *Badboy*
>
> I suppose I'd be more hands-on now. I'd be more in tune with what the kids are doing. I'd be more interested in what they are doing. I suppose one thing I like about having all of this time with them is I can see them grow and develop. You see them grow up. You can see them changing as they are getting older. *George*

Batman, who had few memories of affection from his own father spoke of the pride and almost evangelical fervour he felt when his children were affectionate towards him. He wanted this for other men too.

Even the big ones give me hugs. And they stay for hugs. And that's brilliant. I think that's cool. That's a proud moment. If you are out and somebody has seen you huggin' your kid like that. I'd like the idea that there's a man walking through the shopping centre with his kid or whatever it'd be and he's seen me doin' that and he'll do it. That's what I want. *Batman*

Fathers compared the periods when they were in employment with their present situation as SAHFs. Due to shift hours, and employer expectations about overtime they had missed being with their children during work-days.

I used to get up about six, half six. Be in work. I was driving at the time. Be in work for half-seven. I wouldn't get home until about six in the evening. Then he'd be going to bed at about seven. So I wouldn't see him all day. *Jerry*

Before, I was often working twelve hours a day and you didn't have time. I feel I actually missed out to a degree as much as the kids did. *Rory*

That's how it was with me. When Joe was born I was working and so a lot of the time, by the time I got home he was in bed. I found it now, to be honest, a bit difficult. Because sometimes when I was working and I would come home at night, if I was doing overtime and he'd be in bed, and there'd be a few days when I wouldn't see him cause I'd be out early and back late. And then at the weekends you would be tired after a long week. *George*

When I was working I was going out the door seven in the morning. Didn't see them when I got home they were nearly asleep, ready to go to bed. I got to see them for five minutes, you know? *John Smith*

Messi, the only father who was working full time had deliberately chosen a night job in order to spend time with his family and to help his wife look after their ten children.

I would be out workin' the nights, which is handy for me cause I get to see the kids durin' the day. Where if I was working during the day, I'd be comin' home and they'd be just ready to go to bed. You'd be like ships passin' as someone once said, like ships passin'. *Messi*

Being unemployed provided opportunities for men to connect with their children's day-to-day lives, to get to know their children in a newly intimate way. They could bring them to school, collect them after school. Trips to the seaside, museums, playgrounds and the zoo were mentioned, as were football and boxing. The fathers told me they were not sitting

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around all day watching television. They were laying down precious memories for their children in which they would be recalled as good dads and this was of great importance to the men. They spoke of their active involvement in their children's lives including the development of language and literacy skills. This data will be presented in the following chapter.

> In a way like all she wants is my attention and my love. She's not looking for anything else. She just wants me to be there. I suppose when she's older she'll always be able to turn around and say 'Well, you were there. You seen me growin' up' and stuff like that. I'll have that bond with her even when she's older. *Damian*

> I'm there all the time….as I said the little fellow now, he's my best buddy. He follows me everywhere. If I'm gone and he's waiting for more than ten minutes he's crying over me, you know? *John Smith*

> I'm there since day one like. You know what I mean? Knowin' that you are there for them, big benefits, there'd have to be. When they grow up, I know in my heart and soul, they won't be able to say 'Oh, he was a this, he was a that'. They'll say 'He looked after us'. Do you know what I mean? That's what I want for them. *Andy*

Batman, who had been homeless and physically absent from his children's lives, also spoke of the importance of being there for his children. Throughout his time living on the streets and even during his darkest days he had stayed in touch with them with his mother's support. He had held his children in mind. He had marked all of their birthdays and this ongoing effort at connection had resourced him and his children and their relationship in the present day.

> That's how I think my kids, I don't mean respect me. You know? They love me. Even with all the stuff that's gone down….and obviously if anything ever goes wrong or anything happens I'll want them to be able to know that I'm there for them. To come to me. And they do. *Batman.*

Having the time to spend with their children meant closer, more secure relationships. These men did not have to wait until evening time to hear stories that were old. They had

immediate insight into their children's school and social lives, all of which had been invisible to them before. They described bonds of deep connection with their children.

> He's attached to me now like. The way most kids are with their Mas. *John Smith*

> If you listen to your kids, giving them more times [sic] to play with him, to do homework with him. To be close to him. Like your friend? He's going to be more happy. *Najibcassa*

> I'm there a lot of the time. Like if they want to go out to the park to kick a ball round I can do that. I get down on the floor and play Lego with David if he wants me to. Now not all the time! I suppose they are able to come to me and talk to me whereas I wouldn't really have spoken to my father about anything really. The relationship, I think it is much better with myself and my two children than I had with my father….I suppose in one way it is that I am there a lot of the time and they know I am going to be there. We have good relations between the two of us and I'm always there to tell them corny jokes and come up with useless pieces of information. *George*

> I spend more quality time with them. Like they will remember the time like. They wont remember you spoiling them with money but they will remember the time. Cause my Ma always says that. Like I had Jack out in the park, I brought his friend out. Paul's young fella hangs out with my young fella. And just looking at them with the skateboards and all, and then bringing them home. That's priceless. They'll remember that, do you know what I mean? *Jack*

Domestic masculinities

Those men who were involved in caring for their children were also doing the underlying domestic care work that supported children to flourish. Only one man, John Smith, spoke of his inability to do this work and that was in a context where his girlfriend and the mother of his three children was not only caring for their family she was also caring for her mothers' family. Whilst he noted that she had been taught to care in this way, there is an implication that she was innately good at doing this care work. He sees himself in a secondary helping role.

> She was taught how to cook and do everything. She looks after the boys up in her house. She's sort of took that role. That's the way she was taught. As I said, of course I would help out and that in every way I can but….she's just…she's good at it you know. She does it for two households a day. She looks after 15 people you know. *John Smith*

Men spoke in tones of amazement of the daily home care work and the extensive love labour they were involved in. Domestic care work referred to in the data included ironing, washing of clothes, changing of beds, dishwashing, tidying of the home, preparing children for school in the morning, food shopping and preparation. None of the men remembered working out the changes in their roles and responsibilities with their partners. They spoke of them as something that had slowly evolved. Some spoke of being compelled to do the work by a sense of fairness to partners who were working outside of the home. Others were unclear how the shift had happened, just that it had. Few of the men remembered their own fathers doing this type of work. When they spoke of this work it was in terms of helping partners.

> Well I suppose I always, when they were babies I always helped. I changed nappies, gave feeds, that sort of thing. The one thing I can't do is iron. I can clean and cook with the best of them. So I suppose….I bring them out walking or whatever. I suppose that's hands-on I think. And now helping with the homework. *George.*

Not all of the men felt they could do all of the household tasks. Some told of being unable to manage washing machines, others, like George, of not having ironing skills. Thus they were selective, leaving particular tasks to partners and as such describing the work they were doing within a construction where they retained an element of choice and therefore power about household chores (see also Coleman, 1989; Goodwin, 2002; Hanlon, 2012; Johansson & Klinth, 2007; Legerski & Cornwall, 2010).

Whilst cooking has traditionally been framed as women's work, it was the single most popular household activity referred to by the men. Many spoke of the enjoyment and pleasure of cooking for their families. Some had attended courses to improve their skills. Azziz described cooking as a way of being close to his daughter whilst criticising his wife

for serving fast food to their child. Serving freshly prepared meals was to him a way of being a good father.

> For example, my child is hungry, yeah? I never give her chocolates or give her crisps or give her bread and butter and tell her just eat it. No. I prepare exactly the meal. Vegetables. 'You want a salad?' 'Yes'. I prepare a salad for her first. She eat the salad. She eat maybe four or five vegetables in her salad, yeah? After salad, about two hours, I prepare meal for her. Maybe fish, maybe meat. *Azziz*

Batman, who did not live with his children cooked for them every evening in their flat whilst their Mam was out at work. Jack captured the significant changes in his family when speaking about cooking for his family.

> So then from Sue having to come in and cook, I'd cook and have dinner ready for her comin' in with the kids. Like that's great for her. She doesn't have to cook, she's been out all day working. I mean. Yeah, so I enjoy that….Yeah the sense is the minute they are in the house its 'Oh that smells lovely, what's that? What did you make for the dinner?' *Jack*

Jack felt that in taking up what was traditionally viewed as women's work that he was modeling a changing masculinity to his son.

> Well the messages he'd get, it's from like he'd have known I was out workin' and then he knew I wasn't workin'. So he'd have got that message, and he'd have seen I was cleanin' and cookin', so he'd have got that message. So he'd have got the message its all right to clean and cook as a man. *Jack*

This was echoed by Messi who was also *'hands-on with the cookin''*. He hoped that his example was positively influencing his boys. He positioned domestic care work as anti-macho.

> Hopefully in the future now, in about thirty years time that will make a difference with boys being macho. Like seein' their fathers at home, seein' them doin' a bit of cookin', doin' a bit of cleanin'. I hope it breaks it. *Messi*

There were also allusions to their partner's readjustment to their involvement in household arrangements. These hints included some mention of *'stupid little arguments'* about a lack of satisfaction by partners with standards of housework which the men were doing. There were also references which suggested that some women, working outside of the home, were feeling redundant in terms of the gendered work of housework which construed this as women's, not men's work.

> I'd be full on. I'd clean, I'd cook. The only thing is, it's direct from me girlfriend, she says it's the washing, the washing machine. I said 'I'm not doing this. I'll ruin it, I'll turn on the wrong heat. I'll mix up all the colours'. I've everything else. I've cooked, cleaned…she used to be saying 'Jerry will you please let me cook dinner today? You're doing it too much.' *Jerry*

Signifying further change these fathers were turning to their peers to look for support in their new roles. Jerry, the full-time carer for his daughter, spoke of discussions he regularly had with male friends about child and domestic care activities and what were perceived as the different standards that men and women had about this work. He told of the confusion felt when they were criticised for not keeping homes tidy whilst looking after small children who were intent on playing and pulling out all their toys. Having other men to talk to about such issues was, he said, supportive.

> You can have a little bitch with all your pals, like you know what I mean? 'She's doing me nut this, that, and sayin' I'm doing this wrong…you know or doing that wrong'. But I'm not like that. I just agree with her like, you know? *Jerry*

Andy also spoke of the importance of having male support as a way of dealing with the stresses of being a SAHF.

> I hang around with three of me best friends. We are three stay at-home dads like. I've three (children), the rest of them only have one. They are great. Just pure stay at-home. We all go away for our time off. We are goin' away for a weekend now soon. You have to get away like. You need to come up for air! They are great like. We are the same people.

We grew up for years beside each other and so we know one another inside out. You'd be talkin' about the good things and the bad things like, you'd be always talkin' about your kids. *Andy*

Badboy grew in stature when he spoke of the support and advice he had been giving his

friend Derek, the father of a four-year old boy.

Like my mate Derek would ring me and say 'Look…' His young fella's only four.' He's doin' this and that'. And I'd be able to say to him 'Look at, he's just at that hyper stage. He's pulling everything down. Basically, you know what I mean? This is what you have to do. This is what you have to do'. You know what I mean? *Badboy*

The men spoke of their partners and mothers support for their roles as SAHFs. Jack would

'be lost without' his wife's advice, whilst when Azziz was unsure of things to do with

housework he would ask his wife. Messi, the only father in full time employment was

'inspired' by his wife and all she managed in their busy house.

Well I think the Mrs. being there, she's a great support, you know what I mean? Just looking at her, what she has to do puts me to shame. I just have to go to work. I can get out of the environment, go to work in a different environment. I wouldn't say its any more easier, its stressful but it can be stressful in the house at times. Leaving her there, in that situation can be like. You look at her and you'd be inspired by her. *Messi*

If Messi got stuck about household chores he had a band of women to whom he could

turn for support.

Mum. The wife. You ring your Ma and you say 'How do you set this washin' machine?' Or you ring your sister, 'How would you set this? *Messi*

Roy admitted to being lazy about household tasks. If left to his own devices he might just

sit around the house all day. To counteract this his wife left him a list of daily tasks. These

tasks, he said, were never completed to her satisfaction so he was less and less inclined to

try. This shifting of responsibility for directions about domestic care work added to the

workload of women. Whilst changes were noted by the men in their roles as dads, in most cases the men's partners continued to be construed as the primary parents. Many men positioned themselves as 'helpers' who relied on partners to direct them in the work they did.

> As I said, of course I would help out and that in every way I can. *John Smith*

> I think it is only fair that a man should help out at home with his partner or his wife to rear his kids. *Andy*

Looking to the future: concerns and hopes

New technologies required new literacies and parenting skills. Fathers spoke of feeling ill-equipped and powerless in dealing with rapidly changing technology and the new pressures that accompanied their ubiquitous presence in family life. Mobile phones, iPads, tablets and laptops were all described as part of the everyday fabric of family life. Digital equipment appeared in many of the men's photographs of family literacy. Children were seen sitting gazing at devices of various types, their faces illuminated by the blue light of screens. Some children were wearing giant headphones, cut off from all around them by digital sound pouring through their ears. In some photographs, and reflecting the multi modality of modern life children were seen using several pieces of technology at the one time. The popularity of digital equipment and children's desire to have the most up to date gadgets and devices was a source of pressure on fathers whose role as provider was already stretched to the limit.

Modern technologies were described as having a profound impact on family lives. They were viewed as something that decreased communication between fathers and children,

between parents, between siblings and even between people in the wider community setting.

> If you dropped down to your nanny's years ago they'd all be sittin' there talkin'….if my daughter drops down to her nannies now she's like that you know [mimes, head down looking at a screen]. It's like a fuckin' graveyard in the house. They're all like this. They are a joke they are!..... Then the young fella would be sittin' on the Ipad like this and the three of them. There wouldn't be any talk goin' on in the house, no one would know anything about what's going on with anyone's life. Do you know what I mean like? *Andy*

There was a sense from the dads' conversations of men being excluded from these new developments. Children were having conversations with people outside of the family circle and in the presence of their, often ignored, dads. Children were in *'their own little world'*, they were being *'reared by computers'*. Fathers were losing control of their children, an uncomfortable experience for men who were expected, in terms of patriarchal masculinity, to be in charge of their familial and social environment.

> Rory: I got a text from me daughter and it took me an hour to decipher it. Even the
> spellin' is all new words. It's all short now.
> Messi: The actual conversation is gone. The communication is gone.
> Jack: Yeah. One of them is on the iPhone the others on the iPad, all their heads is
> down.
> Messi: The communication is gone.
> Jack: That's what my oul' one is always sayin'…
> Messi: They are all sitting in the room textin' one another not talkin' to one another.
> They are all on the phone. They won't say anythin'.
> Rory: You see it now if you go out to a pub or restaurant, there's people sittin'
> together havin' a drink or a meal but they're not talkin', they're textin'.
> *Transcript group 2*
>
> Andy: There's no communication…[*Interrupted*]
> Roy: …there's no connection there. It's like that ad on the television. They're all
> sittin' around on the couch, you know? And they say isn't it beautiful? But none of

them is talkin' to one another. They're all watchin' the television, supposedly, but
yet no one is talkin' to anyone.

Transcript group 1

For many there was a sense that computers and technology had *'passed them by'*. They were excluded from the knowledge that their children so easily and competently accessed.

> I'd say they are way past me with iPhones and that. I'd be able to do simple things. Google things and that but the kids are way ahead. Like my eldest one would sit in the room all day on the iPhone you know? *Jack*

> Computers are a big influence. He's learned a lot. He'd come up with things I wouldn't know. *Rory*

> My young fella is nine and he knows more about computers than me like. I actually don't know what he is doin' sometimes and I do have to get it checked up an' all to see what's goin' on, what's he doin', what's he gettin' into. It's like I have to go and do a course now just to keep up with him. *Albert*

They were concerned with the amount of time children spent on computers and the use of computers in cyber-bullying. Worries about children's access to Facebook were expressed by a number of fathers, as were concerns about the impact of technology on children's reading habits. Books had been put aside by many children and replaced by screen time. There was also a perception that computers, in and of themselves, made children more intelligent. The fathers were proud of their children's adeptness and comfort with all things digital whilst also worrying about the world children were accessing on line.

> She figures it our herself now. She'll take the phones and put it [*film*] on You Tube – her films or somethin' like that. So at this stage she's getting' good at it. She knows what she's doin'. So when she's older it probably won't faze her. She has the iPad now. So she's startin' to work that. She asked me there durin' the week 'Can I go on Facebook?' I said to her 'No'. *Damian*

> He's 13, computer mad. He knows more than me about computers. You have to take him off, give him a limit, because he'd sit there all day with a computer. That's the best way you know. They could click on somethin' with porno or anything, you know? *Jerry*

Fathers' worried about children getting into trouble with the law, getting involved in gangs or with drugs. The impact of a consumer driven culture was also of concern. Many spoke of worries about the prospect of employment for their children in the future. Anxieties were expressed that, despite efforts to keep children in education, there would be no security for future generations.

> You are putting them through all this education and you wonder what is going to be there for them. No security for the future. That's what you are preparing them for. *Messi*

Alongside these concerns the fathers also had many things to say about their hopes and dreams for their children. Many of these aspirations were in the area of learning. For Najibcassa the most important thing was that his son would grow up to be a respectful and caring man. Damian hoped that his step-daughter would be a confident person. Jerry wished for his children to '*do well*'. To him this meant that they would get a good education, go to college and travel the world. Badboy wanted his son to stay in school and to get a good job. Batman wanted his children to be happy in their lives, to have a good education and to not have days like he had when he was homeless. John Smith wanted his children to have work that made them happy and education, he believed, would give them the choices he missed out on when he was a young man. Azziz wanted his daughter to contribute something to the country which had given his family new opportunities. Albert wanted his son to be independent, to '*be his own person*'. Like many of the other fathers, he hoped his son would go to college, that he would be able to express his feelings and that he would have a moral compass which would help him understand right

from wrong. George wanted his two sons to be confident and fearless. He hoped they would have good friends and be respectful of others. Rory wanted his daughter to be well educated so that she could do whatever she wanted. He did not want her to be *'kept down by some man'.* He wanted her to grow up knowing that she was equal to everyone else. Jack dreamed of his son going to college, travelling the world, experiencing different cultures before settling down to have a family. Messi wanted his children to understand the shortness of life and he wanted them to be kind people. Echoing the desires of many of the other fathers he wanted his children to have a good education.

Conclusion

The fathers in this study spoke of their desire to be the best dads they could be. Their extensive and generous participation in the research signified their care for and interest in their children's lives. They had for the most part inherited scripts of fatherhood that had been hurtful and abusive, scripts that they wanted to discard. O'Toole (2015a) suggests that we uphold gender roles,

> ….because it's hard to imagine alternatives. Repeating the behaviours we see all around us, from the script we have inherited, is easy; writing our own script takes effort. (*Ibid.* 262)

There was evidence that the men in this study, whose lives and identities had been disrupted through unemployment, were developing their own unique scripts of fatherhood.

In their new, albeit involuntary role as SHAFs they had to reinvent their gender dispositions and to model alternative gender roles. In doing so, they found themselves restructuring normative ideals of masculinity by integrating childcare and domestic care

work into their conceptions of themselves as men. Whilst masculine and fathering identities were closely interwoven the data shows that these men attempted to shed the mantle of a hard and impenetrable masculinity to fabricate a softer, caring, more explicitly loving and non-hegemonic man-cloth. The men were diverse and the fit of this new cloth was not always a comfortable one. Scratchy threads remained of outmoded and no longer useful patterns.

These fathers had little or no preparation for fatherhood and for the most part their own fathers were not the role models they wanted to emulate. It was not until the men experienced unemployment that they had the opportunity to enact childcare and its underpinning domestic care work in a pro-active and meaningful way and to understand some of the costs to relationships of living in an oppressive patriarchal world order. In spending time with their children the men became more fluent in the language of love, care and connection. They described an intimate awareness of their children's lives. This was not empty rhetoric. It was supported by loving, active care for children that included, in most instances, the background domestic care work involved in the nurture of children.

In the workshops, men hesitantly described to others their involvement in the daily hands-on care of children. They tested the speaking aloud of this work with the men in their research workshops and found solidarity, not competition. Their endeavours were affirmed and validated by other men, signifying an acceptance of their efforts to integrate the work of care and nurture into their presentation of themselves as men. In their speaking of this work one can hear a new understanding amongst the men of the weight and importance of this work. There were many references to the women on whom they relied to support and guide them (see also Hanlon, 2012; Legerski & Cornwall, 2010; Reay,

1998). This construction of women as domestic expert impedes gender equality and helps to sustain unequal power relations between women and men. Yet there is evidence of hope here also. Through a process of individual and collective reflection these men became aware that they were performing gender differently to their own fathers, they were incorporating new subjectivities into their identities. In their involvement in women's work they were valuing what had been construed as traditionally feminine and in so doing they believed they were influencing the next generation to develop a more gender equal division of labour and an alternative less patriarchal masculinity.

The question remains: is this a step which supports men to develop their nurturing potential and which in turn helps to erase a damaging macho culture or is it merely a diversion on the road to economic recovery? This will have to be a focus for future research but for now, my sense is that the hegemony of patriarchy remains intact although more problematised in practice than ever before.

The data in this study has provided evidence of change on the ground in how gendered parenting roles are operating where unemployed men have become SAHFs. Men's more active role in fatherhood has prompted reflection about traditional gendered divisions of labour and men's new experiences of domestic and childcare work. This in turn has made for a deeper understanding about the social construction of gender *per se*. Nevertheless, without continued opportunity for conscientisation, chances for greater gender justice may be missed as men undermine women's skills to aggrandise their new roles and give way to the lure of creating new forms of male power and dominance.

Chapter 10

Empirical findings: Family literacy learning

It's pride. They don't want other people seeing that they actually care about things that the mother does and that they want to….like their homework and stuff. Cleaning their room. Things like that. That's a woman's job. And a man's looking in and saying 'Do you know, I'd actually like to do that. I'd like to help do that. But then I wouldn't be a man, would I?' You know? You know yourself that you want to do these things. But your job is to be a man's man. And I think that's wrong. Badboy

Introduction

This final findings chapter focuses on how the fathers in this study conceptualised and felt about their involvement in literacy learning care work in their families. It revealed the men's experience of close engagement in their children's learning.

The chapter opens with the men's recollections of their parents' educational experience and their own experience of family learning support. These conversations trace the intergenerational relationship between families from working-class communities and the education system. They emerged as mostly harmful encounters between children and one of the primary institutions of the state, the legacy of which carried through to the present day. The men's learning identities had been intimately affected by the past as was the learning care work they did with children and in particular their relationship with school literacy work.

Reflections on literacy and family learning provide a context for the discussion of the evidence of what men actually do with their children, their 'caring for' language and literacy work. The considerable reciprocal benefits of men's involvement with this work

are outlined. The chapter concludes with findings relating to the challenges for men in taking on the role of family literacy learning careworker. Here the intersection of the construction of masculinity and the demands of family literacy learning care work are exposed.

Shaping literacy

Family

Recollections of their parents' efforts to support the men in their language and literacy development revealed stories of fathers and mothers who left school at a young age without their educational needs being met. *'Times were different'*, there was no expectation that children from working-class communities in Ireland or indeed Morocco would be well educated. The majority of the men's parents left school at the age of twelve to go directly into employment or in the case of women into family care work.

> She had to leave school early to look after her mother who wasn't well at the time so she lost out on a lot of education herself. *Messi*

The two Moroccan men, Azziz and Najibcassa, told me that there were no schools for their parents to go to and therefore no expectation that they would be able to support them with their learning.

> So my parents doesn't have a chance to do this, you know. *Azziz*
>
> We can't blame our parents because our parents don't been to school. Before like my father he was born in 1938, no schools. *Najibcassa*

In reflecting on their parents' experience of education men shared stories that illustrated the harmful experiences of children from working-class communities whilst in the care of the education system. The majority of their parents had been failed by the education

system and had left school with their literacy needs unmet. Prefiguring the research

participants' experience, many of their parents had shared with them stories of physical

and emotional abuse whilst in the care of the education system.

> Jerry: I heard me Da say back then that the teachers didn't care. He couldn't read or write and they never showed him.
>
> Damian: So they failed him. That's the way I think about it. My Da, he told me he left school when he was 14. He has said it before - back then it was a different time...
>
> Ann: Yeah?
>
> Damian: He said like you never had any of your Leaving Cert or Junior Cert or anything like that. He said if you wanted to walk out you walked out. They'd go on about that cane or whatever they used to get hit with. So he said like if you were getting hit with that, why would you want to be in school? And my mother told me they would get hit with the whip….they'd put their hands on the radiator so it would numb their hand if they took the whip out. The hand would be already numb from the heat of the radiator, so it wouldn't hurt them.
>
> *Transcript group 4*

Eleven of the 20 men (fifty-five per cent) told me that they had no memories of their

parents being able to help them with their schoolwork.

> My Ma wasn't educated like. My Ma, I just done me own thing in school. She left when she was twelve. She had to go out and get a job. *Andy*

Damian's father had hidden his literacy difficulties from him all of his life. When he was

small his father pushed him away when he had homework to do. It was not until Damian

was in his twenties that his mother told him that his father could not read or write.

> When we were younger we didn't have a clue that he couldn't read or write like. When we were doing our homework and we'd say 'Can you help us? He left school when he was 14. They used to get battered…..I'd never say it to him because it'd probably hurt him for me to say it. But I have thought about it like. *Damian*

Damian's mother had been badly beaten in school and had left when she was twelve.

Jerry's mother and father had also left school when they were in their early teens.

Jerry: I think cause I found it so hard in school, and when I'd get home me Da'd always be at work and me Ma would be tryin' to help me with the homework and she was desperate at spellin' and at maths and I don't know if it kind of, did it come from me mother that I'd have found it hard like? Do you know is it in your genes like? Do you know what I mean? Like alcohol is in your genes?

Damian: I have thought about that too, my father couldn't read or write, probably it was the teachers didn't care and it took me a long time to learn to read and I used to think in my head did I get that off me Da?

Jerry: Yeah I used to think I got it off me Ma as well you know?

Transcript group 4

Highlighting the institutional power and status of the education system in their parents' day, and despite often brutal experiences in school the men spoke of their parents respect for teachers and schools.

I think that always struck me with me Mam especially, if anybody was a professional she had respect for them, whatever they said was the way it should be done, doctors or teachers. *George*

Teacher's judgment was to be trusted. If teachers punished children, there must have been good reason for such actions.

Whilst 11 men spoke of having no memories of support from parents, George spoke of parents who had passed on a love of books and reading to him.

I don't really remember him sittin' down with me but he always encouraged me to read. The two of them did. They were great readers, there was always books in the house. *George*

Rory described a father who had the leisure time to read, whilst his mother cared for his many siblings.

He read an awful lot of books in his life. He always had books. He used to buy the evening paper religiously and read it from cover to cover. He always had library books.

I mean it was only when he died I realised how many books, he had a wall full of books. My Mam didn't have time [*to read*]. There were ten kids! *Rory*

Mothers had no such leisure time. They worked in the home yet this work was not viewed as real work as it did not provide any direct monetary contribution to families. Seven of the men (forty-seven per cent) spoke of the support they got from their mothers. In line with traditional gender norms of the time, it was mothers who were at-home ensuring that homework was completed and it was mothers who encouraged often unheeding sons to stay in school.

> I regret it. I did this [*left school*]for money. I start to like money. My Mother she told me, 'Don't go to work. Stay'. Looking back…what I regret is my mother. She was following after me, 'Get back, get back'. But I never returned, you know. *Azziz*

In the men's narratives their mothers were spoken of as protectors, as intermediaries between the education system and with strict fathers. Mother's role was described in highly traditional and gendered terms. Women were the homemakers. Despite their many care responsibilities they took the time to sit with children. Their fathers worked long hours and had no time for learning care work, although they did have the leisure time to pursue sports and to socialise. It was mothers who supported and encouraged sons' learning activities. Many of the men's mothers had been removed from school at a young age to do care work for ailing relatives or younger siblings. Despite having few literacy skills themselves, mothers did their 'best'. They made sure that young children were prepared for school in the mornings, that homework was completed.

> My dad used to pick me up from school occasionally, but he was never in my school. My Mam would have dealt with that sort of thing. *George*
>
> It was the mothers' who would do that sort of thing. *Roy*

Education

The chapter on the findings about masculinities illuminated the impact on the men's young subjectivities of often brutalising school regimes. For many the confidence, so fundamental to being able to learn, was eroded. Others spoke of the long lasting effect of the disrespect and harm they had suffered at the hands of the education system. Having acquired a scant share of educational capital themselves, their parents were for the most part unable to practically support them when they were in school. Despite their experiences of harm whilst in the care of the education system, the majority of the men believed in the transformative power of education. This was evidenced in the previous chapter where the men spoke of the hopes they held for their children's futures. Education was viewed as a social good, something that would provide greater life choices for their children. The data that follow narrows the focus of the previous chapter on the schools role in shaping their young masculinities to reflections on the role of education in shaping attitudes towards learning.

Messi had hated school. He was put sitting in the back of the class and felt ignored by teachers. He was *'learnin' nothin''*. He reasoned that he would not be missed by the school and was absent for a full year. During that time he regularly intercepted school letters and when his luck finally ran out he was brought before the local court and was sent to what he described as a *'special school'*. Here, he recalled that he had plenty of attention from teachers. He felt recognised and cared for. Education became a different experience for him for a short while. He found he could learn when given the support and stimulation he needed and he began to develop his literacy skills. He was subsequently

moved to a technical college where he felt invisible again. Messi left school when he was 13 with what he described as *'the basics'*.

> I wouldn't say I am the best reader or writer in the world, but I got the basics. I can sit and read a book or sit and read a paper. *Messi*

Although the system had treated him poorly, Messi maintained a belief in the value of education, it was '*the biggest thing'*.

The themes raised by Messi recur in many of the men's narratives. Much of the data highlighted the absence of care and the prevalence of harm in the learning experiences of the men.

> I found it hard to learn. They didn't care. They just left you in the corner. That was back in the eighties. I left in '92 I think. I just couldn't wait to get out of school I left when I was 15.…. I know I once ran away from school. What happened? Why did I do that? I got a clatter off the teacher and I ran away from school. I ran home. And my Ma went down and went mad and it was alright for a while. I was mad. I just didn't care. *Jerry*

> The vice principal had me sitting outside his office for six months at a desk like this and he wouldn't give me any work to do. I wasn't allowed into the class. It was just …back then that's the way it was. *John S.*

> Well I shouldn't probably be able to probably sit here in front of many people and have even a conversation [*following a beating by a teacher*]. Never mind trying to have a civil conversation…and I know that myself. And that's what I like about myself. *Batman*

Echoing Messi's brief experience of education as positive, seven of the 15 men (forty-seven per cent) who took part in the one-to-one interviews spoke of teachers who had made small, yet important, differences in their school lives. These narratives revealed instances of the impact of learning care by individual teachers. Damian spoke of a teacher who encouraged him; Roy told of a teacher who had taken the time to tell stories to his class; Johnny Cash had a brief experience of feeling he could learn because one teacher was 'nice' to him.

I learned a bit because he wasn't…he was nice. He wasn't rough, you know? It's amazing, that's all you have to be, nice to people. *Johnny Cash*

Albert told of a volunteer teacher who visited the institution where he lived to give extra tuition to the children who lived there. It was the first time Albert experienced any kind of learning care and he remembers it in terms of 'luck'. Before this his learning had involved much physical punishment.

We were lucky to have that….if we couldn't understand something it was easy to ask him. He was sound like….he was a very patient man. *Albert*

For Badboy the intervention of a supportive teacher provided the only good memory he had of his school days. It showed him he could learn despite the hard and hurtful times he was facing in his home life. These included an abusive father, a period of homelessness with his mother, the witnessing of sexual abuse and personal experience of physical abuse at a young age. Badboy highlighted the hierarchy of classroom life where some children were valued more than others.

I was down the peckin' line in the class. I couldn't read or write. They tried to teach me and I tried to read out a few things in class. There was a handful of us that struggled. Just couldn't learn as quick as the others. We went to this class with a teacher and he gave us his time to learn us like to read and write. I learned then how to read and write with the help of yer man. The Principal of the school says 'Look he's after comin' on so much'….in sixth class this was. They gave me an all-inclusive two weeks in Butlins for me and my mother. I'll never forget that. It was a big thing. Me Mam she even says to me still to this day 'Do you remember that? You got that holiday up to Butlins and all-inclusive for two weeks. We stayed in the chalet an' all. You won that from school' she says 'I'll never forget that'. I think it was because I wasn't willin' to learn before cause I had so many trials and tribulations going on at the time. It wasn't me priority. *Badboy*

Here Badboy, describes an internalised pathology (see also Reay, 2001), where he blames himself for not learning, framing it as his unwillingness to do so rather than locating the failure in the structures of education. He noted his inability to keep up with the other

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students in his class who learned quickly and who were already positioned up the '*peckin'*

line' from him. The education system put him in his place and left him with a legacy of

educational failure. Stories of such levels of disrespect for young working-class boys were

woven throughout the data. Some boys recognised and resisted such disrespect early on

(see also Connell, 1995, Reay, 2002). Others had no expectations that they would be

treated any differently, '*that's the way it was*', there was little point in fighting against

such a seemingly monolithic and abusive structure. Reflecting back on their educational

experiences as young boys, many of the men spoke of neglect, of being made to feel

invisible and worthless. The experiences of education and learning of these children from

working-class communities was one of losing any sense of themselves as valuable human

beings.

The challenges of the wider affective, social, and economic context had a profound impact

on the educational experience and aspirations of other research participants. George

spoke of education '*going out the window*' after his father died when he was fifteen.

Jack's father abandoned the family when he was a young boy and his mother became the

breadwinner alongside her already existing role as care-giver.

> I was a good student. I was good at sport, great at sport, art, sums, and English. It was
> good, learning. I think I started messing then [*when his Dad left*], getting into trouble....I
> had never had a problem doing my homework. Well then cause she [*his Mam*] was on her
> own it was kind of hard. She was out working so we got up for school, we got dressed and
> we went. She'd be working so we'd have the keys. She'd leave something there for us to
> eat and then I'd just change and go out and play and then when she came in she'd put on
> the dinner and I'd wait for her to do the homework. *Jack*

Jack's recollections further illustrate the lack of respect and care experienced by children

from working-class communities. Like George, he had been enjoying and progressing in his

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learning yet was overlooked by the system at a time of great need. Jack left school to begin his working life in the then booming construction industry the summer after his father abandoned the family

Community

In a context where school was often a punishing place to be, where the need for young men to contribute to family finances was a necessity and where a socially constructed masculine drive to be independent was desirable, educational qualifications seemed irrelevant. Many of these young boys had internalised the message that school was not for them.

> I would have been street-wise growing up in the flats. I was always kinda fast. I could read and write when I was in school. Coming to literacy, I educated myself and I just got better when I went to work myself. I went to work when I was twelve as soon as I got out of school. I was gone! *Johnny the Keg*

> Some people, eight years old they leave. They don't want school. I know a lot of people they never been to school....we don't think about this [*learning*] because we think only about money, you see? I know how to read little bit, you know? But we still need to go to work. *Najibcassa*

> Look at, I never came up with books or anythin' like that. If I did then I would have given them [*children*] books like that chap. But I wasn't reared up like that. I say to my kid it wasn't my fault I left school at twelve. I just seen me Da goin' up the road with the horse and cart and I said 'There's your school bag. I'm gone!' Cause I was gettin' nowhere. It wasn't for me. That was me out the door, do you get me? *Jake*

Furthermore, within the men's social and cultural context education was not promoted as of relevance in the families or the communities in which they grew up. Education was viewed as a luxury, something that was available to other more privileged groups in society.

> We were never told that education was good for you. That education was good for your life. You could achieve things with a good education. *Rory*

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> I'd never heard about it [*college*] in my house. You'd never hear my Ma or Da going on about it. *Damian*

Whilst Damian may never have considered or even heard about the possibility of going to college, he and his partner are consciously modelling something different for their daughter. This marks a cultural shift in working-class communities. The fathers of the men in this study had no such ambitions for their children. As evidenced in the hopes of the fathers in the last chapter families in this research are consciously changing the discourse about the rights of working-class children to access third level education. They optimisticaly envisage a future time when college participation will be *'second nature'* to children from working-class communities, where they expect their children will feel like fish in water (Bourdieu, 1990).

> Education is the way. She's [*daughter*] said it to me once or twice, and her Ma. 'All yous ever do is study, study, study. You don't have time for me', and we're like 'We do!'. 'I'm just sick of this, all I hear is about college and college and college. And Mammy has to do this and you have to do that'. So I suppose when she's older, if she does decide to go to college at 17, it'll be second nature to her. Because she would have heard me talk about it, her talkin' about it, her auntie talkin' about it…all of them talkin' of going to college and doing this course and that course. So when she's older it will be second nature. *Damian*

Literacy and family learning: research participants' reflections

Literacy

Initial brainstorms with the groups revealed that the term 'family literacy' did not hold any meaning for the research participants. However, an interrogation of the word 'literacy' produced many responses. Initially these related to the secretarial or functional aspects of literacy: reading, writing, spelling and maths.

> Ann: So what is literacy anyway?
> Damian: Readin'.

Jerry: Readin', writin'. Spellin's.

Damian: Speakin' properly and grammar like. Fine motor skills, I learned that from the little one, cause at the moment she's having problems with that but…what did they say she was? ADHD? Like in later life its important, I'm in my twenties now and when I was younger I didn't care. But its' about normal things, like being able to sit in a chair and read a book and getting' a job and stuff like that. And homework

Jerry: Yeah, being able to help kids with their homework. Literacy, you need it for life, you do!

Damian: Yeah. Fillin' out a form or reading the back of a cereal box.

Transcript group 4

Whilst initial responses to the meaning of literacy were most often associated with traditional school-based skills, following some reflection these meanings were greatly expanded. Messi, like Jerry related literacy to the quality of existence itself. Without literacy one was useless.

You need them skills, readin' and writin'. They're your basics. If you can't read and write and you get older you are no use to you at all…readin' and writin' is your basics. *Messi*

For others, the word 'literacy' was intimidating. It was closely associated with being what Roy defined as *'a high falutin' thing'*. The word also tapped into traumatic and embodied school memories of pain and fear. It awoke recollections of being battered and humiliated and surfaced internalised feelings of failure. Some associated literacy, with being called deeply affecting and life impacting names such as *'dunce', 'dummy'* and *'stupid'* during their formative years. The word conjured up feelings of abandonment, isolation and anxiety and pulled to the surface harrowing recollections of brutal school experiences. Yet, in further discussions, literacy was also defined by the men as essential for a fulfilling life. Literacy opened up opportunities. It held promise for meaningful employment and it was described as having the potential for self-transformation. On reflection, literacy was not viewed as one fixed thing, by the men, rather it was described as dynamic and fluid.

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They spoke of literacies implicated in: communication, relationship building, new technologies and playing games. Literacy was something that gave access to *'the whole world'*, something that was *'everything'*. For Albert it was about *'normal things'*. It was associated with relaxation, with sitting in a chair, reading a book.

As in NLS, different literacies were identified by the men as being needed for diverse communities. Country children needed different types of literacies to city children. Preparing children to be street-wise was for many of the fathers equally important to supporting children with isolated language and literacy development and schoolwork. The men prioritised their children's safety over and above their formal educational success, not a choice middle-class parents had to make.

> It's maybe harder for them [*boys*] to show their feelings here though. I think it really depends on what area you live in. Like it's harder for inner-city kids than it would be for well-healed kids. They seem to get along better. *Messi*

Being school smart was one thing but being street smart was a matter of survival. It was *'the best education'*. Knowing how to read and write did not keep you safe and it did not stop someone from being bullied or hurt. As discussed in the previous chapter local streets were viewed as dangerous places. Fathers worried about supporting children to deal with bullying, with coercion, with keeping themselves safe in relation to drug culture.

Family learning

During the workshops the term 'family learning' was introduced and this evoked more immediate responses than 'family literacy'.

> Batman: It's learning together.
>
> Badboy: Improving on being a parent. Making up for lost time…..making sure your kids reach the potential that you didn't.

Azziz: To learn, to be teaching your children as well.

Batman: Well we want to know what we're doin' with our kids when we're doin' it. If a kid comes and asks you a question and you don't know the answer, you know you like to be able to give them the answer. Or show them how to get an answer.

John Smith: Helping!

Najibcassa: Homework.

Badboy: Being a responsible parent. Even being a role model. Learning coping skills.

Najibcassa: Playing!

Batman: It's fun!

Transcript group 3

Family learning fitted with constructions of capable and responsible fatherhood, where men could answer children's questions and ensure that their potential was fully supported. Some research participants spoke of their return to adult education as being part of their efforts to do this learning care work. It was a deliberative strategy to support children not only in the present but also into the future during their expected transition to more difficult work in secondary school. Their participation in the research, was also viewed as part of their efforts to support children's learning. Being involved in education as adults gave the men added authority, confidence and status in their roles as dads. For Jerry his return to education was *'about bettering my life'*. He dreamed of having his life *'sorted'* by the age of forty. He would get his qualifications, a good job that would allow him to *'have a few quid to throw around, go for nice holidays.'* Batman was proud of his return to education, he boasted to his children's friends about it and wanted them to see the value he placed in learning and education.

I tell everybody! Especially when I'm coming into the garden and their mates are all there and they say to me 'Where are you after being?,' 'I was in college' [*proudly*]. *Batman*

Children's education

The men spoke of the marked difference between their experience of the education system and that of their children. Fathers proudly described confident children who loved school, children who were winning prizes for attendance and application. As far as the men were concerned schools were different now. They were friendlier places for parents and students. There was less of a divide between parents and teachers than in the past. Parents could be more involved in school life and could even lighten the work load of teachers through their participation in shared reading programmes and a variety of other school based activities. Teachers were described as *'a lot nicer now'*. They cared more about children.

> They [*teachers*] get on with the kids and they're real nice. Ben would come home with the best kid of the month. You want to see the mountain of those he has, like loads of times! Teachers love him in the school. Really, really get on great with them. I don't think we ever got a bad report about him and Katy is top of the class now – 24/7! *Andy*
>
> It's different now. I think the kids and teachers now are brilliant because they are getting more looked after now. *Messi*
>
> I think it's better in a way that school isn't so rigid. It's more of a fun place to go, you know? Parents were only in the school before when there was a problem with a child. Before there was a barrier, us and them. *George*
>
> Now there's school plays and all other stuff you can be part of, you can be more involved. I think there's more opportunities for parents. And schools too! Encouraging parents to come in an odd day to see how the kids are gettin' on and to help relieve the pressure off the teachers. It can be a good thing. *Roy*

Gendered literacy identities

It was noticeable in the data that the fathers spoke more about sons than daughters. Boys and girls were presented with stereotypically gendered learning identities. Boys were depicted as being eager to leave school, as more likely to get into trouble on the streets than girls and as being more susceptible to the lure of gang life.

Comparing the data about the men's gendered observations provided insight into persistent stereotypical views of girls as interested and boys as disinterested in literacies. Daughters, were described as doing well in school. Girls were '*top of the class'*, they were winning prizes for attendance and participation and generally daughters were described as giving less trouble than sons. Whilst technology distracted them, girls were still reading books and were enjoying school. Girls were spoken of as clever. Aunties and grannies were buying books for girls for birthdays and Christmas.

Fathers spoke about their sons' desire to leave school early and like their own young selves, many wanted to be free to earn money, to be autonomous.

> But you'll always have one of your kids sayin', obviously not the girls, probably the boys sayin' 'Da, I'm leavin' school in third year.' *Johnny the Keg*

Many of their younger sons enjoyed being read to and read books themselves for pleasure and to '*fit in'* with what was going on around them in their families.

> He likes art. He's nine. He loves reading. He sees probably Sue reading a book, or me reading a magazine or a paper and he grabs something and reads it. You know what I mean?....Just to fit in kinda thing. He's a very intelligent child. *Jack*

Once hormones were activated and an interest in girls began, books and reading were left aside by boys and reading was no longer cool.

> With Jack I read to him at bedtime from when he was able to understand up until eight or nine. The same with him [*younger son*], but he would be more liable to pick up a book than Jack would. I think Jack is just goin' through that age when they are getting' muscles, smellin' themselves [*laughter*}. *George*
>
> I was just sayin' to George there. I've lads of 14 and 16. Goin' around that age and they wouldn't pick up a book or read. They wouldn't even pick up a newspaper. Boys can be hard on one another and they see them pickin' up a book, they see them as bein' soft. They don't see readin' a book as normal. As George said they could be padded off as being cissy. They just tease all the time, especially around here. *Messi*

As boys reached puberty, reading was not a '*normal*' occupation for them. It was deviant and for some, being seen to read in public spaces, might even be considered as risky behaviour.

> I'm thinkin' of a gang of boys walkin' by and then seein' a boy sittin' down readin' a book. I'm sure there would be somethin' said to him. Yeah. It would probably knock him back a bit in his confidence….he might not pick up a book again! *Jack*

There was much evidence in the data that younger boys are reading to themselves but in the private space of their homes. Boys were reading comics, adventure books, nature stories and science fiction.

> Damian likes reading and it depends, he'd be more reading a factual book like about the earth. He's big into volcanoes. *Rory*

One of Albert's photos shows his nine-year-old son posing on a kitchen chair in the midst of kitchen clutter. He was dressed in a green tracksuit and trainers. The young boy was holding *'Beast Quest'* in his hand and focusing all of his attention on the book. His legs were wrapped around the chair legs, he leaned forward, towards the book. Behind him, washing was piled on another chair and, to the left of the photograph a teapot and litre of milk sat on the kitchen counter. The back door was open to the left of the shot and a large velux window was overhead illuminating Albert's son.

> That was him actually readin' that book. He's readin' it for about two weeks. He reads about ten pages every night before he goes to bed. The book is a quest, adventures. That's kind of a favourite one. You wouldn't see him pickin' up a book and just sittin' on his own. He wouldn't do that. Maybe he would do it in bed. He has shelves of books in his bedroom. *Albert*

Albert had recently noticed the beginnings of a move away from an interest in reading from his son. Like George's son he was on the cusp of puberty, an age when the men believed boys' interest in reading dropped away.

Many of the fathers identified boys consuming interest in digital technologies as impacting on their reading patterns.

> The way I see it Ann is, it's the same with my boys. It's that it's just natural to them now, no reading. They're just going around on phones. The boys are seen as soft when they are readin' books and tha'. It just has to be broken, but how do you do it? *Messi*

Family literacy learning care work

Fathers' caring for family literacy learning

Fathers had a diversity of chosen practices in relation to their role in supporting children's language and literacy development. Rory, Jack, Messi, Albert, Pado, Andy, George, Batman and Najibcassa all remembered reading to their children when they were small but spoke of the sporadic nature of such practice due to the demands of their work. Like their breadwinning fathers before them, these men had left houses early in the morning. They returned late in the evening after their partners had finished homework with children and put them to bed. As a result of the economic crisis and ensuing unemployment these patterns had been disrupted. In the context of school literacy thirteen of the fifteen fathers (eighty per cent) who took part in the one-to-one interviews were involved in school homework whilst also supporting children in the broader context of family learning.

> Ah, yeah. Well, I've to drop them to school and now I collect them....I'm there to do their homework with them. Whereas when I was working I was going out the door seven in the morning. I didn't see them. When I got home they were nearly asleep, ready to go to bed. I got to see them for five minutes, you know. *John Smith*

In the past and in most cases the men's partners had done the broader learning care work including the maintenance of the relationship with teachers. This was, Roy, Jake and Samson believed, the mother's job. The impact of the economic crisis had changed much of these practices as men's unemployment caused a recalibration of gendered roles. Many fathers viewed these changes as positive advancements over previous times when fathers were not seen in schools unless there was a discipline issue to be dealt with.

> I've noticed that now with the schools they're trying to get the fathers more involved. The Principal said it to me: 'We'd like you to come too.' They're trying to get the fathers more involved. I suppose just things are changing now. Because I know when I was growing up my mother would usually go to the meetings. *Damian*

These changes were welcome in the eyes of the men and more equal relationships between parents and school staff were indicated.

> I always felt you had to go to school, you had to have your homework done, you had to listen to the teacher. It seems to have totally eased up. Parents were only in the school before when there was a problem with a child. Before there was a barrier, us and them. *George*

The majority of fathers (eighty per cent) were now involved, to some extent, in hands-on support of their children's school literacy.

Table 4: Fathers' participation in school literacy

Opt out of support	Share responsibility	Helping	Doing the majority	Full responsibility
Jack**/** Johnny Cash**/** Roy	George	Jerry/ Andy/ John S./ Damian/ Najibcassa/Badboy	Batman/ Azziz	Rory/ Messi/ Albert

Three of the men spoke of being solely responsible for this learning care work as two of their partners did not have the literacy skills needed. One father did not trust his partner to maintain his standards. Two fathers spoke of doing the majority of this work, one of whom did not believe his wife would do it properly. Six spoke of *'helpin' out'*, this was described as helping their partners when they got stuck or were too busy. One father described shared responsibility with his partner. Three fathers opted out of school support work due to their own lack of confidence in literacy skills. If they did not do hands on support in the context of school based literacy support they found other ways to support their children. These included conscious practices such as: encouragement, confidence building, motivational strategies, drawing, creative activities. During the photo workshops the fathers shared strategies that they had found to help their children become confident, self-directed learners. Messi believed in the importance of a structured approach to supporting children's homework. Being able to work nights freed him to spend time with his children during the day. Following their return from school the drill was homework, a short fun-time break and then homework completion.

> I think you need structure, especially with a big family. If you let them run wild you'd be overrun. It's hard now. *Messi*

Similarly, Batman had worked out support structures with his ex-partner. This allowed him to maintain and develop his relationship with his children, support their school literacy whilst simultaneously supporting his ex-partner's participation in the workforce.

> My ex, I go up and watch me kids let's say. She works at night so I go up and do the kids their dinner. Now I have me own place but what I am saying is I do the homework with them in the kitchen while I am doin' the dinner and I do it with three of the kids. Me grandchild, and me two youngest. Every night. *Batman*

Strategies to nurture language and literacy emerged from the men's discussions of their photographs. These included active participation in children's school lives, managing children's emotional needs when it came to doing difficult or challenging work and developing motivational reward systems. Fathers spoke of accompanying children to libraries and bookstores to encourage reading, directing children's interests towards educational television programmes and spending close-up time with children, reading bedtime stories. Like the mothers in Reay's study (1998) these dads were marshaling motivation, encouraging children in their schoolwork and supporting them to develop feelings of confidence and enthusiasm for education even in a context where their own experiences of education had been harmful.

The younger fathers spoke of support for babies and young children as unproblematic. They told of the confidence they felt about this early learning care work. Fathers were happy to sit on the floor and play with babies, to read to them and to tell them stories. Jerry often sang to his baby girl believing it helped her to develop her language skills. Others had been reading to children from the time they were young babies.

> English, I'm great at it! I've always read books with them now. I can read anything like. I'd always sit down and read books with them. I did that. You'd hear them 'Da will you read this to me?' Always from day one! *Andy*

Albert had begun reading stories to his son when he first noticed how lonely he was going to bed on his own at night.

> I started to read to him when he was about two. It was like, I felt bad like bringing him up to bed and dumpin' him there, sayin' good night son. *Albert*

He described how the practice which began out of a desire to comfort his son has endured and developed over the years. Albert now consciously used the time with his son to expand his comprehension and language development.

> We would read the story and he'd be able to tell me the story through the pictures but since school now he's kind of gotten into bigger books. He has no problem reading but I am asking him, 'What happened to the man on the last page?' Seein' is it registerin'? Is he learning from the book? Seein' if he knows who is who, what's what, who owns the ship and that. That's what I think, he's learning. I do that every night. It's like a religion. It's like a prayer you know and that's that until nine o' clock and he looks at his clock and he says, 'Right lights out. That's it!' *Albert*

Albert, who had previously recalled harmful memories of learning about fractions had developed a very different approach with his son,

> Maths was not my favourite subject in school. I've learned how to show him how easy it is to learn about quarters, I just pick up an apple and show him, I cut it and he knows now what a quarter of a quarter is. He knows all that now. I was just saying I don't know why the nuns didn't do something practical like that rather than going 'Get that into your head'. The nuns just expected you to know it and be brainy like. *Albert*

George read to both his sons from when they were babies. Reading to them was a deliberative approach to supporting their language and literacy development.

> I always read to our two at home. When they started school they were able to pick out words, they had some of it already which made it easier for them. I loved reading books to them, I got a lot out of that. It was kind of, particularly with Noel, we read all the Harry Potter books from the time he was about five and I really enjoyed that because it was a half an hour before he went to bed and we'd go up and we'd lie on our bed. I'd read to him and some of the times he fell asleep when I was reading to him. I always enjoyed that. Although we finished the last book and he turned around and he said, 'I never really liked those books'. Four years I was fekin' reading those books [*laughter*], 'Why didn't you tell me?' *George*

Dads spoke of their role in praising and encouraging children in order to build their confidence as able learners, and secure their identities as lifelong learners. As children grew older and school-work became more complex, anxieties, guilt and self-doubt began

to surface for the men. Much of these anxieties were rooted in ideals of masculinity which construe men as knowledgeable experts. Maths caused particular issues for fathers who had been taught a very different curriculum. They spoke of feeling foolish when teachers told them not to teach children 'old maths' for fear they would confuse children. Fathers wanted to be able to answer children's questions confidently, to display their knowledge, to retain their status in the eyes of sons and daughters.

> When he was small and doin' the babyish stuff I was fine with that. I'd be alright with it but I'd say with secondary now I'd struggle. I'd try my best now and say to him to try and do his best. *Jerry*

> I do tell Damian when it comes to homework and that if you are not able to do that you need to ask the teacher cause some of the stuff is done differently. Its nearly gobbledegook to me. Particularly maths. I'm stuck a lot with that and this is where the schools could help. Something new they could bring in for dads or mums so that we could help at home. *Rory*

Traces of men's complex relationship with their new identities as SAHFs are heard in descriptions of the learning care work they do with children. Hints of fathers default positions as authoritarian and as being in control of children's learning are evident. Attitudes, which view women in gendered terms as less able to be strict, as softer, emerge. These are at odds with the presentation of themselves as caring, equally involved fathers and highlight the tenacity of patriarchal masculinity that dictates that men must hold on to dominant positions.

> Well we take turns doing it. I would do it for a week and sometimes he'd say 'Ah Da I want me Ma'. Cause I'm a lot firmer than her and I know she's very soft. I know she'd be sayin' 'Give it to me' and he'd be runnin' amok on her, that's' why he likes his Ma doin' it so! *Albert*

Damian presented conflicting approaches. He showed a depth of understanding of his daughter Jane's mood and of the options open to him in terms of supporting her. On the

one hand he could give her time and space and on the other he could be annoyed with her, picking on her, shouting at her. Damian was aware that such prerogative was available to him as an adult man but he chose to enact a more caring masculinity.

> When Jane comes home from school and she's tired and she'd be goin' 'I can't do this, I can't do this'. Instead of gettin' annoyed with her I tell her to take her time or I tell her to take a few minutes. I know that at that stage she is not listening, she has no interest in it so I tell her to 'Go up to your room, take a break, watch the telly'. Then I'd bring her back. The way I look at it when she's in that state of being tired and feeling like she can't do it there's no point in sittin' there and pickin' on her. I wouldn't be getting annoyed or shoutin' at her. I'd just be tellin' her to take her time. It's all you can really do like. *Damian*

Damian acknowledged that his partner does homework most consistently with Jane. He sees his role as one of rescuer when she has had enough and when Jane needs to be controlled.

Mothers' caring for family literacy learning

Despite the role reversal in the men's families where women were now the primary earners and men were the caregivers, the majority (sixty-seven per cent) of the men, described their partners as the person most capable and involved in consistent and structured school learning support care of children. Women were admired for their capabilities in doing this work. They were described as *'full of brains'* as *'really intelligent'*, and *'really well up'*. Children got their brains from their mothers. Women continued, in most cases, to be the go-to person when homework challenges arose. Ideals of masculinity construct men as knowledgeable and in control, so far better for their status to hand over power to their wives and partners than be unmasked and rendered vulnerable in the eyes of their children.

Many of the men's partners were involved in learning programmes. Photographs showed mothers sitting at computers with children beside them, in others mothers are sitting with books piled high on kitchen tables. Najibcassa's wife had a Masters degree, Damian's partner was studying to be a childcare worker and was doing level five qualification. Rob's wife was *'really well educated, she was very good at teachin'*, and better able to support their sons in their education than he was. John Smith's partner did most of the homework with their children. He sometimes *'helped out'*. Azziz's wife had returned to college. Johnny Cash's wife had a *'great education'* so she was best equipped to support their children with homework. Andy's wife worked in the local homework club.

> She's really, really well up in here like. So the kids are…like me daughter is the cleverest in her class like. Ella [*wife*] used to always do it. Every night without fail, she'd sit down and read them books. She used to embed them into her brain. *Andy*

Jack's wife did most of the homework with their son. She worked in the local school since being made redundant and *'knows a lot'*. Since becoming unemployed he had lost confidence about spelling and writing.

> I find Sue does it all. Sue does help them a lot. I've kind of forgotten most of the things. My brain is like a sieve. I just forgot a lot of stuff and mmmm 'cause Sue is workin' in the school now she'd be in the classes. She'd be learning it all. That is a great benefit for our house. She'd know a lot more. I'd say she knows more now than ever before. *Jack*

One of Jack's photographs showed his partner sitting on the floor with their son who was doing his homework. He was lying down with his head resting in his hand, focused on writing in a workbook. His Mam was sitting slightly apart from him and she looked relaxed and at ease. A fire burned in the background and to the right of the fireplace there was a vase of flowers. The second photograph which Jack shared with the group was taken by his partner. It mirrored the other photo in some respects. Jack was sitting close to his son,

looking over his shoulder. In speaking of the two photos Jack noticed that he was in a more supervisory position to his son. He was looming over him. He commented that his son looked much more up tight and stiff in the photograph with him. In analysing the photo he described how tense it made him when his son asked him questions which he could not answer. During the final workshop Jack spoke about his new determination to be involved in this work with his son.

> If I'm honest the main thing I got out of it is I need to have more input into his homework, to my kids homework. *Jack*

Reciprocal benefits

The men spoke of the reciprocal benefits they got from their involvement with children in family learning care work. It supported the development of the emotional capital of individual fathers as well as children and was described as an enjoyable process.

> I enjoy doing it with him. I learn as well… It gives me confidence to say, 'Well I have the patience to sit down and I am doing this', and you know just do it. *Albert*

It was a way of giving children something that the men had, for the most part, not received in their own childhood and their efforts supported them in thinking of themselves as good fathers, helping them construct a different style of fatherhood to the ones they had inherited. Their children's success in school reflected well on them and they enjoyed this social approval.

George's photographs of family literacy included one of his nine-year-old son, David, and himself sitting closely together on the sofa. They were working on a crossword puzzle. His son was leaning into him. They both looked relaxed and were dressed in summer clothes, shorts and tee shirts. To the left of the boy, a copy of Roddy Doyle's *Rover Saves Christmas*

lay on the sofa. Around them, strewn across the floor was a pile of Lego and a Lego

instruction book. In the background were an array of board games stacked on shelving.

George's partner took the photograph. His son had been trying to persuade him to play

Lego with him before the photograph was taken. He had come across the book and had

taken a break and sat down to read it. George joined him on the sofa and began to do a

crossword with him. A discussion of the photograph by the men focused on what they

described as the rare sight of a boy relaxing with a book.

> Messi: That's a great contrast with what Rory showed earlier. His young fella sittin' down with a computer on his downtime and George's young fella here. His downtime is readin' a book. It's very rare that you can get them at that, but it's great now if you can get them at that.
>
> George: It's very calm!
>
> Rory: They have a great way of getting' the mind going I think, crosswords!
>
> Messi: It goes back to sittin' with them and doin' the homework with them. It actually teaches….it's somethin' you lost out on. You have the ability I suppose now to sit down and try to get somethin' that you lost in your own childhood as well. So it's a bonus!
>
> Rory: It's an interaction between father and son.
>
> Messi: A father teachin' a son!
>
> George: Actually there's times I can't move around but he's behind me.
>
> Rory: You could call it 'A cosy relationship'.
>
> *Transcript group 2*

The dads described a generational shift. They viewed supporting their children's literacy

and language development as an enjoyable and rewarding role. It was part of their

contribution to making their children's lives better than theirs.

> It's about making sure your kids reach the potential that you didn't. *Andy*

They highly valued literacy in its broadest sense. They spoke of its power to transform and

enhance lives. It opened up the world for their children and it gave them access to choices

which they had not had. As such, literacy was closely associated with power.

I get great enjoyment out of it. It's great. And then you see them with the education. They enjoy doing the education. You just have to sit and look at them learning and it's great. You can actually sit and see their minds working with half of them when they're doing it. *Messi*

You want her to be treated right. You want her to be equal to everyone else. You don't want her to be kept down by some man you know. And a lot of women were kept down. Some of them were beaten down. I want her educated so she can do whatever she wants. *Rory*

Doing learning work with children was described as a relational and transformatory process. There was a moral dimension to the father's involvement in this work. They thought of themselves as 'good' when they spent time doing this learning care work and were conscious of the positive influence they had on children's lives.

Azziz: Yeah well it will make you smart, won't it?

Badboy: A good human. A good person.

Azziz: It makes you a good person. If you are educated it would make you a very respectful person.

Badboy: A new perspective on life.

Ann: What do you mean by that?

Badboy: It makes you look at life in a different way at a different angle cause the way you used to be from the way you are. If you are learning and you're learning about literacy and you're doing things with your kids and all. So it's giving you that extra knowledge that you benefit from, you know? And they're benefitting from it as well. It works both ways, yeah.

Johnny Cash: It gives you the thirst for knowledge.

Azziz: We teach them many different things but we learn from the kids as well.

Badboy: Your kids upbringing is to do with you, the way you bring them up as well. If you bring them up bad they're goin' to turn out bad.

Azziz: Sorry when we talk about literacy we are talking about ourselves first. Because we are here as well. What we do. We study to get our selves better and to teach our children and we don't want our kids to be on the same..[*Interrupted*]

Badboy:….to have the same problems….[*Interrupted*]

Azziz: …track.

Transcript group 3

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Men wanted to feel well equipped and confident in supporting their children's literacy and language development, hence the return to adult education by twelve of the twenty men (sixty per cent) who contributed to the study. John Smith had completed a computer course when his daughter asked him to help her with Microsoft Word. His confidence soared when he was able to support her

> I thought, yeah, I can do that! There's no problem. I showed her how to do this, do that. It was great when me daughter asked me…if she'd asked me three months ago I wouldn't have known. They taught me and I was able to tell her everything! It was quality time with each other. *John Smith*

Badboy's photograph was taken when his son was having his weekly sleep over with him. His son was sitting on Badboy's bed. He was wearing a football jersey and looked confidently at the camera. In the background of the shot Badboy's portfolio of literacy work can be seen on the bed. He told me his son was surprised at the amount of work that was in the portfolio. '*It's hard for him to believe, you know? He thinks it's great. He supports me!'* Badboy knew that when he presented himself as interested in literacy and learning he was passing on an important message to his son. It was a deliberative strategy to convey to his son the value he placed in education. He acknowledged the importance of both parents' role in the promotion of family learning whilst also highlighting gender inequality.

> If they don't see that you have an interest in homework or what they're doing, they're not going to have any respect for it. You know? 'Only me Ma makes me do it, me Da doesn't care'. It's important that they learn from both sides. I think that's crucial. *Badboy*

Badboy, like the other fathers who had returned to education, equated his return with being a responsible father. In his role as father he had a transformed view of literacy and learning, one that benefited him and his son.

> It's a way of living now. It's to do with life. And one of the main things is it gives you confidence. You benefit from it…. I want that for him and I want it for myself. *Badboy*

Badboy believed that many in his peer group viewed care work, in whatever form, as women's work. He eloquently described a deep conflict for men between their desire to do care work and their fear that they will be seen by others doing woman's work (see also Connell, 1995). Individual men's emotional and caring selves were battling with ideals of masculinity which had been constructed to override and erase the desire for the close connection with children which learning care work brings.

> It's pride. They don't want other people seeing that they actually care about things that the mother does and that they want to….like their homework and stuff. Cleaning their room. Things like that. That's a woman's job. And a man's looking in and saying 'Do you know, I'd actually like to do that. I'd like to help do that. But then I wouldn't be a man, would I?' You know? You know yourself that you want to do these things. But your job is to be a man's man. And I think that's wrong. *Badboy*

Badboy described a 'habitus divided against itself' (Bourdieu, 1999, 511) where his masculine self struggled with his desire to be involved in 'women's work'.

Discussions which surrounded the showing of the photographs were filled with comments about the closeness of children to their fathers, of how happy, content and engaged children looked when they were involved in learning activities. Jerry's photo showed his fourteen-month old daughter sitting on the floor. In the foreground of the photo she was holding a blue book in her hands. It was so big she was resting it on her lap. Toys surrounded the little girl. The entire background of the photo was filled with an array of Sesame Street figures, giant Lego pieces, many dolls and some shiny plastic shapes. She looked intently at the book cover.

> Jerry: I get her hardback books because if I get the other books she just rips them, do you know what I mean? She gets the books and opens them and sits there and looks at all the pictures. I do read some of them to her but she doesn't understand, so I just explain with my own little story like…with the characters in it….she loves it. She'll sit there in my lap for a good 10 or 15 minutes. She gets bored then.

Ann: From looking at all those photographs, if you were to say one thing about family literacy what would it be?

Adam: She looks like a happy child…

Jerry: I'd say there's a lot of love there.

Transcript group 4

Najibcassa spoke of the pleasure he got from reading with his son. He was reading to improve his own English but it was in fact a deliberate strategy to encourage his son in his reading development. Talking with his son, playing with him, giving him his time all added to Najibcassa's enjoyment of their growing relationship. This relational work had led to a sense that *'Life is easy now'* for Najibcassa.

> If you listen to your kids, giving them more times, to play with him, to do homework with him, to be close to him, he's going to be more happy. *Najibcassa*

Family learning work was what Batman called *'family oriented'* work. It involved the whole family unit. This was highlighted in Messi's photograph of family literacy care work in action in his family. The photograph showed five of his ten children sitting around a kitchen table. They were sitting closely together their heads bent to their school books. It was homework time in their family and this was a learning support strategy which replicated his mother's approach to learning care work when he was young. Due to his long hours at work his father had never had the time to sit with him and his siblings and Messi was determined that he would do things differently with his own children. Over their heads the message *'This kitchen is seasoned with love'* was stenciled in fine calligraphy on the wall.

> It's just a regular thing after school in my house with everyone doing their homework together so they are all learnin' off one another. It's so busy…. You're goin' around each one of them helpin' them with their homeworks. See we had a big family as well. I had a lot of brothers and sisters and it was basically the same thing and we are all around the

same ages. So I remember me Ma used to do that with us. She'd have us around the table too doin' our homework and whatever. It's just always so busy! Like you really have to put effort into it. I thought it was great cause I was getting' a few hours with the kids you know? Even to get that hour or two, life is so busy now isn't it? It's too quick. Everything is in an instant. *Messi*

Messi viewed homework time as an opportunity to sit with his children, to support and motivate them and to hear about their lives.

It goes back to sittin' with them. Doin' the homework with them. It actually teaches you, it's goin' back to somethin' you lost out on. You have the ability to sit down and try and get somethin' that you lost in your childhood. It's a bonus! *Messi*

Andy whose father had left him when he was a young boy spoke of the great pleasure he got from supporting his children to learn. He equated learning care work with the essence of fatherhood. In contrast to the absence of good memories of his father he was trying to lay down loving recollections for his children through his presence and close involvement with them. He was resourcing his children's stores of emotional wellbeing, a role that in the past was most closely associated with women's work.

You get great feelings out of it, do you know what I mean? Like as I said again, it was never there for me. I used to say this is what being a father is like. This is what you are meant to do. You have to be there. You have to teach your kids what you know. Whatever you know. I get great feelings out of it like. Especially when they come home with, like Ben would come home with 'best kid of the month'. The benefits for the kids would be that they know that there is someone there for them. They're learning at home. They'd go into school and say, 'Oh, I read with me Da last night'! *Andy*

Challenges

It was clear from the data that the men were confident in their roles as learning care workers in terms of the broad concept of family learning. They were diligently and strategically preparing children for their life's journey and equipping them with confidence, with self-discipline and street wisdom. Despite their own early and damaging

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experiences within a careless education system the men were encouraging children about the value of education and many of the fathers were consciously role modeling literacy engagement. Fathers were involved in motivating children, in the practicalities of getting them ready and out to school in the mornings, they were structuring homework engagement, providing emotional support and encouragement and investing energies in resourcing their children's emotional wellbeing.

Significantly the men were articulating their love to their children and in this they were disrupting patterns of non-expressive masculinity that they had witnessed in their childhoods. This change was located in a transformed social and cultural context where there was more encouragement of the expression of affection in the public domain generally (see also Seidler, 2006). Other tenets of masculinity were more tenacious and difficult for the men to disrupt. In the first instance having unmet literacy needs carried much stigma for men. It signified vulnerability, a feeling which was intolerable for many. Jerry returned to education to work on his literacy skills. He was delighted to do so but he kept the real purpose of his return a secret.

> Actually I put status on Facebook. I says life is great. I says, 'Back in college.' I didn't say what I was doing down at college. I says, 'Back in college. Back in a new band that I love. Things are good, you know.' *Jerry*

Discussions about the challenges they faced in specifically doing school literacy learning care work with their children, whilst feeling ill equipped to do so, highlighted the damaging relationship between constructs of masculinity and fathers' involvement in family literacy learning care work.

> If you don't know how to do maths how are you supposed to help your child do maths? *John S.*

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Albert: If Cal [*son*] was to ask me something and I didn't know it I would be embarrassed, I'd be embarrassed to say I can't do a kids sum….

George: Not man enough maybe?

Messi: It's your image.

Albert: That would be the issue.

Transcript group 2

Drawing from his own experiences as a child whose father could not read or write, Damian captured something of a fathers' desire to maintain his status in the eyes of a child.

I'd hate for her to come up to me and for me to turn around and make up some excuse like 'I can't see that properly'. *Damian*

Many knew that they could rely for support on their mostly more literacy confident partners, if they could not help children with particular tasks. This added to women's workload and left men reliant on women, a construct which was paradoxical in terms of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity. Discussions about alternative support that they might access, such as involvement in family literacy programmes revealed that the majority of the fathers were adamant that such feminised spaces were not for them. The men spoke of the fears that might block such participation and these were wholly located in gendered anxieties about their masculinity being evaluated by both men and women.

I think men opening up in front of women that they don't even know, I don't think so! That would be one of my fears, I think. *Andy*

Batman worried that men would look at him and think he was a 'loser'. They would judge him. Women would be sympathetic but men would judge. Najibcassa worried that if there were women present in such courses that they would laugh at a man.

If he going to say something, these girls are going to laugh at him. *Najibcassa*

Jerry who had put the post on Facebook announcing his return to college had mixed feelings about fathers being involved in family literacy programmes. He believed that dads, like him (young), would have no problems participating although he suggested men might be disruptive in a group. Men, he suggested, would not want to reveal anything about themselves as fathers with feelings. He also thought that men would be too proud to show themselves as having to look for support to help their children. In line with ideals of masculinity which portray men as not needing any help, as inherently autonomous experts, fathers who were expected to control their children would not look for such help. They would not be involved in something which was seen as feminised (and therefore subordinate) work in the first place.

> Jerry: I'd say if it was a load of blokes they'd be just messin' and crackin' jokes, you know?
>
> Ann: Why do you think that?
>
> Damian: We're not goin' to sit there…[*interrupted*]
>
> Jerry: ….and talk about our feelings….[*interrupted*]
>
> Damian: ….I think a lot of men are like 'I'll do it myself! I don't need a course.' Too proud. Men are… women are stubborn but I think men are even more stubborn about things like that, do you know what I mean?
>
> Ann: Mmm…
>
> Jerry: 'No! You don't need to go on a course to learn your child! I don't need someone to tell me how to raise my child!' You know what I mean? There's loads of people like that! I suppose they would still have that idea that that's women's work. Maybe they don't want to be seen to be doing stuff like that…
>
> *Transcript group 4*

Roy also believed that men would be too fearful to work in groups.

> They're afraid to try somethin' different…I think it's the fear of showin' your emotions. I'd say that's probably it. Women will ask questions. I think it's their nature. Men won't ask. If you embrace it, it broadens your horizons and your mind and it takes the fear from…..[*pause*] I think it's the fear of showing your emotions that stops us. *Roy*

Fears were expressed about working in mixed groups by some of the dads. On the one hand being seen to be learning in the company of women might associate men too closely with being female themselves and open them up to public ridicule.

> It's that image thing as well. Goin' in you know? The image, walkin' through the door like. Bein' seen goin' in with women and then someone askin' them 'What's goin' on in there?' They'd be down the pub, they'd be gettin' slagged you know? 'In with all the aul' ones', you know? *Jack*

Men worried that it might suggest to other men that predatory intent lay behind participation, as suggested by Jack.

> It would be ok once an affair doesn't come out of it. *Jack*

For Andy the local construction of masculinity as macho is the greatest block men put in the way of their own development. He is clear that men need to let go of this image if they are to progress.

> I think a lot of them would fear it… a lot of people fear education. It must be the macho thing yeah? I don't want to know about that, I'm grand where I am, but they're not really. I think it's got a lot to do with where they grow up with being the macho man. I think it's hard to get them to sit in a group. …that's what it is, image, your image yeah. It's about droppin' it and just getting' over it, isn't it? Droppin' that image and sayin' 'Shut the fuck up!' *Andy*

Overcoming gendered fears

The men had many recommendations about what might help them in their family literacy learning care work with children. Suggestions were closely aligned to adult and community education practice and to a care-full learning environment. Highlighting the fragility and lived reality of feelings of powerlessness suggestions included: wanting to be treated with respect, wanting to be listened to, to be treated like an adult, to be encouraged and treated equally with no singling out.

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If nobody tells you, 'You can do it', you're not going to believe it yourself. *Damian*

Facilitators should preferably be from the local community as they would be most likely to understand and relate to the complexity of such settings. There was some criticism of well-educated and privileged outsiders dropping into communities without any real understandings of the issues faced by local people.

> There were women working with them here [*Young men*] but they didn't know anything about around here. They just got an education, came into one of the most deprived areas of Dublin and tried to work with mad young fellas and it just wouldn't happen. Like they just learned all these things in college and then they are comin' out onto the street. Fair play to them for tryin' to do it but I just don't believe in anyone who hasn't the experience. You have to have the experience before you do it. *Andy*

Men held differing views about whether groups should be 'mixed'. Some felt that they would not be able to relax in a group where there were women. They would worry about being judged, or being laughed at whilst others thought that mixed groups would be *superb* as it would allow for the building of mutual understanding.

> Badboy: I thing they [*learning groups*] should be mixed because you'll get both sides of the coin, you know? And the woman would explain her role, the man can explain his role. And when you're in a class with women and fathers you can get views and get different opinions from both.
>
> Ann: Mmm
>
> Badboy: I think that would be superb, wouldn't it? That would be the best way to get it out there…
>
> Ann: Yeah
>
> Badboy: And being a father and sayin' I'm doin' a class with a girl and she thought this and I thought that and she learned from what I had to say and I learned from what she had to say….I think that will be fantastic, you know?
>
> *Transcript group 3*

There was widespread acknowledgement that it was difficult to attract men into groups.

> Messi: I suppose if you offered men tickets to a Man United match you'd get them all in! It's one way of getting' them in. If you wave something in front of them. You have to put the carrot in front of them to get them in! Anything at all, it doesn't matter what it is.
>
> Jack: Yeah you would have to entice them.
>
> *Transcript group 2*

George shared with the men that his reason for participating in the research workshops, he was motivated by his son who appealed to his 'heart strings'. He positioned himself as different to other men in responding to this request from his son.

> Daniel looks at me, 'You have to!' It's the heart strings. I think you'd have to have some sort of enticement. I reckon a lot of men would say 'Ah no'. *George*

Jack and others in George's group focused on the affective wellbeing which men gained from working in groups. Echoing the experience of many women who worked at home, Messi alluded to the isolation which men felt when they were similarly positioned.

> Jack: Tea and biscuits are always important! [*Laughter*].
>
> Ann: What would you say men would get out of it?
>
> Messi: Well it's good. You are able to get out and sit with other friends.
>
> Albert: Yeah, mingle, socialise.
>
> Jack: Exactly. You are socialising, getting to know people.
>
> Messi: You could be at home sittin' in the house on your own.
>
> *Transcript group 2*

Activity based, short interventions were suggested as a way of supporting men to take their first steps in the direction of adult education. These included a range of activities for dads and their children; football, art and craft sessions, outings in the city and countryside, photography and games workshops. Such activities would be a means of building relationships between children and fathers, between fathers and between fathers and adult education facilitators. Based on these initial learning ventures, more focussed

programmes could then be developed through consultation with fathers about their needs. Reflecting on their experience of participating in the research many believed that once fathers began to work together that they would let go of their fears and that they could be encouraged to take part in further programmes. Men found that they had enjoyed working with one another and expressed sadness that the research was coming to an end.

> Albert: What am I going to do on me Wednesdays!
>
> George: I suppose it was interesting to hear other fathers talking about their experiences and listening to how they deal with their situations.
>
> Albert: We got to mingle like, socialise.
>
> Jack: You're socialising, getting to know people.
>
> Messi: Well you are able to get out and sit with other friends.
>
> Albert: One thing I would have got out of it would have been breaking my old routine like of having nothing to do basically and trying to find a course that you can do like. Its nice to know we are all the same underneath really, we all have problems at home and we all have things to learn and things to do and it would be nice if there was a bigger group of people because in bigger groups you learn bigger things, you know. More things.
>
> Messi: The way it is with us dads is that we are absorbing everything that comes at us and there's no one that actually sits down and asks us how we feel about this, like yourself is doing. Maybe there could be something on a regular basis?
>
> *Transcript group 2*

Evidence from this research indicates that introductory photovoice sessions with fathers might be a successful lure to support them through the adult education door.

There was no shortage of ideas for potential adult learning programmes. Suggestions included short courses such as cooking with children, coping with bullying, supporting maths development, skills for working with children with special learning needs and practical support with new curricular approaches.

> All I want to do is to be one step ahead so I can say 'Oh yeah son I can help you with that', you know what I mean? *Albert*

> I'd like a refresher course. To keep you on your toes like, maybe 'A dad's guide to homework with kids'. It could be a little book too. *Jack*

Fathers' thought that school premises would be best suited to these interventions as this would encourage their physical presence in children's schools. This would in turn show to their children the value they placed in education. Schools could also extend their communication strategies to fathers as many noted that traditional, but outmoded habits of communicating only with mothers remained the norm in children's schools.

Many spoke of the need for more general interventions for men in local communities, noting that there was much community provision for women but very little opportunities for men.

> People have realised that they need somethin' for men now because there is a lot of men sittin' around here on their own, doin' nothin'. They are just sittin' at home drinkin' which is doin' them no good and they probably need to be nurtured. Just taken by the hand and just coaxed out. I'd say 'We'll take you this far. It's up to you then and we are there if you want to take that next step. We're there to catch you but you've got to move.' *Roy*

Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings regarding research participants' relationship with family literacy learning care support work. It traced an intergenerational story of institutional disrespect for families from working-class communities. In reflecting on their parents' stories, and their own, the men recalled deeply affecting embodied experiences of systemic neglect and harm. These experiences had lasting impact on the men's learning identities and many left school without '*the basics'*. Interventions by teachers, which demonstrated care for their young selves, were vividly remembered. Such outstanding

moments provided a glimpse of what a more egalitarian education system might provide rather than one which depended on what Gheaus (2009, 63) terms 'brute luck'.

Despite many damaging experiences these men viewed education as something positive which had the possibility of transforming lives for the better. They contrasted the positive experiences their children were having in school with their own negative memories. A more egalitarian and caring educational system was described, one where teachers, school staff, mothers and fathers worked together to support children. This in turn was having a notable impact on their children's participation and success in local schools. Furthermore these more hopeful stories record a transformation in working-class families' expectations of education. Fathers recognised the limitations put on their own lives as a result of their unmet literacy needs. They valued education as a path to a better life for their children. They had no sense that their children would not take this path. Despite having few role models for how to do this work the men wanted to support their children along this journey. Significantly, they were prepared to step outside of their gendered dispositions to try out new subjectivities that included paradoxical presentations of masculinity.

The word 'literacy' evoked hurtful and sometimes shameful memories that were tangled up with school literacy, and as such something to be avoided. Fathers described diverse levels of involvement in the routine hands-on support of their children's language and literacy development. Men were most comfortable and fluent in speaking of their learning care work in the broader family learning context. Many were happy and confident to be responsible at the community level. They accompanied children to school, to sports activities and to local libraries and participated in parent teacher meetings and in school

activities. These men were now comfortable in presenting themselves as involved and caring fathers in the public space alongside their children. In these contexts, men were no longer fearful of the denigrating gaze of other men or women. Signifying additional change, this study found that many fathers were closely involved in hands-on literacy learning care work. Furthermore, Reay's (1998) three components of parental (i.e. mothers') involvement in education, practical, educational and emotional support work were all in evidence in the narratives of the fathers in this research.

Notable disruptions of gender norms were in evidence when the men spoke to one another, in affective terms, of the joy they got from the time they spent reading bedtime stories to children, supporting homework and language and literacy development in the private realm of the home. Fathers spoke happily of this time and they were keenly aware that their children were enjoying their attention. They were connecting with one another and deepening relationships.

Fathers expressed particular concern for their sons' literacy development. Boys learned early that literacy and its content and skills were out of keeping with dominant constructions of masculinity (see also Francis & Skelton, 2001; Scholes, 2013; Walkerdine, 1990). Some boys managed to overcome this limitation by reading in the privacy of their homes or reading on digital devices while others appeared to stop reading with the onset of puberty.

The data revealed that mothers continued to be consistently involved in routine school literacy support of children. Mothers were, for the most part, described as more able to do this work. They were portrayed as better educated and positioned as the 'natural'

experts in this area. While some fathers did all of this support work, many continued to define their role as *'helpin out'*. They described an ability to pick and choose roles and this ability to choose remains a significant expression of their continued power (see also Johansson & Klinth, 2008; Reay, 1998). Positioned alongside this power there were many glimpses of the men's feelings of powerlessness. This was most apparent in data relating to men's fears about needing support to do school homework with their children. Deeply held gendered anxieties revealed men who desired to be seen by other men as competent and in control of their social and emotional environment. Reflecting Connell's (1995) words 'Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval. It is other men who evaluate our performance' (*Ibid.* 128), many were fearful that they would be judged and ridiculed by other men and laughed at by women. These conversations highlighted the destructive and corrosive nature of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity.

In their ideas for attracting men to adult learning programmes deeply gendered and complex views of men and women emerged. Women's gaze was to be feared. The men inferred fragility in their desire not to be disrespected, overlooked or ignored. Men needed their hands held until they were ready to stand on their own feet and repeatedly described a vulnerability that was contradictory to patriarchal ideals of masculinity. Alongside these emotions, men were aware of their powerful position as role models to their children and concerned about maintaining status in their eyes.

Hopeful glimpses of men's growing understandings of the centrality of the affective domain are also in evidence in this data. Through the research process they developed a degree of comfort in speaking openly in the presence of other men. Some were happy to work with women to get to understand their perspective on life. Others recognised that

men were in trouble and were concerned for them while yet others implied that men would be happy to have opportunities to stop and reflect on their changing lives and to get to know their affective selves. Openness to such affective reflection is I believe indicative of the readiness of men from working-class communities to reflect on gender and offers possibilities in the field of adult education to develop responses to emerging needs.

Chapter 11

Summary & conclusions

The genders, far from being simple roles to be played at will, are inscribed in bodies and in a universe from which they derive their strength. (Bourdieu, 1998, 102)

Introduction

In the quote above, Bourdieu (1998) reminds us that collective and individual identities are inextricably connected to and influenced by what has gone before. He suggests that gender is inscribed in bodies. Whilst this research affirms the influence of what has gone before it has also revealed a different story, one which signifies agency in how masculinity is performed. The narratives of the men in this research suggest that they are tentatively involved in authoring their own scripts of masculinity in their new positionings as SAHFs.

Feminists also stress the importance of the accumulation of history in the shaping of both the sexual division of labour and the social and cultural production of gender inequality (hooks, 2004; Lynch et al 2009; Millett, 1970). Despite the historical weight of these constructs feminists, myself included, believe in the potential for transformation and the possibilities of individual and collective change towards a more gender just division of labour. This envisioned gender justice would be supported by gender equal social structures (Dowd, 2010; Fraser, 2013, hooks, 2004). Positioned in this context the stories of their young lives, shared by the men, traced intergenerational accounts of the shaping of their masculinities. Men looked back over their shoulders to view their families'

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experience of education and to catch a glimpse of the understandings of masculinity that they inherited from their parents. The creative photovoice research process supported the men to collectively reflect on their gender grooming and to puzzle out the influence of social structures on their present day performances of masculinity as SAHFs.

The primary research goal was to discover the relationship between ideals of masculinity, and fathers' experience of family literacy learning care work. A secondary concern of the study was to consult with fathers about their learning support needs from adult and community education. This final chapter begins by positioning the findings against the literature base laid down in the initial chapters. The literature relating to patriarchy, feminism and masculinities, fatherhood, family literacy learning and boys, men and literacy are all revisited. The chapter presents the conclusions about the study design and the findings of this four-year qualitative enquiry.

The analysis of the empirical findings draws on Reay's (2010) tripartite framework, *Temporality (History), Spatiality (Geography) and Relationality,* developed to examine links between social class and education. This, sometimes overlapping framework, is applied innovatively here to trace the relationship between masculinity and education. This innovation is one of many in this study, including the use of the dynamic photovoice methodology to enable the emergence of fathers' experiences of the relationship between masculinity and family literacy learning care work.

The construction of gendered identities is powerfully connected to place (Connell 1995; Rose, 1993) and an examination of the theme of place is used here to explore the impact on the working-class men in this study of their new positioning in community landscapes,

in the education system and in their private home places. Tuan (1999) stresses the importance of the emotional meaning that underpins our connection to place and the men's narratives are revealing of just such affectively rich connections. The disruptions in the men's relationships with themselves, their families and communities as a result of their transition from breadwinners to caregivers emerges from the analysis. Themes relating to temporality, spatiality and relationality are also woven throughout the men's suggestions for adult and community educations' role in advancing gender equality in family literacy and learning and these ideas alongside some concluding remarks draw the chapter (and the thesis) to a close.

Patriarchy

Discussions of gender oftentimes veil the cause of inequalities that have their primary root in patriarchy (Holter, 2005). Yet, Bourdieu (2001) reminds us that, through its accumulated history, patriarchy is felt in the here and now. It has seeped down through different eons touching and shaping the lives of generations of women and girls, men and boys, albeit in very different ways.

Populating spaces with gendered identities, patriarchy positioned men in the public and powerful sphere whilst women were allocated the private home place. This archetypal paradigm of control was strengthened through the creation of multiple structures to ensure male domination in the political, economic, social and cultural world and intersected with class, ethnicity and sexuality. 'Waves' of feminists have challenged these gendered structures and the androcentric view of the world which privileged male knowledge and culture, depicting women and the feminine as 'other' against the valorised

cultural norm of masculinity (De Beauvoir, 1989). This created hierarchical and often harmful divides between women and men, where even disadvantaged men persistently maintained the dominant and privileged position. This study examined the consequences of a disruption in the normative gendered order where recessionary times placed men in the home while women were in the workplace.

In his analysis of unequal adult education processes, Freire (1972) asserted that oppression dehumanises the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Accordingly, the harmful cost of maintaining patriarchal privilege has been emerging in discourse relating to a crisis in masculinity (Fineman, 2004; Hearn, 1999; Kimmel, 2013). It was memorably articulated by Badboy when he spoke of the tension between his desire to be a full time SAHF and societal expectations of him to be an invulnerable 'hard-man'. Ideals of patriarchal masculinity required of men that they turn away from their emotional and feeling selves and that they persisted in maintaining an invulnerable façade. The building blocks of this façade are laid down during the early years of childhood when boys are taught to deny their full humanity (hooks, 2004). Affirming the literature, the patriarchal messages which assert that 'boys don't cry', that boys 'toughen up' and that boys 'be a man' are in plentiful evidence in the men's narratives in this study. In shutting down their affective selves boys learned, through this patriarchal violence, to disconnect from those around them. Boys' male socialisation taught them to expel and revile the feminine from their developmental journey. In so doing it limited boys and later men's access to affective expression which is the foundation stone of relationship with the self and others (Jacupack et al, 2005). Such an affective fluency is developed in connection with others and forged through language and literacy with which some boys and men, like those in

this study, are held to have a problematic relationship (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Lynch & Feeley, 2009; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Renold, 2001). The many tendrilled root of this 'problematic' relationship for 'some boys' is further clarified when issues of class are examined alongside gender in relation to the education of boys from working-class communities (Reay, 2001, 2002).

Feminisms and masculinities

Feminism and feminist activism have been working over time and across many places towards greater gender justice (Mackay, 2015). Some significant advances towards women's equality have been achieved yet the work is not complete. Each wave of feminism broadened and enriched understandings of the nature and extent of women's oppression by patriarchy. Women's right to vote (Humm, 1992; Ward, 1983), their right to bodily autonomy (Millet, 1970; Steinem, 1984), to participate in the labour force (Fraser, 2013; hooks, 2004; Tong, 1989) and to a violence free existence (Dworkin, 1981) were some of the issues which engaged and continue to engage the diverse feminist movements. This list of gender inequalities is not to imply that there is one universal feminism that represents all women but rather suggests that a unifying cord of the abhorrence of patriarchal oppression connects feminists across their diversity (hooks, 2004). Oppression that is experienced by women is not the same the world over. It is multi-layered and complex and manifests differently over time and space (Salem, 2013). Women's realities are further intersected by gendered issues of ethnicity, poverty, ability and class that are woven together to make a many-layered blanket of oppression (Crenshaw, 2003; Salem, 2013).

Through a combination of feminist discourse, gay and lesbian studies and queer theory, the relational nature of gender came to light and with it the gendered construction of masculinity emerged from the shadows (Kimmel et al, 2005). Concurrent with the backlash against second wave feminism, a persuasive cultural representation of a growing crisis amongst men unfolded (Faludi, 1999). This ignited the mobilisation of activism and scholarship relating to the construct of masculinity. Opposing paradigms located the cause of the crisis amongst men differently: one blamed women and feminism whilst others identified the social construction of manhood within a patriarchal frame. One had as its focus the reassertion of men's power and efforts to reclaim patriarchal privilege (Bly, 1990; Kipnis, 1995) whilst the other desired gender equality and recognised the power differentials between women and men, and amongst men (Connell, 1983, 1995; Hearn, 2004; Kimmel, 2000).

Mirroring feminist discourse, there is a contested diversity of masculinities scholarship to help in elucidating the meaning of masculinity for men and women. For Connell (1995), masculinity is about a set of hierarchical gendered relations, one which has a particular idealised masculinity at the apex of a masculinity pyramid. This pattern of masculinity is constructed as white, heterosexual and successful in economic terms and essentialises the male care role as one of breadwinner. The impossible ideal is so narrowly envisioned that it locates the vast majority of men outside of this realm of power, leaving many feeling powerless and discontented (Connell, 2001; Faludi, 1999; Kimmel et al, 2005). Within this construct, it is men's approval that is being sought through performances of manhood. Yet even those men who are outsiders gain from patriarchal privilege, benefitting from a patriarchal dividend because of their biological sex. Men who themselves have

constructed and control the patriarchal structures of power continue in their gender advantaged positions (Connell, 1983, 1985; Hearn, 2004; Kimmel, 2000).

In my view, a recent turn away from the sociological emphasis in masculinity studies, towards a cultural one, has contributed an important dimension to the discourse. Reeser's assertion of the possibilities of agency are in accordance with my thinking about masculinities. Whilst I recognise the powerful influence of intersecting gendered structures in our lives I understand that they have been created by social practice and as such there is much potential for change. As a feminist I strongly believe in transformation and the power of social movements to bring about social and structural change. However, oppressive gender systems may only be dismantled if they are identified as such and this suggests a process of critical reflection and naming. This research into masculinities and education is just such an action and a contribution to the goal of greater gender justice.

Themes in the literature relating to masculinity came to life during the research process. The narratives participants shared with one another and me, my observations about the men's performance of masculinity during their engagement in the workshops and the subsequent individual one-to-one interviews uncovered and confirmed elements of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. Men sometimes vied with one another for space, they competed about who had taken the best photographs. Their banter confirmed their heterosexuality and occasional misogynistic or homophobic comments demonstrated their manly credentials to one another. But this was not the sum total of the men. Their way of being was far more expansive than these presentations of their masculinity and their public participation in 'care-talk' signified some slippage of the ideals of masculinity with which they were so familiar.

The men identified a range of dynamic influences on the construction of their masculinity. These included parents, the education system, the local working-class community and culture, becoming fathers and the crash in the local and global economy. However, contradicting Connell's essentialist view of masculinities the men's narratives provide much evidence of agency in how they were choosing to fulfill their new roles as SAHFs. With the destabilisation of their breadwinner role many of the men in the study adapted and recalibrated their masculinity towards care in all its dimensions. This included not only an attitude of caring about their children, but also their participation in the domestic labour that signifies and enables care in practice and the specific and particular attitudes and actions that facilitate and support learning.

Fatherhood

Reflecting the fatherhood literature reviewed in Chapter 3, many research participants spoke movingly of the life changing impact on them of becoming fathers (Kaufman, 2014; Levtov et al, 2015; Miller, 2011; Palkovitz et al, 2001). Most felt unprepared for their new roles and were surprised by the emotional awakening which they experienced on first becoming a parent. Disrupting patriarchal ideals of masculinity which associate emotions with the feminine, discussions of their transitions from breadwinner to SAHFs invoked revelations of vulnerable selves. Their new positioning as SAHFs prompted men to take action in order to incorporate their new care roles into their identities. Unlike the fathers in Doucet's study (2006) the men here chose to involve themselves in domestic care work. These nascent subjectivities were prompted by the love they felt for their children and were fashioned by the men without role models. As such presentations of themselves were resistant, even paradoxical to their gendered grooming to be, what the men

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described as, 'hard-men' by social and cultural institutions of the State. Furthermore, their care narratives disrupted discourses of the 'new involved father' as a purely middle-class phenomena and destabilised pathologised representations of working-class fathers as inferior to those from the middle-classes (Dowd, 2010; Goldman, 2005; Lupton & Barclay, 1997).

Men in the study remembered fathers who were, for the most part, models of breadwinning as described by masculinity scholars (Johansson & Klinth, 2008; Pleck & Pleck, 1997; Ruddick, 1997). Many recalled Dads who were distant, detached, inexpressive and 'properly masculine' working-class men. They worked hard and had little time or energy for connecting with children when they returned from their workplaces.

The literature identified the deep gap between what men had learnt about being men and fathers, and their own paradoxical desires to 'care for' children (Barker et al, 2011; Hochschild, 1989; hooks, 2004; Kimmel 2000). The desire to care was strongly voiced by the men in this study and it included both attitudes and actions. The language of love and care are incongruent with ideals of masculinity (Morrell & Richter, 2004) yet the men's conceptualisation of care included the desire to be expressive, affectionate, and tender fathers. Their stories, unlike those of the fathers in either Doucet's (2006) or Dermot's (2008) studies, evidence the men's active involvement in domestic care work and the performance of regular child maintenance activities. Their experience of this work provided them with new insights into the often mundane and burdensome nature of what had previously been women's work. Confirming Chesley's study (2011) the men assigned value to the care work they were involved in. In the doing of care they were learning to care. Yet, signifying the complexities of meanings of masculinity and the seductive allure

of power, these fathers frequently leaned back into more hegemonic performances of masculinity competing with partners to be experts in care work. Illuminating further messy and complex meanings of masculinity where men themselves are not only diverse but also diversely situated, research participants' efforts to hold on to masculine privilege was accompanied by much contradictory evidence of men's vulnerabilities in relation to being SAHFs.

Family literacy learning

Like power and its benefits, literacy is unequally distributed across social groups. Literacy disadvantage is socially situated and intersects with wider gendered, social, economic, cultural, political and affective inequalities (Baker et al, 2009, 2009; NESF, 2009; O'Toole, 2003; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). This is evidenced when we look to the location of family literacy interventions in working-class and poor communities. Such interventions are most often aimed at working-class mothers who are already under resourced and overburdened with unpaid care work. Consequently, working-class mothers are expected to extend their unpaid care work to provide a remedy for unequal educational outcomes. To add insult to injury, working-class literacies are least valued in an education system that has been designed for the reproduction of the middle-classes (Reay, 1998; Tett, 2001). A hierarchy of literacies values school literacy over pathologised working-class and ethnic minority literacies. In deploying such a deficit discourse, the State's role in the construction of a deeply inequitable education system is obfuscated.

Boys and men and literacy

Gendered dispositions towards literacy are formed early in life. They are carried through to adulthood and are in evidence in the data. Such dispositions are developed primarily in the family and in an often alien education system which seeks to reproduce class inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1986; Willis, 1977). In this study, the vast majority of boys' early experiences of schooling were abusive and harmful and deeply impacted on their relationship with learning and literacy as adults.

Family and educational institutions are diverse, unequally resourced and closely affected by the interplay of wider social and economic inequalities in the areas of class, ethnicity and sexuality. These intersectional factors affect boys' (and girls') success or failure in education (Connell, 2000; Hall & Coles, 2001; Mead, 2006; Reay, 2000; Willis, 1977). It is boys from the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups who leave school with the greatest unmet literacy needs and who benefit least from the education system (Collins et al, 2000; Connolly, 2006; OECD, 2010).

The men in this study grew up and lived in some of the most resource poor and disadvantaged communities in Dublin and had first-hand embodied experience of educational inequality. Like the 'lads' in Willis's study (1977) as young boys, they learned that they did not fit in an education system which had been designed to be 'the making of the middle-class self' and where schooling was about the 'unmaking' of the working-classes (Reay, 2010, 402). Unlike their middle-class peers, there was no expectation that they would remain in school as they were destined, like their fathers before them, for lives in construction and manufacturing.

The literature revealed, and this research confirms, that for some boys (and later men) literacy is associated with feminised or homosexual activity (Francis & Skelton, 2001; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Reay, 1998; Renold, 2001; Scholes, 2013; Willis, 1977). Consequently, it was something to be shunned by boys. In this study fathers told of boys preferring to read only in the privacy of their homes. Such hiding of competent literacy identities requires much psychic and emotional work on the part of young boys (Reay, 2010) conceivably depleting energies which might be used elsewhere.

Gendered and classed relationships with literacy carry through to adulthood and their legacy comes into focus when men become fathers and first educators, with mothers, of their children (Nichols, 2000; Karther, 2002). It is the 'with mothers' that is at issue in fathers' engagement in family literacy care work. Here, the complex influence of hegemonic patriarchal masculinities comes into view. Mothers' educational work can be taken for granted. Fathers involvement is not to be expected. As such, when fathers participate it is viewed as a gift, something to be grateful for (Coleman, 1989; Hochschild, 1989; Reay, 1998), leaving often overburdened and under resourced mothers with primary responsibility for doing this learning care work. Exploring this gender inequality was a core motivation for me in this study.

The literature showed that hegemonic patriarchal masculinity had much power to influence men's engagement in family literacy learning care work and this was somewhat confirmed in the data here. Fathers wanted to maintain their status in the eyes of children. To be seen as unknowing would render them weak and vulnerable, something that is disallowed by ideals of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity (Connell, 1995; Jacupcak et al 2005). Yet, the literature and this study also show that when fathers summon their

agency to overcome gendered fears, they and their children have much to gain. The literature suggests that when fathers involve themselves in literacy learning care work they benefit from an enhanced emotional repertoire, greater closeness and connection with their children whilst their confidence and self-esteem is also enriched (Baumann & Wasserman, 2010; Morgan et al, 2009; Nichols, 2000; Ortiz, 2004). Such benefits have all been confirmed in this study. The fathers who engaged in learning care work positively equated it with being a '*good father*', '*a good human*' and as '*family oriented*' work. Aware of their position as influential role models they recognised the power of their participation in their children's learning. Many saw it as a way of actively providing something for their children which they had missed out on in their own young lives and their efforts to support children was frequently linked to their desire to be different fathers to their own. The men's narratives provide much evidence that research participants were actively involved in changing norms of fatherhood in their families and in their communities.

Methodology

The design of the research process was informed by my feminist epistemology and twenty year experience of working in an emancipatory and empowering adult education context. Multiple methods, including three participatory photovoice workshops and follow on one-to-one semi-structured qualitative interviews gathered fathers' views and experience as men doing family literacy learning care work. The research process was designed with reciprocity in mind and during the workshops fathers shared parenting and literacy learning tips with one another. With a background in family literacy, I also contributed advice about literacy strategies to these discussions. Participants' camera, photography and visual literacy skills were also enhanced. Each participant received a certificate of

participation that outlined the different aspects of the workshops. This was designed to acknowledge participants' contributions to the research and to be used as evidence of learning for adult education accreditation programmes in which many of the men were already involved.

In this study, and confirming the work of Slutskaya et al (2012), photovoice promoted deep levels of reflective thinking and supported men to discuss their intimate feelings and emotions. Photovoice, the images produced and the affectively rich collaborative and facilitated discussions surrounding them supported the men to name their world. It enabled them to challenge dominant and damaging (mis)representations of fathers from routinely stigmatised working-class inner-city communities (Reay, 1998; Skeggs, 1997).

For working-class men who had predominantly harmful experiences of education, their participation in this research reportedly provided them with a positive experience of adult education, where they felt listened to and where their experience was acknowledged and affirmed. The creative adult education process supported research participants to imagine their involvement in future adult education provision. The research mirrored participatory adult education and provided working-class men with a collaborative forum in which to critically reflect on gender and educational inequalities.

Empirical findings

Reay's framework (2010) was used to analyse the empirical data gathered during this four-year study into the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' experience of family literacy learning care work. The analysis focused on the overarching themes of masculinity and education and each was considered under the lens of

intersecting temporality (history), spatiality (geography) and relationality. The latter included not only the relations between people but also the research participants' psychosocial relations with literacy that were developed over time and located in resource poor and State neglected inner-city working-class communities.

Temporality

The men's recollections confirm Bourdieu's (1998) hypothesis of the influence of the past on how we live our lives in the present moment however, I believe hopefully, they also trouble his suggestion that they are inscribed in the body. Whilst stories of their early years illustrated the power and influence of the messages they received about the meanings of being a working-class man they also revealed some agency in altering societal inscriptions about masculinity.

Remembering their fathers, the vast majority of men, described distant figures who worked hard and withheld emotional connection from them. There were no expectations that men would be affectionate or demonstratively tender towards children. Their dads controlled family finances, protected family members, and had 'natural' authority as both disciplinarians and moral guides. It was a time when men occupied the public space whilst women were located in the private space of the home,

In their fathers' time, men had no hands-on responsibilities in raising children. This was the care work of women. Mothers, where they could, were responsible for educational support work and thus research participants internalised this learning care work as women's work. In the stories of the men whose fathers were absent, mothers were depicted as strong, capable, courageous and protective. These women showed traits more

usually associated with fathers. This indicated women's elasticity and agency in terms of gender constructs and their determination and capacity to be both mother and father to their children, regardless of strict gender norms.

The education system of their parents' time, and arguably their own, was not designed to serve the interests of working-class children. Many of the research participants' parents left school at a young age. Recollections of their mothers and fathers school experiences exposed a systemic deep disrespect for working-class children whose learning needs and emotional wellbeing were mostly ignored. During their parents' early lives, there was no expectation that working-class children would stay in school. They were being reared, like the 'lads' in Willis's study (1977) to serve the marketplace as unskilled manual workers. For the most part, they were left with few literacy skills to pass on to their children meaning intergenerational language and literacy were under-resourced in already disadvantaged families and communities. Despite their educational experiences and signifying the cultural and social power of the State, in their parents' time relationships with schools were mostly distant and deferential (Reay, 2010).

Initially, and for the most part following their fathers' examples, the men donned what they described as their 'hard-man front' and worked to become stoical, unemotional, disconnected and therefore invulnerable men. This, they had learned, was the 'natural' way of the world, this was how they were to be in the world, this was the patriarchal hegemony.

In the data, it was not until men became fathers that some of these messages began to be questioned. Fatherhood was a time that revealed the price of patriarchy to men, and

women. On the one hand, becoming a father ended carefree days and mobilised their socially constructed breadwinning identities. On the other hand, and surprisingly for some, becoming fathers awoke care in the hearts of men and a new empathy was described. Alongside these transformations, new subjectivities were called upon to mirror changes in the cultural context. Here fathers were increasingly represented as more involved with their children and this coincided with partners' expanded expectations of men's level of involvement with children from those of previous pre-feminist generations. Before ever becoming unemployed the men were aware that these cultural changes were calling on them to change. Such understandings were deepened when they became SAHFs and began to understand, perhaps for the first time the full extent of 'women's work'. And so, messages they had inherited from their fathers and from wider society came under further pressure. Breadwinning masculinity, once the touchstone of their identity was outwardly obliterated by the financial crisis and the collapse of the construction industry where most of the men had been employed. Elements of their masculine habitus were further disrupted (Bourdieu, 1999) leaving fathers in a liminal space where what they had learned about being a man was no longer useful. New subjectivities were needed and the data evidences the men's efforts in recalibrating their masculinity towards care. Strongly felt, often ambivalent emotions underpinned these divided identities and are discussed below.

Spatiality

The men's narratives roamed through school environments, community landscapes, childhood and adult home places. They spoke to me, and to each other, of a range of masculine performances located in, impacted by, reproduced and on occasion

recalibrated in these diverse locations. As they recalled journeys through these landscapes, men confirmed Reay's (2015) identification of the affective relationship between field and habitus and the men's rich emotional underworld came into view. These revelations were, I believe, facilitated through the combination of the creative adult education research process and the photovoice methodology.

Confirming Reay's position on the importance of the impact of social structures on the self, the data relating to the men's memories of school were saturated with feeling. The research participants' experience of the education system was characterised by brutality and harm, discipline and control. Young boys subjectivities were materially and emotionally assaulted. Corporal punishment and emotional abuse left its mark on the men. Physical and psychological violence left boys feeling isolated, frightened, angry and hurt. Experiences of disrespect such as these are 'anchored in the affective life of human subjects' (Honneth, 2001, 40) and many participants internalised self-blaming messages, locating themselves as stupid and unable to learn. This sedimented a lifelong legacy of spoiled learning identities (Feeley, 2014) leaving the men feeling under-resourced to support their children on their educational journeys.

Others had fought against and resisted the domination of the school system. They learned from such encounters that violence and domination were acceptable ways of maintaining social control. This, in turn, led some to adopt personas of exaggerated toughness and violence (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Such a choice meant that as boys, they had to disconnect from others and to suppress their emotional selves leaving them affectively bereft. Against this backdrop, their young masculinities and their learning identities were framed. Furthermore and following in their fathers' footsteps, many left school with their literacy

needs unmet. They learned from their own families, their communities and their school experiences that education was not the place for them. This was compounded by the hostile messages in school spaces which daily demonstrated to them that they were *'nothing'*, less than human and that their lives were viewed as valueless by more powerful others.

The men's narratives illustrated a historic generational and systemic neglect and disregard of boys from working-class communities by a mostly uncaring education system and indeed by wider society. These memories lingered with the men. The creative photovoice research process supported their recall and gave rise to discussions about the importance of care in supporting their children's learning. Participants described their determination that their children would benefit from such care. Glimmers of hope recalled by the men referred to the few occasions when as boys they experienced something that was akin to learning care. Such instances were mostly ascribed to 'brute luck' (Gheaus, 2009, 63) rather than something which might be expected from a just education system which was entrusted with their care and development. Further hope is signified in the decision by many of the men to return to education, to newly engage in mental labour (Willis, 1977). Love for their children was the primary motivator for these choices.

Each group stressed the very real dangers of their local community streetscapes. Their masculine identities were formed in contexts where gangs ruled the streets and where drive-by shootings were not unknown. Whilst the messages the men got from their parents confirmed Kusserow's (1999) findings of working-class children being prepared to be a 'singular unit against the world' (*Ibid.* 216) the data here suggests that the messages they were passing on to their children were at odds with Kusserow's findings. These

fathers spoke of preparing their children to look outwards, to travel beyond their working-class boundaries.

In their communities the men learned that to survive as a man required them to be extra hard, extra tough and more macho than in other areas of the city. There was an underlying masculine bravado and pride expressed in these declarations. Reflecting the competitive nature of ideals of masculinity identified by Connell (1995) the men vied with one another for the recognition of living in the hardest communities. Until recent times men could not display any vulnerability or weakness in such public spaces. They had to be constantly on guard when negotiating community streets, to be alert to the disrespectful and evaluative gaze of others. Men were keeping watch on themselves and one another (Bourdieu 2001; Connell, 1995) and this required much energy and suggested little peace.

The economic crisis, fuelled by careless, greedy and predominantly male leaders (Folbre, 2009; Reavis, 2012) reached into these gendered community landscapes disrupting the performance of local masculine subjectivities in both the public and private space. Once purposeful and gender-approved manly journeys to work, to sports events and to the local pub were no more for these dads. Their traversing of social landscapes was no longer solitary. The purpose and destination of journeys had also changed. Unlike the working class fathers in Dolan's study (2014) these men were now commonly seen caring for their children in the public space. They walked hand-in-hand with children, they pushed babies in buggies, they were seen laden down with groceries. Fathers were making their way to and from school gates, to shops and to children's sports and social activities. This research illustrates this new social and cultural norm in inner-city communities: fathers were out and about with their children and this was described by the men as no longer remarkable,

it was the 'norm'. Yet, I argue this is remarkable as it evidences an intergenerational disruption of the performance of fatherhood, and therefore masculinity in the public space of working-class communities. Despite the societal efforts which the men described to construct them as 'hard-men', as men who would previously shun such 'women's work' these men were pragmatically constructing new subjectivities for themselves, ones which incorporated paradoxical performances of caring masculinities.

Whilst they had no role models to draw from in the past, in the present moment the data shows that men found much reassurance and solidarity in seeing others involved in similar activities. Some men spoke of taking on these roles because they felt it was the right thing to do in their new circumstances; they construed it as being fair to partners.

Men expressed some ease about this transition in the community space, but evidence suggested that they were less comfortable when their front door closed and the 'shock' of their new situation became clear to them. Some spoke of their utter confusion during this time. From their perspective they had done everything that was expected of them as a man and yet they were facing a future with little hope in terms of being able to find paid employment again. Like the lads in Willis's study (1977) as young working-class boys they had not been prepared by the education system for anything other than manual work. They spoke of being left without the skills needed to match a transformed economy.

In the early days of unemployment, many men described feelings of isolation. They were without resources to draw from to support their transition from the public to the private homeplace. Without any retraining, men found themselves immersed in a new and

unfamiliar role. They could not sit, they were ill at ease, with much time on their hands. Slowly they began to make the transition to their new realities.

Reflecting the complexities and uneven path of transformation, and the diversity of the men, the journey was not straightforward. Deeply held gender dispositions did not disappear overnight. Rather a process of recalibration began and indeed continues. Men retained the power to tentatively practice 'the art of inventing' (Bourdieu, 1990, 55), repositioning themselves in response to their new situation as SAHFs. This transition was marked by ambiguity and ambivalence. Fathers shared stories of performing what they had once construed as women's work: cleaning houses, washing windows, shopping, cooking, clearing dishes, washing clothes, folding clothes, preparing children for school in the mornings, supporting them with homework in the evenings. Adjacent to the hard-man masculinity which they had learned to reproduce and confidently perform, a tentative and oftentimes awkwardly fitting domestic and child-caring masculinity was being tested out.

Men dealt with their relocation differently. Not everyone slipped seamlessly into their new roles. There was messiness, there was a sense of a few steps forward a few steps back. Whilst many were trying out their new roles they also leaned back into more comfortable and familiar ways of being men. This was most apparent when they spoke of holding onto their gender power when choosing their level and degree of engagement in childcare. The phrase 'helping out' was commonly used in the data to define their new roles as SAHFs and pointed to men's ambivalence about their unfamiliar role. Helping out allowed men to assume a secondary rather than an equal role in responsibility for child and domestic care work. This default patriarchal position bubbled through in their denigration of the work of women and in their inflation of their roles as superdads, better

at parenting than mothers. Yet, there was also clear evidence that men were publicly and privately involved in women's work, work that was viewed as subordinate by ideals of both local (and global) masculinities. This indicated further transformation in inner-city communities and suggested significant disruption of gendered dispositions. Furthermore and on a positive note, men's greater involvement in this care work suggested some lightening of the workload for mothers.

Further change was indicated in men's proactive encouragement of their children to remain in education, in Willis's (1977) terms they were encouraging to deeply involve themselves in mental labour. Overlooking the educational inequalities to which they were subjected, fathers did not want their children to make what they described as the mistakes they had made. They spoke of hopes that their sons and daughters would continue to further and higher education and believed that this would give them access to better lives. Fathers were involved in laying down additional elements in their children's' habitus, ones that were markedly different from those laid down by their own parents. Most of the research participants desired for their children to progress contentedly through school and onwards to third level education, a location where it was believed they would feel right at-home.

These hopes mark a disruption in an intergenerational discourse in working-class families and communities regarding their relationship with education. Signifying more change, these working-class fathers saw education as an escape route from the dangers of the neglected areas in which they lived. Echoing middle-class aspirations, yet without middle-class resources, privilege or sense of entitlement, these fathers hoped for children to travel the world, to have a more cosmopolitan orientation than their own (Moore, 2004,

cited in Reay 2010). Fathers desired for their children to see something other than streets where gangs ruled, where there was a threat of danger and where subjectivities were constrained by unequal local, social, cultural, class and gender boundaries. They believed that they had an active role in supporting these journeys through efforts to motivate and encourage children in their educational trajectories. In their new location as SAHFs, they saw that they had the opportunity, power and proximity to invest their energies towards achieving these goals and they were willing to do this work in the best way they could.

Relationality

The data revealed men whose relationships with themselves and others had been disrupted. This disruption had required them to reconfigure their identities. Evidence gathered belied depictions of men who were unable and unwilling to speak of their emotional selves. The photovoice research methodology, constructed upon adult education and feminist principles and processes, helped reduce gendered barriers which men described in relation to fears about groupwork. The participatory, creative and dialogical approach, for the most part, created a space where men felt safe to discuss the features of their inner emotional landscapes with peers and the female researcher.

Research participants shared experiences of their affective and practical transitions from breadwinners to SAHFs. Efforts to integrate these new subjectivities collided with patriarchal ideals of masculinity which pervaded the culture of working-class inner-city Dublin. Nevertheless, and reflecting the experience of Oliffe et al (2008) and Slutskaya et al (2012), reflective dialogue was a notable feature of the men's conversations with one another. Furthermore, and contradicting theories of masculinity which depict men as

lacking in empathy (Schwalbe, 1992) in this research a strong sense of solidarity and empathetic listening were notable features of the men's exchanges with one another giving rise to new insights into their masculinity and their roles as fathers.

We have seen that these men learned in their families and communities to present themselves as invulnerable, macho and carefree independent actors. In the context of their classed position and through their encounters with the education system, and in some instances within their own families, many learned that violence was an acceptable way to control others. Emotions and their display did not fit with being an autonomous and self-reliant man. They had learned that their ultimate role was to care for their future families by being good providers. Such messages were reinforced by the wider social and cultural institutions yet were worthless to the men in their current domestic relationships.

The men's childhood memories revealed the impact of the absence of an emotional connection with their fathers. This absence held within it a deep yearning for the protection and security that was associated with socially constructed idealised imaginings of fatherhood as relational and caring and which were at odds with the ideals of masculinity with which the participants were most familiar. Highlighting the usefulness of Reay's (2015) conceptualisation of the psychosocial as providing deeper understandings of social phenomena, many articulated sadness, anger, disappointment and hurt when speaking of the paucity of these formative relationships. They craved expressions of affection from their dads and determined to be different fathers for their own sons and daughters. This difference was characterised by a desire to be affectionate, tender and demonstrative. Becoming fathers had transformed the men's sense of themselves allowing caring identities to emerge. Hearts blew open, care flooded in creating affective

resources from which their children would benefit. The opening up of an emotional self was revelatory for many prompting fathers to pause and reflect on their identities. Confirming Reeser's (2011) belief in agency and the type of masculinity one chooses to enact, many chose to perform their role differently to that which they had observed in their families and communities when they were growing up. There was evidence in the men's narratives of some ambiguity in this positioning. This uncertainty was located in the tension between the sticky sediments of what they had learned about being real men and their new identities as SAHFs. They wanted to hold on to their masculine privilege which endowed them with the power to be disciplinarians, to be moral guides, and authorities on life. They also desired to be reliable fathers who provided their children with the emotional security which had been denied most of them in relations with their dads. In order to do this they were willing to make themselves vulnerable, to open themselves up to connection and closeness all of which were antithetical to the ideals of masculinity they had learned as young boys.

The men's transition to being SAHFs alongside the research process provided them with opportunities to reflect on more recent changes to their identities. In their roles as SAHFs they spoke not only of 'caring about' their children, rather they described 'caring for' them. Love involves acting for those we love not just feeling for them and these fathers were involved in many care actions (Lynch et al, 2009). They were spending time with children, investing their energy, effort and emotions in supporting them. The performance of this love labour had a reciprocal benefit and helped men and children to affectively flourish and to further stretch identities towards caring masculinity. Such identities were at odds with the lessons they had learnt from the structures of the family and of

education which had endeavoured to shape working-class boys to be inexpressive 'hard-men'.

Through their performances of domestic masculinity these fathers were elbow deep in 'women's work'. In doing this work they gleaned new understandings and respect for the intensity of household labour. Revealing further resistance to ideals of working-class masculinity and crucially without role models to draw upon, these fathers were intent on showing their sons and daughters that men could indeed be nurturing, caring and loving fathers, who participated in what was previously viewed as women's work. In this, men hoped they were modeling more egalitarian gender subjectivities. Furthermore, in their verbal expressions of love to their sons and daughters they were actively instrumental in disrupting a gendered legacy of silence whilst also supporting children to develop a language of emotion for themselves (Nowotny, 1981).

Underpinning men's performance of these once feminised activities, complex emotions jarred against one another. Fears about losing their 'manliness' were expressed. Men felt isolated and sometimes purposeless when they closed their hall doors. They spoke of feelings of vulnerability about their unexpected new identities. Fears about the future and their ability to provide for their children were ever present in their stories. Discomfort, anxiety, being at odds with the self, uncertainty, anger and feelings of loss of control represented some of the messy complexity of counter hegemonic emotions which men articulated about their identities as SAHFs. These emotions were counter-balanced by their appreciation of the connections they were forging with their children, of the success they were experiencing in ever-closer loving connections with them.

The men framed the doing of family literacy learning care work as a significant way of developing connections with children. Negative connotations relating to family literacy learning work were bound up in the doing of school-based literacy and located in the men's memories of school learning which had been instrumental in honing the men's 'hard-man' front. Fear, failure, shame, and vulnerability had all been associated with school literacy learning and these feelings continued to stick to the men's relationship with such activities. Worries surfaced when children asked for homework help, or when fathers felt they could not answer questions authoritatively. When work became too challenging men knew they could direct children towards mothers who were represented, for the most part, as more educated and therefore better able to do homework and school literacy support.

The men differentiated between school-based literacy work (mostly homework support) and family learning work. The first was entangled with harmful school memories and understandings that this had been women's work in the past. On the other hand conceptualisations of family learning work were without negative associations for the men, rather this work fitted comfortably into ideals of patriarchal masculinity which construed the father's role as one of moral authority, guide and disciplinarian.

Despite the men's negative associations with school based literacy work, the data showed that men were restructuring their attitudes and engaging in this learning care work. Supporting children with their educational development included emotional labour, educational and practical support. Unlike the fathers in Reay's study (1998) who stood at the margins of this work, the majority of men in this study were engaged, to varying degrees, in these areas of family learning. This was despite their gender construction and

their experiences of an unequal education system. They were motivated in this work by love of their children and perhaps naïve optimism about the role of education in social change (Reay, 1998; Skeggs, 1997). In supporting the 'unmaking' (Reay, 2010, 402) of their children's classed identities, fathers believed they would provide greater choices and opportunities for them than those which they had experienced. In order to do this work they again summoned their agency, and recalibrated their masculinity to integrate gender performances that were paradoxical to those which they had learned as young boys and men. Contrary to their gender grooming, the restructured masculinity described by the fathers in this research, had room for the demonstration and expression of affection. It integrated child and domestic care work that included varying levels of involvement in family literacy learning care work and signified men's willingness to change.

Research participants' recommendations for adult education

Discussions, about ideal conditions for fathers to engage in learning which would support them in their role in family literacy learning care work, revealed much about the men's prior educational experience and their gendered identities.

The research participants' needs included a desire to be shown respect, to be listened to and encouraged. Men wanted to be treated like adults and have their experiences valued. Some did not want to learn with women as they feared that they would be ridiculed. Others believed that having women present would allow for mutual understanding to grow about the challenges facing parents. Several believed that men would need to be enticed to join with others in learning. Men would have to get something out of it for themselves.

The majority believed that a local community facilitator would be preferable to an 'outsider'. Facilitators would need first hand knowledge of the issues facing men doing this care work. Short taster courses were preferable to longer commitments. Topics of interest included; cooking with children, coping with bullying, supporting maths development, skills for fathers who had children with special needs and refresher courses in spelling techniques so that fathers could stay one step ahead of their children. School premises would best suit such activities, as this would familiarise fathers with their children's daily environment and with school staff. Fathers wanted some courses to involve their children as this would support the development of their relationships. Considering the isolation many fathers were now facing in their communities, and which some in the group had experienced before joining the research, the men hoped that such programmes would help fathers to develop supportive relationships with other men in their communities.

Concluding remarks

The research question aimed to reveal the relationship between masculinity and fathers' family literacy learning care work. This question was posed in a context of economic crisis where many men had moved from being breadwinners to carers in the home.

I see these as important concerns for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is widespread worry about boys and literacy and this is primarily focused on boys from the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups. It is such boys who benefit least from the education system (Collins et al, 2000; Connolly, 2006; OECD, 2012). Secondly, a stubborn gendered attitude to literacy, alongside a gendered division of care has prevented fathers

from supporting children's literacy and acting as positive role models. At the same time women continue to bear a socially constructed unequal share of family-care labour.

The photovoice research methodology rehearsed a process of adult and community education. It revealed that a careful feminist and Freirean research process supported men to shift away from banter that sought to assert their masculinity credentials, towards caring, empathetic, meaningful dialogue with one another. In so doing the men looked behind their 'hard-man front', considered the genesis of its construction and critically assessed its usefulness to them in their transformed circumstances.

Gender role recalibrations had been undertaken in isolation and the research process innovatively provided an opportunity for the fathers to collectively identify the challenges and benefits of these transformations and to find solidarity with others. Significantly, this suggests men's willingness to engage in critical conversations about gender equality and highlights an important role for adult and community education. Without opportunities for men to engage in supported reflexive work and address gender inequality, progress can stall. As a first step, gender justice, in all its aspects might usefully be visible on the agenda of all adult education activities.

The research found evidence which suggests that ideals of masculinity that constructed men as knowledgeable, in control and disconnected from those around them also served to impede their involvement in highly relational literacy learning care work. The men had learned in their own families that this work was women's work, not men's work. Wider inequalities intersected with this story. As revealed in the section on temporality, most of the men's early relationships with literacy and language development were framed by the

intergenerational disrespect of the education system for working-class families. Such misrecognition left a negative emotional legacy which further affected men's relations with literacy and indeed the trajectories of their lives.

Despite such associations, and following collective reflection, the men identified literacy as related to the quality of existence itself. It was the key to unlocking a wide range of life opportunities. In its role in supporting affective communication, literacy was viewed as central to the development of worthwhile relationships. Reading to children, talking with them and spending time with them was associated with closeness and pleasure and was equated with being a good father. This was family-oriented work, work which they were not raised to do but which they were actively doing. Participating in the research was part of their efforts to understand more about family literacy and to enable them to better support their children's learning.

Despite the gender grooming of the research participants this study reveals some regendering of care labour during the economic crisis in Ireland. The men's narratives indicate a shift in entrenched gender inequalities at grass roots community level. Destabilising ideas of men as being unable to nurture and as 'fixed' by social structures, the fathers in this study were found to be summoning their agency, recalibrating their masculinity and actively 'caring for' their children in both the private and public domains. This care work extended to deliberative strategies to support their children in their literacy and learning and included men's engagement in the often invisible domestic care work that is required for children to flourish. These efforts were motivated by the love men had for their children, something that fathers, supported by the research process, were happy to talk about with one another. This too signified some new 'care-talk'

amongst men. Participants were content to discuss with one another the joys and challenges of being fathers and of their intimate connection with their children. In doing so, they opened themselves up to vulnerability thus providing further evidence of masculine subjectivities in transition.

The research participants' narratives disrupted pathologised representations of fathers from working-class communities, as careless and feckless (Hewett, 2015). These working-class men emerged as caring and committed fathers who were determined to do their best for their children, often with scarce resources. The study revealed the diversity and complexity of masculinities. Research participants were tentatively making their own patterns of masculinity, ones which matched the needs of their children and their own nascent identities as SAHFs.

Baker (1996) reminds us that equality is not only to do with structures, it is also to do with human relationships. The fathers in this study were intent on building good relationships with their children, they were actively contributing to levels of affective and gender equality. In the context of adult education, Freire (1997) reminds us that without hope the struggle to overcome oppression would be intolerable (*Ibid.* 9). This study into the relationship between ideals of masculinity and fathers' experience of family literacy learning care work illuminates much hope about working-class fathers' agentic turn towards care work during recessionary times and perhaps onwards into the future…..

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What will we be doing?

Through photography and discussion we will:

- Agree what family literacy learning work is
- Discuss the benefits and challenges of doing this work
- Discuss what it means to be an 'At home Dad' doing this work
- Identify the most useful supports and strategies for other fathers involved in family literacy learning work.

How will we do this?
- Three two-hour workshops
- Workshop dates and times will be agreed to suit you
- On completion of the three workshops you will be invited to take part in a one-to-one conversation with me to explore in more depth the issues discussed during the workshops
- All course materials will be supplied. Cameras can be loaned to the participants, if needed.

What will you get from being involved?
- Ideas about helping your children with their language and literacy development
- Tips about photography
- A chance to share your experience with other Dads who are doing family literacy learning work
- Increased confidence and skills in family literacy learning work
- Certificate of participation.

Who will be doing the research with you?
My name is Ann Hegarty and I am a PhD research student from NUIM. I have been working in adult literacy for more than 20 years. I am very interested in supporting Dads in their family literacy work as I think that children, Dads and families all have a lot to gain from the involvement of fathers in literacy learning work.

'At home Dads' Helping Kids Get a Good Start

A research project with fathers of primary school children

Dads - have you free time to be involved in an exciting family learning and photography research project?

The aim of the research project is to support 'At home Dads' with helping kids to get a good start with their reading and writing, and to get a clearer idea of what fathers think about their role in this family learning work.

For more detailed information about the project please contact me at 0872398895 or at ann.hegarty@nuim.ie

Appendix 1: Promotional materials

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Appendix 2: Semi structured interview schedule

At-home Dads – Helping Kids to Get a Good Start

One-to-one interview

Purpose of research

This research is part of a PhD study that I am doing in the Department of Adult and Community Education in NUIM. The study aims to identify with fathers of primary school children, the most useful supports and strategies that are needed to do family literacy work. In these conversations I am interested in how you view this work, as a man and as a dad, how you experience it and what you think about the benefits and challenges of family literacy work. I hope that from our conversation today, and further discussions with other fathers, that useful strategies will be identified to support fathers build on and develop the skills and confidence needed to do this work.

Confidentiality policy

During the research I hope to talk with 28 fathers. The conversations will be undertaken only with those who are interested and willing to participate and people may withdraw at any stage in the research process, should they so wish.

It is intended to use a digital recorder to accurately capture your words, your thoughts and ideas about the role of fathers in family literacy. Information will be held in confidence, names and all identifying details will be changed from transcribed interviews.

Audio files will be held securely until they are transcribed by me. The audio files will be uploaded to an encrypted, pass word protected laptop and will be destroyed by me three years after the research has been fully completed. I will also destroy computer files containing research transcripts and all paper based records within this timeframe.

If you have any questions that you would like to clarify before making a decision to take part, I will be very happy to answer them. If you have any

questions following our discussion I will also be happy to answer them. If it is OK with you I will be ringing you following our conversation to check back with you on how the interview was for you and if you needed to add anything to what you said during our time together today.

Interview process

We will be talking about a few different topics, some of which we have already discussed in the workshops. We will be talking about your own memories of learning in school and at home, reflecting on your journey to becoming a father and what it has meant to you and of course we will be talking about family literacy and your experience of doing this. You have the right to refuse to answer any question. We can stop the interview at any point and you can say if you have had enough at any stage. I would like to point out that there are no right or wrong answers; you are the expert on your own experience.

How long will it take?

The interview will take 45/ 60 minutes depending on how much you have to say.

What will happen to the information?

The information you give will become part of a PhD thesis that discusses the role of fathers in family literacy. No individual will be written about separately. Rather your words, in the form of excerpts from the interview, may be used to highlight points about fathers and family literacy. On completion of the thesis, the research may be published in academic journals or possibly as a book. The findings may also be presented at seminars or conferences relating to the topic. At no stage in any of these will it be possible to identify you.

Who will read what you say?

Some people (mainly including my PhD supervisor and other staff members in the Department of Adult and Community Education, NUIM) in the university will read parts of what you say in the context of the overall document. They will not know your name or any of your personal details.

Interview schedule

Section 1- General background

a. Interview date   b. Consent given

Day/month/year		
/ /	Yes	No

c. Name/attributed code

d. Age/ethnic origin

e. Co-parenting   ☐   Parenting alone   ☐

   At-home dad, full time   ☐   At-home dad, part time   ☐

Other

f. Number of children   Boys ☐   Girls ☐

   Age of children

g. Age when interviewee left school

h. Formal educational qualifications completed

Primary cert   ☐

Junior/ Inter cert   ☐

Leaving cert   ☐

FETAC/ Post leaving cert (PLC)   ☐

Other

i.   Employment history

Part 1 – Your learning memories

a. Can you tell me about your own time at school. What was it like for you?

Happy/ sad/ worthwhile/ terrible

b. What sort of learner were you?

Serious/ messer/ eager/ dis-interested

c. What do you remember about doing homework?

Who helped you?

What was that like?

What would you say was your mam and dads attitude to education?

d. Looking back, have you any memories of how you learned to read/ to write?

What was your mam's role/ your da's role? Were they different? Why do you think that is?

e. Do you think that there are differences in how you support your kids with their reading and writing and school lives generally?

Time spent/ approach/ attitude/ expectations/ similarities/ differences

Family relationship with teachers / with school

Part 2 - Identity

a. Thinking about yourself as a da – what would you say you get most pleasure from? What are you good at as a da?

> *When you most enjoy being with your children? What does being a father feel like? How would you say being a father has changed you? How do you imagine your friends might describe the changes in you?*

b. Where did you get ideas about what sort of dad you wanted to be?

> *Who taught you about being a dad? What did your dad teach you about being a father? What did your mam teach you?*

> *What have your children taught you? Are there other people / events that influenced you in your ideas about being a father? Did you get any from school?*

c. When you think about growing up and the messages you got about how to be a man what words come to mind?

> *Where did those messages come from? School/ family/ church/ media sport/ other*

> *What were you like then? How would your friends have described you?*

d. When you think back on those messages and what it means to be a man today how do they compare?

e. How has it been for you to take on all the recent changes in relation to being at home more?

> *Advantages? Challenges? How has it affected your children? Your relationship with friends and family?*

Part 3 - Family literacy

a. How important do you think literacy is in everyday life?

What opportunities does it hold?

b. Can you remember back to when your child was a baby, the years before they went to school and all milestones along the way, first responses you got….(burbling, cooing, smiling at you……learning how to sit up, to say dada/ mama, how to crawl, walk)… later on getting them ready for the first days at school – what things do you remember doing to help your child on this journey?

Can you give me any examples? How you helped their language to develop? Their vocabulary? Other things you did to help them, to give them a good start?

Would you call it 'work'? I keep calling it family literacy work….. what would you call it?

c. We had lots of interesting discussions in the workshops about family literacy work…..what would you say it is about?

Can you give me an example of when you 'do' family literacy.

How do you feel when you are doing it?

d. From your own experience - when does it happen?

Every day/ occassionally

e. Where does it happen?

Is it planned for/ spontaneous

f. In your family how do you decide who does family literacy work?

How do these decisions get made?

g. How would you describe the dad's role in doing family literacy work?

h. How would you describe the mam's role in fmily literacy work?

Are there similarities/ differences?

Have they changed since you were a boy? How have they changed? What has brought about these changes?

i. How do you know how to do this work with your children, how did you learn how to do it yourself?

j.Where do you get support to do this learning care work?

Do you ever talk to your men friends about doing this work?

What sort of things would you discuss with them in relation to this?

Do they ever talk to you about it? What sort of things would they mention to you?

k. What would you say is fun about doing family literacy work?

l. What is hard about it?

Where do you get support to do this work?

m. What do you think are the benefits for you in doing this work?

n. What do you think are the benefits for you kids'?

What messages do you think you are giving them about literacy?

Are they learning anything else? (Gender/ care)

Does anyone else benefit from your efforts? How?

Part – 4 Identifying support needs

a. I have noticed that men do lots of family literacy work with their chidren but not many men are involved in family literacy programmes – any ideas of why that may be?

b.Would you join a family literacy learning group?

What might be the benefits?

What worries might you have?

What would stop you from participating?

c. What might attract you / other men you might know to being invovled in a family literacy programme?

Men only/ mixed?

d. What support do you think would be useful for dad's who are doing this work?

Who should provide the support?

Is there anything schools could be doing? Local community? Adult education centres

What would suit men best?

e. How would you go about recruiting fathers to Family Literacy programmes?

Promotion

Part 5 - Ending

a. Is there anything else you thought I would ask you and have not?

b. Anything you want to ask me about now?

c. How are you feeling now at the end of our coversation?

d. If I need clarification of some aspects of this interview is it ok for me to contact you?

Yes/no

What is the best way to make contact?

Thank you!

AT-HOME DADS – HELPING KIDS TO GET A GOOD START

THREE WORKSHOPS - PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, (full name)…………………………….received information on the study and I understand what the research is about. I understand that I will be taking part in 3 x 120 minute audio recorded workshops with the researcher Ann Hegarty. I know that the information I have given will be written up in a Doctoral thesis and included in published materials and relevant conferences. I understand that the photographs I will be taking for the purpose of this research project will be my sole property. I know that my real name will not be used and other details that identify me will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

I understand that I can decide what questions I want to answer and up until the point where my contribution has been anonymised, I am free to withdraw from the research.

I understand that the data gathered will be kept securely by the researcher for three years and that at that point it will be destroyed, audio files will be overwritten, computer files deleted and all paper based materials will be shredded.

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Appendix 4: One-to-one interview consent form

<div align="center">

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEW

FAMILY LITERACY, MASCULINITIES AND THE ROLE OF FATHERS

</div>

I, (full name)…………………………………..received information on the study and I understand what the research is about. I understand that I will be taking part in a one-to-one 60 / 90 minute discussion with the researcher Ann Hegarty. I know that the information I have given will be written up in a Doctoral thesis and included in published materials and relevant conferences. I know that my real name will not be used and other details that identify me will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

I understand that I can decide what questions I want to answer and up until the point where my contribution has been anonymised, I am free to withdraw from the research.

I understand that the data gathered will be kept securely by the researcher for three years and that at that point it will be destroyed, audio files will be overwritten, computer files deleted and all paper based materials will be shredded.

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Appendix 5: Photograph consent form

At-home Dads – Helping Kids to Get a Good Start

(Consent form: Photograph subject)

I, (full name)……………………………… hereby grant permission to ………………………… to take photographs of me for use in this research project. I understand that the photographs will be used as part of a research project into fathers' role in family literacy work. They will be used as a discussion prompt within the photographer's research group into the role of fathers in family literacy and will only be seen by members of that group and the researcher, Ann Hegarty.

I understand that the photographs will not be published or distributed and will remain the sole property of the photographer.

_____

Signature

_____

Date

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

- Why did you 'click'?

- What does it mean to you?

- What is important in it?

- What does it show about family literacy learning?

- What does it not show?

Appendix 7: Research participant's details

Name	Age	Nationality	Co-parenting	Parent alone	Full time at-home dad	Part time at-home dad	Age when finished school	Education/ qualifications	Years since last employed	Work full time	Work part time	Children	Age range	1/1 Interview
Albert	39	Irish	Yes	-	Yes	-	14	Primary cert	7	-	-	2	9- 18	✔
Andy	35	Irish	Yes	-	Yes	-	17	Junior cert FETAC	-	-	CE scheme	3	10-18	✔
Azziz	39	Morocco	Yes	-	-	Yes	13	Primary cert equivalent	3	-	CE scheme	1	7	✔
Badboy	29	Irish	Yes			Yes	14	Primary cert	4	-	-	1	9	✔
Batman	43	Irish	Yes	-	-	Yes	15	Junior Cert	9	-	CE scheme	7	8- 25	✔
Damian	27	Irish	Yes	-	-	Yes	16	Junior cert	5	-	Return to education	1	7	✔
George	47	Irish	Yes	-	-	Yes	18	Inter cert Leaving cert FETAC courses	5	-	CE scheme	2	9 -14	✔
Jack	37	Irish	Yes	-	-	Yes	15	Junior cert FETAC	2	-	CE scheme	3	9- 14	✔
Jake	N/A	Irish	Yes	-	-	-	13	Primary cert	N/A	-	-	1	8	✗
Jerry	33	Irish	Yes	-		Yes	15	Junior cert	5	-	Return to education	3	12 months -12	✔
John Smith	35	Irish	Yes			Yes	14	Primary cert	1	-	-	3	5-15	✔
Johnny Cash	65	Irish	Yes		Yes		15	Primary cert	20	-	-	2	36-39	✔
Johnny the Keg	56	Irish	Yes	-	-	Yes	12	Primary cert	6	-	CE scheme	5	-	✗

Messi	44	Irish	Yes	-	-	Yes	13	Inter cert	-	Yes (night shifts)	-	10	6 - 27	✔
Najicassa	42	Morocco	Yes	-	Yes		14	Primary cert equivalent	6	-	-	1	6	✔
Pado	51	Irish	-	Yes	-	Yes	14	Primary cert	2	-	CE scheme	1	13	✗
Rory	62	Irish	Yes	-	Yes	-	14	Primary cert	2 years retired	-		6	2 - 41	✔
Roy	56	Irish	Yes	-	Yes	-	13	Inter cert	5	-	CE scheme	2	29 - 34	✔
Samson	31	Irish	Yes	-	-	Yes	17	Junior cert	-	-	CE scheme	3	2 - 13	✗
Tommy	37	Irish	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	18	Leaving cert	-	-	CE scheme	0	N/A	✗