

A room with a view:

Exploring the impacts of early school leaving and imprisonment on a cohort of working class men, participating in an adult education project in Dublin, Ireland.

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**Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the
MEd in Adult and Community Education**

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University**

2016

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Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the continual support from the relevant staff of Maynooth University who have been a constant and ever present source of understanding, commitment and aid since I was welcomed to Maynooth in 2011.

To Seamus Taylor, Michael Kenny, Camilla Fitzsimons, Fergal Finnegan, Michael Murray and many fellow students....thank you.

To Brid Connolly, who I have been lucky to have as a lecturer, listener, guider and supervisor I thank you so much Brid.

To Jim Wallington, Tommy Genockey, Niall Walsh and everyone who is or has ever been involved with the Pathways Project, thank you and this is for all of us.

To all my family members who have supported me through everything, thank you.

To Sarah Louise, thank you so much for all your encouragement and help throughout. This process would have been much more difficult without your unconditional support.....thank you.

Abstract

The media in Ireland paints a negative picture of people who have been to prison. People with convictions, regardless of what those convictions may be, are largely deemed untrustworthy and unemployable. A prison sentence in Ireland has the capability of literally ruining someone's life and future.

Irish prisons are mostly filled with males from working class backgrounds. It is no coincidence that most of the working class males within prisons have high literacy issues and low educational attainment (O'Donnell, et. al, 2008). The importance of educational attainment in order for the awareness of one's situation, one's employability and life chances and one's overall freedom is undeniable.

To ask the research question of what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland it would be deemed unreliable research if the topic was not explored with the direct aid of a group of males from Dublin who have experienced early school leaving and imprisonment in order to provide this arguably unique group with a voice and also to present the cause and effects to these and multiple linked social and personal issues experienced by the group for richness, reliability and validity throughout.

The group of research participants who have contributed so much to this research have all been sourced in an education centre where they all frequent and engage with various levels of education. They also all receive and provide emotional, personal and academic support to the other learners who frequent the centre. The fact that each of the group have all experienced early school leaving and imprisonment and are now each involved in and identifying education as a means of staying out of prison really engulfs and breathes through this research.

The exploration of what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland has unearthed a number of relevant social and personal issues that require significant consideration. Issues of early school leaving, identity, masculinity, emotional intelligence, rational choice theory and imprisonment are impacted by issues of power, oppression, structure, agency and social class.

These issues have all been found to be the lived experience for the research participants and the issues have been linked and analysed through a theoretical lens with theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Karl Marx (1844), Emile Durkheim (1833, 1933), Max Weber (1922), Erving Goffman (1959), Paulo Freire (1970), Raewyn Connell (1995, 2005), John Scott (2000) and many others to show the importance of identifying the lived experiences of the group of research participants.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A Room with a view

At the time of reading this and regardless of when it is read, there are a high number of working class males from Dublin spending 18 hours of a 24 hour day in a 13 foot by 8 foot prison cell in various prisons across Ireland. I say regardless of when it is read because this thesis could have been written and read twenty years ago or it might not be read for twenty years from now. Thus, the social reproduction of working class males being imprisoned is and has been constant throughout the history of the prison system in Ireland (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

It is every working class male in prison that this research recognises.

This work does not argue as to whether anyone in prison deserves to be there or not. It does not argue as to whether the prison system ethos and mode of operation is actually rehabilitative or not. It does not argue for or against the criminal justice system in Ireland.

However, this work does argue that the mass devastation of decades of working class males being imprisoned is largely unnecessary and absolutely reducible at the very least. This work also argues that if one could imagine that the 13 foot by 8 foot prison cell is a symbol of the experiences felt due to one's social class position and the actual view through the prison cell window is a symbol of the internalisation and possible reaction to those experiences then there is an actual possibility of reducing the numbers of males who encounter imprisonment.

This is to say that Irish society is structured in such a way that there is a large economic divide between the social classes of broadly, upper class, middle class and working class. Furthermore, prisons are largely profitable institutions for the Irish government and they produce thousands of employment opportunities throughout Ireland. Imprisonment is almost part of everyday life for working class males in Dublin whether through personal experience or through a family member or community member etc. it is not an unusual occurrence.

Research question

This research asks: *what are the impacts of early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland.* This research finds and argues that early school leaving and imprisonment, as crucial as they are to one's life, are simply both by-products of being a working class male in Dublin, Ireland. This is the importance of this research.

In order to highlight the social reproduction of early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland this work includes the first hand experiences of five males from Dublin who have experienced early school leaving and imprisonment during the 1980's, 1990's and 2000's respectively. Each of the research participants were presented with the same questions which are as follows;

Q.1 What do you think will be the main reason for staying out of prison?

Q.2 What age were you when you left school?

Q.3 What was the main reason why you finished school?

Q.4 What way was school looked upon by your family or community at that time?

Q.5 How did you fill your time when you were finished with school?

Q.6 What age were you when you had your first experience of criminal activity?

Q.7 What was the time difference between leaving school and entering prison for the first time?

Q.8 Did you receive any community education or welfare supports in the time between finishing school and entering prison for the first time?

Q.9 What would you say could be the most important thing that could help young males not end-up in prison in Ireland today?

Q.10 If you could change anything you wanted about your past experiences in relation to entering prison, what would it be?

There is also theoretical literature from research undertaken more recently to show the continuation of these harrowing experiences for many within working class communities in Dublin, such is the importance of this research.

In addition, this research concludes that there is evidence of social action, in-formal education and a re-engagement with formal education to enhance change among the lives of so many within working class communities in Dublin and especially the male population as they dominate the prison system population.

The structure of the social classes in Ireland will always exist. The divide will always be there. Prisons will always exist. Forms of oppression and the unequal distribution of wealth between social classes will no doubt always exist. However, education and in-particular, in-formal and adult and further education will also exist. Social action will always exist. Courage will always exist. Love will always exist. Change will always exist and so hope will always exist. Once again, this is the importance of this research.

Content of proceeding chapters

Chapter three of this research comprises of the methodology behind this research. My ontological view and my epistemological position of and within society are included and discussed in the main body of chapter three. The methods that were undertaken in order to complete this research are explored and exposed also. This is to say that chapter three of this research consists of why this research was chosen, what my view of the world is, how do I re-enforce my view of the world, how do I go about the research, who else is involved, what literature is used, what is it I am trying to say and what considerations require attention in how I am going to say it are all combined to complete the methodology section of chapter three of this work.

This is followed by the findings section in chapter four. The findings from the semi-structured interviews with a number of males from Dublin who have experienced early school leaving and imprisonment are presented. Although these interviews were conducted from September 2015 to May 2016 the age range of the research participants being from 20-60 provides an examination of the individual experiences of this group over a period of forty years. This reflects the social reproduction that exists within working class

communities in Dublin where early school leaving and imprisonment are by-products of a working class male existence along with issues around oppression, structure, agency, identity, masculinity, rational choice theory and emotional intelligence etc.

The findings are then analysed in chapter five where numerous links are made between the social and personal issues that have been thematically constructed from the semi-structured interviews. A brief analysis of one experience is that in the 1920's in Dublin, secondary education had to be paid for. If you were from a working class background in 1920's Dublin, you most certainly would not be able to afford to pay for your children to go to secondary school or pay for them to be given an apprenticeship by a tradesman. This led to large numbers of working class people having no second level education and no employment of any substance or skill. This continued for decades where large numbers of working class people conducted low skilled and low paid employment. As recessions occurred in the 1970's, 1980's and the late 2000's in Ireland waves upon waves of generational unemployment subsequently impacted working class communities in Dublin.

The introduction of Heroin and many other illegal drugs in the 1980's saw many dead, addicted or imprisoned in working class Dublin. The children and grandchildren of those who could not go to second level education because there were expensive fees are now at the very best working in low income, low skilled, manual labour employment that holds no security. This means that they will never be able to secure a mortgage as they have no guarantee of future employment and the future of their own children is also insecure. Those who have not been this fortunate are early school leavers who largely experience social welfare cuts, unemployment, addictions, mental health issues and imprisonment.

Research Participants

Each of the research participants not only provided similar harrowing accounts of working class male existence in Dublin, they also provided an explanation of the way they have reacted to their lived experiences of early school leaving and imprisonment to name a few. Education fees for third level education in Ireland became free with student grants available. This led to masses of mature students from Dublin and other areas returning to education and with an overall percentage of over 75% of students progressing onto third level education (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

As mentioned previously and throughout this research, the structure of society and the arrangement of the social classes within that structure will always exist. The experiences of the unequal distribution of wealth between classes and the various forms of oppression experienced by those in working class areas of Dublin will exist within these structures. Issues of identity, masculinity, rational choice theory, emotional intelligence, power, agency, in-formal education and social action will all exist within the structure of Irish society and it is these issues that provide an opportunity for change and a reduction of the negative feelings and experiences by many in working class communities in Ireland and especially the dominant prison population which comprises of working class males.

Firstly, a review of the theoretical literature that explores, enhances, challenges and reflects the multiple social and personal issues and experiences that impact early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland is investigated and discussed in the following chapter here.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This research asks *what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland*. This research has been carried out between 2015 and 2016. However, in 2008, the Institute of criminology at University College Dublin, facilitated by the Irish Prison service, published a study of recidivism in Ireland (O'Donnell, et al, 2008). They studied the demographic characteristics of the Irish prison population. Table 2.1 shows that most of the group studied were male, unmarried and were under 30 years of age. More than half the group had not taken any formal state exams and had no job before imprisonment. This was stated to be similar for those in comparable countries (O'Donnell, et al, 2008).

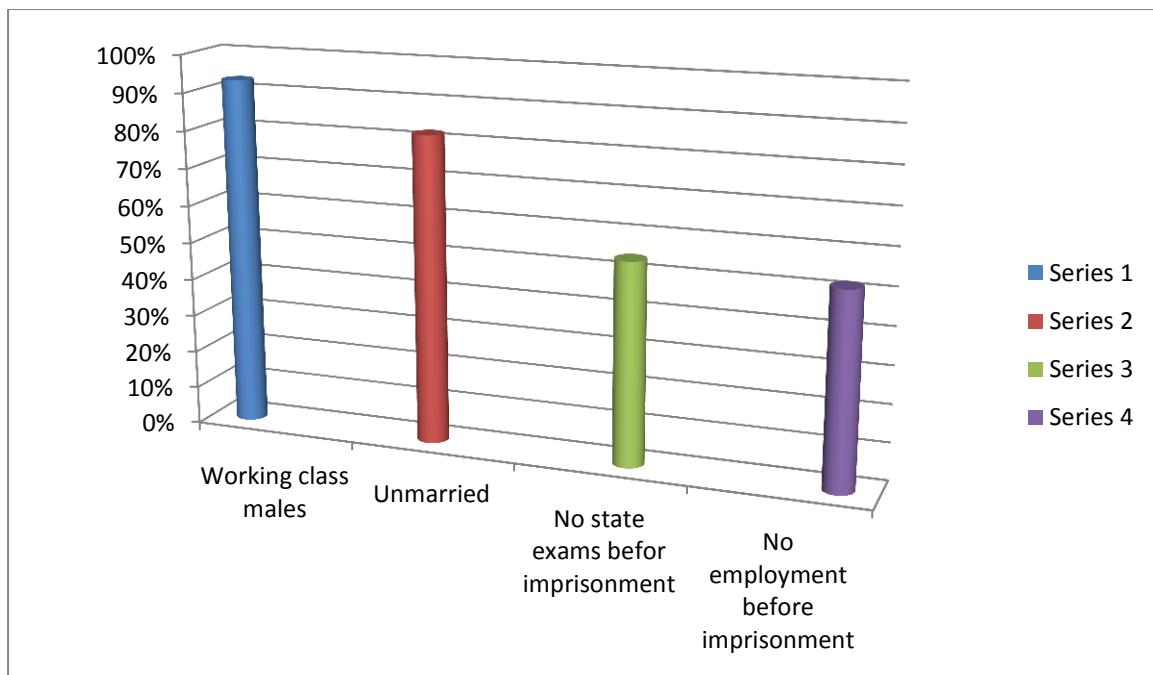


Table 2.1

Studies and statistics are found and presented regularly in relation to social class and the worst affected. The fact that statistics like these have been reproducing themselves for decades indicates that more needs to be done to reduce what may be described as generations of mass neglect which may be highlighted through educational opportunities (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

In fact, if you are attending a school in a disadvantaged area of Dublin there is a 50% chance that you will not sit your Leaving Certificate and a 90% chance that you will not go on to college and a 30% chance that you will have literacy issues. This may be described as a form of oppression (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

The common demographic that was reported in the UCD study and the common statistics concerning educational attainment that are highlighted above are utilised as the gateway into a multitude of social and personal issues that have combined, contributed and multiplied over time to lend themselves to such statistics to attempt to highlight something similar to what Paulo Freire states in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

It is not the unloved who initiate disaffection but those who cannot love because they love only themselves. It is not the helpless, subject to terror who initiate terror but the violent who with their power create the concrete situation which begets the 'rejects of life'. It is not the tyrannized who initiate despotism but the tyrants. It is not those whose humanity is denied them who negate humankind but those who denied that humanity (thus negating their own as well). Force is used not by those who have become weak under the preponderance of the strong but by the strong who have emasculated them (Freire, 1970).

Issues such as power, identity, masculinity, emotional intelligence and rational choice theory are explored throughout through a combination of theoretical literature from theorists such as Karl Marx (1844), Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Erving Goffman and Talcott Parsons (1999), Raewyn Connell (1995), Daniel Goleman (1996) and John Scott (2000) respectively. There is also a variety of insights, quotes and critiques from a number of other theorists, sociologists and authors such as Freire (1970), Huberman (1994), Zinn (2004), Bhaskar (2000), Murray & Lawrence (2000) and Connell (1995) throughout this review of the literature which are infusion with some direct quotes from some of the research participants who have contributed so greatly to this work.

The upcoming section highlights just some relevant literature around social class with specific regard to exploring a range of theories on social class and examining its relevance to social class today in Dublin, Ireland. The five faces of oppression from social theorist Iris Young and a variety of theories about social class from a functionalist, Marxist and Weberian perspective will explore a range of views on the issue. Firstly, an overview as to the origins and some of the effects of social class are provided in what follows.

Social Class

The term social class indicates the arrangement of individuals in a hierarchy of advantaged and disadvantaged life chances and with regard to the stratification of social classes, this is where society is divided into different classes, groups or layers (Bourdieu, 1984: 170-174).

The industrial revolution may be described as the transformation of the human world. It may be traced back to Britain in the late 18th century. It was also at this time that the industrial revolution spread globally. The result of this transformation was massive urbanisation where people living in rural parts of the country moved in large numbers to the cities to work. Each city then comprised of a massive multitude of people from a variety of backgrounds ranging from royalty to people who had been living in extreme poverty. This highlighted the different economic positions between people where many became servants for royalty in return for basic food and shelter which automatically created inequality (Marx, 1844).

Britain reshaped its class system into an upper layer of traditional elites, then landowners or aristocrats, then the middle class of entrepreneurs, then the working class and finally then the poor. This stratification of classes seemed to be mainly based on economics, status and power with gender, race, ethnicity not being properly addressed, possibly due to the era of the late 18th century or perhaps because inequality was already rife and economics, status and power were deemed most necessary in the ordering of the class system in Britain. It shall be argued that not much has changed from a working class perspective in Dublin today. Being from a working class community not far from Dublin, oppression is an extremely recognisable term (Bourdieu, 1984: 170-174).

Five Faces of Oppression

Iris Young is an American social theorist whose influences include feminism, new social movements and Marxism. She suggests that the different social categories that various groups are placed in often leads to them experiencing oppression. Young's opinion of oppression may be summarised as the injustices that a group of people suffer as a means to further empower their oppressor(s). In fact, she stated that "oppression refers to structural phenomena that immobilise or diminish a group" (Young 1990: 39-45). The conditions and key concepts of injustice are divided into five different categories by Young as follows exploitation, marginalisation, cultural imperialism, powerlessness and violence. Among her *five faces of oppression* she identifies the links, influences and consequences between the individual and the social group and its social constructs.

Exploitation may exist in many places. However, it is mainly with regard to finance, the economy, wages and labour that exploitation is often utilised the most. The actual wages that a worker earns in comparison to the possible vast wealth that workers create through their labour power leads to exploitation (Marx, 1844). The difference in income between the workers and the large company owners in modern society is an existing and increasing example of exploitation. "This then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (Freire, 1970). The unequal distribution of wealth in working class areas in Dublin has led to a large number of working class people conducting manual labour employment. This means that any able bodied person can do the job so everybody can be replaced at any time. Low skilled, easily replaced workers earn only low wages (Marx, 1844). The second of Young's five faces of oppression is marginalisation.

Marginalisation refers to those who are marginalised in society. This may be where they are excluded, ignored or treated or looked upon discriminately for any reason. To stay with the worker/company owner example, social exclusion theory highlights that an individual or group may be marginalised, as in they may not be considered for work due to a variety of reasons that may stem from age, gender and disability to education, ethnicity or social class. Those who experience marginalisation are mainly those who have also experienced

disadvantaged backgrounds where poverty is high along with unemployment, lack of education, bad health etc. (Marx, 1844).

This is seen in Dublin where there are large numbers of people in prison from working class backgrounds who have not say state exams, have literacy issues and who are early school leavers (O'Donnell et. al, 2008). There are also figures to show that people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Dublin have less chance of progressing on to college than those from less disadvantaged backgrounds (O'Connell et. al, 2004).

Furthermore, the next *face of oppression* may be a consequence of exploitation and marginalisation. It is *powerlessness*, and this may be where one is powerless as to the work that they may have to do in order to earn an income. An example of this may be where workers in poor countries have to work extremely long shifts for less than minimum wage as they have little choice due to the state of their economy and government welfare systems. This renders them powerless. Even in first world countries some workers in low paying jobs are powerless as it is usually only those in higher positions such as managers roles or those with the means of production i.e. company owners that possess any power. This leads to high levels of inequality (Young, 1990: 39-45).

Cultural dominance/imperialism is the fourth of Iris Young's *five faces of oppression*. This may be where some group's cultural existence and history is seen by them as being somewhat superior to other groups in society. This could be in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class etc. (Young, 1990: 39-45). It is argued here that cultural dominance/imperialism exists between social classes in Ireland. This again reflected in research that highlights the link between educational attainment and social class in Dublin (O'Connell, et. al, 2004). Due to this, particular questions such as what could help you stay out of prison, what was the reason for finishing school and were there any supports available for you between leaving school and entering prison for the first time were asked of the research participants to explore their personal lived experience.

The fifth and final *face of oppression* is violence. Acts of violence have been reported throughout history and in this context violence has often been used as a means of control. Many institutions in Ireland such as workhouses, schools, prisons, public acts of defiance such as marches and demonstrations and even the family home have all been places where

acts of violence has existed as a means of control or power. Violence, along with exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness and cultural dominance are all reportedly higher in areas of high poverty and disadvantage which indicates extreme consequences of inequality in society (Young 1990: 39-45).

The term *misrecognition* (Marx, 1844) and the term *double consciousness* (Bourdieu, 1984: 170-174) are were people who are oppressed i.e. working class people from Dublin, feel oppressed, exploited, marginalised, powerless and culturally dominated as they see themselves through the eyes of the economically dominant groups in society (Young, 1990 : 39-45). These negative feelings lead to personal struggles with identity and masculinity as people attempt to regain or maintain some level of control. All the other aspects of oppression such as lack of education, employment, addiction and mental health etc. serve to enhance these struggles as violence is seen and used as a means of control inside homes and outside in communities (Kimmel, 1996: 45).

A social group is often looked upon with a shared identity instead of the individuals within the group being seen for what they are; individual. When a social group is seen as a minority group among society, this can have negative effects for the members of the group. Furthermore, the individuals of the group are looked upon with collective negativity by the wider society which is due to the wider social structure that exists among society.

The way a group is looked upon, may also be influenced by another dominant group. This highlights Young's Cultural Imperialism argument as one group can exert the "norms" of society and in-turn stereotype another group through differentiation and discrimination. In addition, this can also lead to the minority group seeing themselves as inferior. This is known as "double consciousness" where one views them-self as others view them which is similar to Marx' term 'misrecognition' (Young, 1990: 39-45).

"The oppressed, having internalised the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom" (Freire, 1970).

However, there have also been some criticisms of Iris Young's work. Her work has been criticised for placing an emphasis on differentiation which may lead to highlighting disadvantage for some and possible negativity. Furthermore, her work was also criticised as being a possible threat to social cohesion where a "them and us" division could be dangerous. This has said to also be a risk to victim politics as the social differences are highlighted (Ferguson & Nagel, 2009: 268).

By exploring the impact of early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin and conducting semi-structured interviews with males who have experienced both and are from working class backgrounds in Dublin, the work of Iris Young has been more than relevant. This research argues that the five faces of oppression Young writes about in the late 1980's have been reproducing themselves and this is shown through the research by (O'Connell et. al, 2004), (O'Donnell et. al, 2008) and is highlighted throughout this research which is undertaken between 2015 and 2016.

Functionalist, Marxist and Weberian Perspectives

A *functionalist* perspective may argue that social inequality is not only inevitable but it is necessary to act as an incentive for innovation, business development and the creation of wealth (Durkheim, 1893-1933).

However, arguments may also be made to say that the functionalist perspective may have a degree of truth provided that innovation, business development and the opportunities for the creation of wealth are equally afforded to all which is not the case. For example, health care and education are divided between private and public sectors based on finance. This does not provide incentive for innovation, business development and the creation of wealth it creates a divide among society which seems inevitable to increase (Durkheim, 1893-1933).

On the other hand, as mentioned, a *Marxist* perspective would centre around the theory that production or work was central to society and the human experience. For Marx the material basis of production was the main division in all societies. This perspective argues that two separate classes have emerged. Namely, the bourgeoisie who would be land or factory owners and the proletariat who own no capital and only have their labour as an

asset thus creating a divide and a subsequent inequality through what is described as class conflict (Marx, 1844).

Finally, a Weberian perspective argued that the issue of power was the main cause of class inequality. Furthermore, the specified areas of status, class and power could be the main sources of class inequalities. These areas may certainly be capable for creating class inequality although it may be argued that they are only a consequence of the stratification of classes and other issues that surround the origin of social class and inequality (Weber, 1922).

Karl Marx stated that society was arranged in a specific order to create a human workforce for the labour market and this workforce would largely comprise of the poorest people in society. This workforce was also male dominated which immediately created inequality between social classes and gender which Marx only recognised after economy and class (Marx, 1844).

In Marxist Educational Theory, Marx argued that a genuine education which is based on the scientific socialism he developed required the eradication of false consciousness from the minds of the Proletariat. False consciousness was the product of a dominant class ideology, which was imposed on and accepted by the subordinate class (Marx, 1844).

It may be argued that the social class system and within that, the education system in Ireland is also arranged in such a way. An example of this may be were upon completion of an entrance exam into secondary school, pupils are arranged into higher and lower classes. There are even different subjects in boys schools compared to girls schools with home-economics being more available for females and woodwork and technology being more available for males. This is inequality (Marx, 1844).

From interviews conducted with a number of working class males from Dublin combined with some theoretical work around the issue of social class and its subsequent effects, the concepts of structure and agency are investigated next.

Structure and Agency

According to Gramsci, humans are constantly battling between the optimism of the spirit and the pessimism of the intellect (Gramsci, 1971).

As already stated here, in Ireland today, if you are attending a school in a disadvantaged area of Dublin there is a 50% chance that you will not sit your Leaving Certificate and a 90% chance that you will not go on to college and a 30% chance that you will have literacy issues. This research argues throughout that this is as a form of oppression (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

And so it shall be argued that change is possible in the form of adult education and social action. An example of this in Ireland is, as mentioned here, there are detrimental educational consequences for people who live in disadvantaged areas of Ireland's capital Dublin. However, there have been increasing numbers of people from disadvantaged areas of Dublin and other counties returning to Adult Education since the economic downturn in 2008.

In 2013 it was reported that over 75% of school leavers go on to Higher and Further Education (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

This section explores some of the struggles that exist between structure and agency from a critical realist perspective where it is argued that structures are in place within society but that they are immobile and there is agency for movement and change through social action and formal and informal education. The themes of Structure & Agency, identity, Power and Social action are investigated through theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Talcott Parsons and Erving Goffman. However, conducting my first interview for this piece of work, one question I asked was:

What was the main reason why you finished school then at 16?

The research participant responded to by saying that his Grandmother raised him as his Mother was absent. It was his Grandmother who provided structure in the home. She walked him directly to school every day. He enjoyed the feeling of security and comfort that the Grandmother's structure and presence provided. However, she died when he was sixteen and he said *"when she died the family home just fell asunder and I just said fuck*

school, sorry for cursing but I just said to hell with school and I just touched on out of school. Nobody really cared in the house so I just left and bang I got straight into crime. Well I left school first and then after I was out of school a few months I just fell into the wrong crowd and got into crime, ye know what I mean?"

This is one glimpse into the harsh reality that raises issues of social class, identity, masculinity, power, choice theory and most certainly structure and agency. From one short question came such a harrowing insight into the lived struggle for a working class male from Dublin who has subsequently experienced early school leaving and imprisonment. This study aims to highlight that the gravity and significance of this answer from the interviewee cannot be ignored while comparing and contrasting the following theories.

Power

Pierre Bourdieu stated that power is culturally and symbolically created and that through structure and agency it is constantly re-legitimised. This happens through socialised norms and tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking which Bourdieu calls Habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 170-174). Bourdieu continues by saying that Habitus is neither determined by structures or a result of free-will, but created by an inter-play between the two over time. He states that these are dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures and that shape current practices and structures also. For Bourdieu, Habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, without any conscious concentration' (Bourdieu, 1984, 170-174).

However, in Erving Goffman's *symbolic interactionism*, he states that we have the power for social change through our interactions with others. How we act and interact holds much more freedom and agency. This social psychological perspective holds the view that social action is not the passive compliance of norms and values and that it is creative and dynamic. It is based on meaning, gestures, symbols and expectations. It is the product of more individual encounters (Wallace and Wolf, 1999: 218-244).

Although there are certain structures and laws in place within society that somewhat limit the freedom and agency that we have, we still maintain the potential to change many other social situations through our interactions. For example abortion and gay marriage laws in

Ireland have been changed through our interaction with others. Formal and in-formal education amongst the working class community in Dublin has seen social action and change by people in working class areas returning to Adult Education (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

It is also no surprise that the Irish Government has recently been extending Third level courses and making the means testing for Educational funding a lot harder. This will directly affect people from working class areas. However, the negative effects of Power and Politics instilled by the Irish Government may be about to be out-weighed by the positive social actions of the people which may have been acquired from the Education system that is structured in such a way that marginalised and discriminated against them in the first place (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

There are four functional requirements of the sociologist Talcott Parson's social system which are known as adaptation, goal-attainment, integration and latency (A.G.I.L). Adaptation requires a growing, changing society with opportunity. This is where society is structured in such a way for a certain amount of people to become medical surgeons or government officials and at the same time a certain amount of people to be cleaners and factory workers. For Goffman, this may be achieved through our *interaction with others*. Goal attainment is where the social system provides institutions for people to become such things. Third level colleges would be an example of such places and for Goffman this is where the participants may adopt a *dramaturgical* approach. Integration relates to places like institutions of possible integration like the education system and its schools. These may be places where Goffman's *front stage* and *back stage* theory is important. Finally, Latency refers to the mechanisms to bring people together like the national anthem or prayers etc. which may be in tune with Goffman's *impression management* and also where individual and collective identities are formed which is given further focus in the proceeding section (Wallace and Wolf, 1999: 218-244).

Identity

When the class system was formed in Britain in the late 19th century which as stated it spread across Europe and the United States many identities were formed as a result. Identities too are stratified, they are multi-layered. There are many things that contribute to the formation of identities. From a dramaturgical analysis point of view, how people perceive themselves which may be due to how others see them is a major factor in how they form their identities. Identities are about belonging and the sameness and differences to others. People have personal and social identities. This indicates an element of agency in how one forms their social identity. Their personal identity is like who their family are what age they are etc. which cannot be controlled.

Structures are also beyond people's control when their identities are being formed. These structures may be visible and invisible. Visible structures may be the house you grow up in or the surrounding buildings in your neighbourhood. Invisible structures may be the class, status or power you or your family possess. Each of these may already be in place when you are born which may limit your agency until later life. Your social action or behaviour through life may depend on your visible and invisible structures as they would be linked with your life experiences. Your life chances may also depend on the existing structures in your life upon birth (Bourdieu, 1984: 170-174).

By contrast, your life chances may change through your life regardless of structures you are born into such as class, race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation because everybody is afforded a "degree of agency" where they can make their own decisions and form their own identities. However, if a child from a working class background decides he would like to be a surgeon but his local community college does not teach the required subjects he needs because of lack of government funding for the school or if the teachers that teach the required subjects have difficulty teaching because of the high volume of students in each class then the child will struggle to get the required points to qualify for medical school which eradicates any agency he may possess. As mentioned earlier, in Ireland today, if you are attending a school in a disadvantaged area of Dublin there is a 50% chance that you will not sit your Leaving Certificate and a 90% chance that you will not go on to college and a 30% chance that you will have literacy issues (O'Connell, et. al, 2004). This is continually

argued as being a form of oppression where people are somewhat powerless, marginalised and then exploited in the labour market (Young, 1990: 39-45).

Social Action

Working class areas are reported as having the lowest voting numbers regardless of the fact that it is the people in these areas who are arguably most negatively affected when it comes to Governmental budgets. In the 2013 Seanad referendum there were approximately 143,046 votes which is less than 25% from all working class areas in the whole of Dublin.

However, in 2015 there was an increase of 56.2% with approximately 223,401 votes for the Marriage Equality referendum from working class area across Dublin. The result of this massive increase was that Ireland made global history by becoming the first country in the world to introduce a Yes vote for Marriage Equality. In recent years in Ireland there has been the introduction of the property tax and the water charges. People are now taking to the streets and protesting and marching against these introductions by the Irish Government. Most of these people are from working class areas. People within these communities are organising themselves and others around them in the name of social change. People have now seen that by voting, the law has been changed around gay marriage (Department of Education & Skills, 2013).

There have been a variety of theorists presented here to explore the over-arching concepts of structure and agency. This is done by looking at other relevant issues such as Power, Identity, Social action and Education. However, if you want to know what it is like to be a working class male from Dublin who has experienced early school leaving and imprisonment and who has also experienced the afore mentioned issues along the way, then that is who to ask and again when I asked my first interviewee...

So what would you say could be the most important thing that could help young males not end-up in prison in Ireland today?

The participant identified education and guidance as one of the ways that could help stop young people entering prison. He also stated that there were no agencies such as family or community support available when he was growing up.

“I was never guided when I was growing up, not even in the family home or by outside agencies, nothing like that. No-one ever stepped into my path and said I’ll give you a hand to do this or to do that. They were never there for me”.

This response has prompted a required focus on the issue of Masculinity which is concentrated on in what proceeds.

Masculinity

“Masculinity is a public enactment, demonstrated and proved in the public domain before the evaluative eyes of other men” (Kimmel, 1996: 45). Thus, suggesting that male identity is a central concern in a man’s life. Ideologies of Masculinity are constructed through the evaluative eyes of the brotherhood of man along with the male peer group where they are constantly sustained and reproduced (Kimmel, 1996: 45).

Erving Goffman stated that our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can rise through the little ways we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world while our sense of personal identity often resides within the cracks (Goffman, 1959).

Gender ideologies regulate ways of being in the world through assigning traits and therefore justifying roles. Through traits identified as being Feminine or homosexual, the dominant model of Masculinity is constructed. The *real man* model of Masculinity is seen as heterosexual, strong, brave and one who, especially to other men does not show his emotions. This is seen as weakness (Kimmel, 1994: 119-141).

The patriarchal order of Masculinity as strong and Femininity as weak is an ideological construction that appears to make this power structure seem natural and inevitable. However, the contradictions between the terms ideological construction and natural and inevitable will be highlighted throughout this entire research to show evidence to the contrary. There is a socially constructed gender order that has produced a battle for hierarchy. Amongst males, a symbolic display of being a *real man* and material success are judged as the two levels by which the hierarchical order appears and this, as already mentioned, is done through the evaluative eyes of other men (Kimmel, 1994: 119-141).

Evidence suggests that women have a considerable role in the masculinities of boys and men. Masculinity relates more to gender relations and the position of men in a gender order. Furthermore, as suggested above, masculinities can change and can be both internally complex and multiple which can have a considerable consequence for men (Connell, 2005).

Cause and Effect

Masculinity is not a stand-alone theme in this research. In addition to Structure & Agency, Identity, Emotional Intelligence and Choice Theory, how it is negotiated and experienced can depend on the level of Oppression due to the Social Class position that one lives through. This is highlighted continually throughout this research. The unequal distribution of wealth in working class areas in Dublin impacts on the resources available in these areas. Employment is one of the main areas affected. The high unemployment rates have led to issues of addiction and lack of education among the parents of the research participants. However, as the research participants are all male, they identified with their experiences of their fathers being unemployed and the impact this had on their lives growing up. Employment instead of education is a commonality that led to the research participants feeling a sense of responsibility to generate income for the household and *“getting on and doing what had to be done”*. Furthermore, this led to a suppression of emotions and feelings where they felt they had to play the role of *the “man of the house”*.

This overall experience of struggling and negotiating with their Masculinity and their fluid gender roles inside the home with their families and outside the home with their friends and in their communities will be explored further in the findings section (Chapter 4) and the analysis section (Chapter 5) of this work. However, these experiences are not individual or only connected to working class areas in Dublin.

The Masculinities of Men

Raewyn Connell's "Live Fast and Die Young" Chapter in her book entitled *Masculinities* highlights the similar experiences to that of my own research participants, working class men from Dublin, through the stories of five individuals who have experienced Masculinity challenges due to a multitude of societal and personal issues caused by the unequal distribution of Wealth with regard to one's Social Class position. Thus, it is argued that the main focus of Masculinity in working class society is the income. Furthermore, Masculinity can be formed between the family house-hold and the work-place which means that firstly, just because one exists in a capitalist society does not mean that employment is a guarantee. Secondly, when unemployment is experienced, the formation of masculinity can be altered and affected among the work-place and the house-hold (Connell, 1995, 2005).

An economic downturn can have detrimental effects for many. However, it is those that are already marginalised in society i.e. working class people who largely undertake employment in manual labour industries that can be affected most. That affect can also be generational where large numbers of youth grow up without any expectation of the stable employment that some models of working class masculinity can be organised upon (Connell, 1995, 2005).

The study of the five men revealed that livelihood is a prime issue for working class teenagers. In addition, the importance of personal family links is highlighted in negotiating the labour market. These men have also encountered the state in the form of the school which has been crucial to their path through life and the *failures* that they have experienced along the way. It has also shown that state power is no abstraction. It is a material presence in young men's lives within this class setting. This has a direct effect on the Masculinities of men as they experience what is seen as failure and they construct their own so-called Macho ways of dealing with it and responding to it which has been through violence, drug-use and crime which operates on both an individual and collective level which is described as a *Class Statement* (Connell, 1995, 2005).

Dis-connection with Fathers, school resistance, violence, crime, drug-use and imprisonment are all seen as trajectories based on the reactions to the powerlessness felt by young men in working class communities. An active process of grappling with a situation and constructing ways of living in it is central to the making of gender (Connell, 1995, 2005).

For many, this collective practice or performance of Masculinity amongst the social reproduction of deprivation, unemployment and multiple personal and social issues that emerge as a consequence, and which may be referred to as *Protest Masculinity* or a *Class Statement* is somewhat of a cul-de-sac where it does not lead to anything except more and more of the same through generations (Connell, 1995, 2005).

To suggest Masculinity as a practice that is performed by men and that the trajectories of resistance, substance abuse, violence and crime are reactions to their lived experiences may suggest that there is a degree of choice available to each individual. The various aspects and arguments around Rational Choice Theory are presented in the following piece as a way of exploring such suggestions.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory is explored here and as already mentioned, it is linked to the-fore mentioned issues of Identity, Masculinity and Social Class which is presented as a main influence on these issues. One of the main issues within Social Class is economics and the unequal distribution of wealth among social classes. This in-turn affects the employment rates which when low, can lead to negative outcomes in relation to not only identity and masculinity but also around Rational Choice.

It is said that among many Social and Political scientists, the theories are that all action is fundamentally rational. In addition, it is said that before people decide a particular course of action they weight-up the likely costs and benefits. This is where the term *Rational Choice Theory* has emerged and when applied to the social action of people it is known as *Exchange Theory* (Scott, 2000). However, something that is deemed rational to one individual may not be deemed rational to another and some of the possible reasons for this are investigated next.

Forms of Rationality

In Rational Choice Theories, individuals are said to operate on a means to an end basis. This is where people are motivated by the goals that are driven by their preferences. As it is not possible for individuals to achieve everything that they want, they act in a technical fashion to choose which of their goals are possible and how they will act to secure these goals.

Furthermore, individuals anticipate a number of outcomes to alternative actions and they calculate which will be best for them.

This suggests that a clear rational choice is made on an individual basis as rational individuals are said to choose the alternative that will produce the greatest outcome (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

Other forms of action are also recognised such as traditional, habitual, emotional and various forms of value-orientated action that exist alongside the 'purely rational' types of action. It is said that human behaviour is determined and that it is shaped by the rewards and punishments that each action carries.

The term Conditioning is known as reinforcement through rewards and punishments. This theory emerged in Psychology where B.F. Skinner elaborated on the work of E. L. Thorndike and Pavlov which centres on the law of effect and behaviourism (Schwartz & Lacey, 1982: 48).

Social Interaction as Social Exchange

In Social Interaction, mutual reinforcement influences individuals as one's actions may reward or punish others in a group. Joint behaviour develops through social exchange where one's behaviour can reinforce the behaviour of the other due to the outcomes of rewards and punishments. Money and approval are seen as two of the main factors that exist in social interaction with money being the economic exchange and approval being social exchange. However, it is more difficult to measure social exchange than it is to measure economic exchange. Social exchange emerges from social interaction and this can be affected by wider Power Relations which are discussed further here (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

Actualities within Rationality

"If people are able to obtain a particular goal only through one specific social relationship then they are highly dependent on that relationship and so will have little power to influence the 'price' that they have to pay" (Scott, 2000: 1-15). Collective action, Social norms and Social Structures are just three inter-linked areas that highlight actualities that

exist within the theories of rational action as social action. As mentioned above, individuals will calculate the value of an action and proceed in the most beneficial way. If so, then why would an individual act beneficially towards others in a Collective action setting? In addition, Social norms may see an individual take action that is influenced by a group, regardless of the possible outcome of punishment. An example of this may be where an individual commits a crime along with a group even though the personal punishment may out-weight the personal reward. Furthermore, is it to say that there are Social Structures that cannot be reduced to the actions of particular individuals? (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

This suggests that Choices are not always what is described as 'rational' here. However, there are always reasons for individual choices and these choices are influenced by a multitude of circumstances. One of which is Emotional Intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* states "Our genetic heritage endows each of us with a series of emotional set-points that determines our temperament. But the brain circuitry involved is extraordinarily malleable; temperament is not destiny, the emotional lessons we learn as children at home and at school shape the emotional circuits, making us more adept or inept at the basics of emotional intelligence which means that childhood and adolescence are critical for setting down the essential emotional habits that will govern our lives" (Goleman, 1996, p.13).

An example of this among this research is when I asked one of the research participants...What was the main reason why you finished school?

The research participant responded by explaining....*Shame was the main reason if I had to pick one but there were loads of reasons.*

ME: Shame in what way?

The respondent stated that he felt shame due to his Father coming home drunk every night and becoming the laughing stock of the estate. He also felt shame that he did not do well in school. His parents could not help him with homework as they had not gained much

education. He felt that by leaving school he could eradicate some of the shame he felt around his own educational ability compared to that of his class mates. He also felt that by leaving school he could get a job and give his Mother some money each week which he hoped would make her less angry.

“I left and got a job delivering vegetables and then in a cloak room in a Hotel so I had two jobs but I used to give most of the money to my Mam. After a while I met an older fella who was into a bit of robbing and I went with him cos I could get a few more quid for myself while giving my Mam most of my wages and to be honest I thought it was deadly going around with an older fella smoking dope and all-sorts. He was alright to me ye no but looking back, he used to put me in windows cos I was small then but I didn’t care. I used to take mad risks and I knew it but I would get a buzz from it”.

Rational Choice Theorists claim that people make individual choices based on individual gain. Calculations are made from a technical approach and people will always choose the action that produces the most reward and least punishment. However, there have been problems identified to these theories. The significance of considering the impact of Collective Action, Social Norms and Social Structures on one’s choice and course of action cannot be ignored (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

Conclusion

“No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption” (Freire, 1970).

Throughout this research the issues of Structure & Agency, Power, Identity, Masculinity, Rational Choice Theory and Emotional Intelligence have been presented as just some of the social and personal issues that can all be adversely affected by one’s Social Class position which is affected by the economy, the unequal distribution of Wealth and the availability of Employment to name just a few.

This research question asks; *what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin in Ireland?* These areas along with the afore mentioned theoretical literature and with the insights from the research participants will be explored throughout this research not only to cast a lens on what has gone before but also to suggest the possibility of liberation, emancipation and change.

An extensive in-depth explanation of how this complete work became possible is presented in the following Methodology chapter where the various stages of the research carried out are presented. The combination of Insider research from my own experience of being an early school leaver who has experienced imprisonment and biographical research from field notes taken after a recent visit to an education unit within a prison in Dublin are provided with relevance. In addition, the process of semi-structured interviews and some relevant theoretical literature that have been utilised for this research is also included.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This research explores the link between early school leavers and imprisonment among males in Ireland. The reason for this research is primarily linked to my own experience of being an early school leaver who has completed an eight year prison sentence. During my time in prison I soon came to realise that there was a common demographic amongst us. We were largely working class males who had not completed second level education. It was clear to see that there were also high levels of various addictions suffered amongst the other prisoners. Furthermore, there were serious mental health issues, serious literacy issues and an overwhelming sense of generational devastation amongst many prisoners with other family members such as fathers and brothers imprisoned together.

During my time in prison I felt like an observer of all this devastation, such was the extremely high level of social reproduction at its worst. I felt like an observer because although I shared a common demographic with many other prisoners such as being a male from a working class background, being an early school leaver, having not completed the Leaving Certificate exam and being from a lone-parent family, I did not have any addiction issues or mental health issues that I witnessed among a high number of other prisoners. Furthermore, I witnessed generational incarceration within families which was dis-similar to my own family. I had spent many years in prison and had many conversations with other prisoners and it became apparent that there was also a significant lack of family support available for many of the prisoners. Many prisoners never received any visits from family and friends and some remand prisoners could not afford or did they have anyone else around them who could afford to pay their bail money which may be as little as 100 euro. It soon became obvious that many of the personal and social issues experienced by many of the prisoners were also being experienced by their family members, friends and people in their wider communities. Although I am from a working class background and from a lone-parent family of six children, my past experience was not as disadvantaged as the experiences expressed by many other prisoners.

In addition, my mother had worked in a homeless shelter for many years. This led to her and some of her work colleagues deciding to open a women's refuge. This area of interest enabled me to learn about equality in society. My past personal experiences combined with

my experience of imprisonment influenced me to return to education while in prison and I chose an Open University course entitled *An Introduction to Social Science* as the area that I would study and aim to spend my life studying and working in due to the social issues of poverty, equality, gender, race etc. already being an integral component and influence on my life and which are discussed further in this research through Iris Young's *Five Faces of Oppression* (Young 1990 39-45).

It was the combination of influences that led to me feeling like an observer and upon reflection of these influences and experiences I have decided to entitle this research: *A Room with a View*. I spent Eighteen hours per-day in a very small prison cell with a very small window. However, the room had a view. I could see outside of that room in the sense that I realised that the social reproduction of devastation I experienced daily was social inequality due to the unequal distribution of wealth between social classes in Ireland. This observation helped to shape my view of the world and this research has situated me as an insider researcher.

Insider Research

My unique position of having the experience of imprisonment and experiencing many of the issues that are explored in this research provides me with a positive insight with regard to the research participants. My position also equates to an extremely high level of responsibility around the validity of the research data. "Organisational, professional and personal contexts will affect the way a piece of research and development is undertaken (Murray & Lawrence, 2000: 16-34). The reason for this topic being researched, the research participants that were approached and the education centre where I conducted the interviews have all contributed towards my position as an insider researcher. An insider researcher is in unique position in terms of the personal knowledge and also has a unique position in terms of the topic being researched. Unique access to a particular individual or group and to make distinctions between specific and general remarks and responses is due to the position of being an insider researcher (Murray & Lawrence, 2000: 16-34).

A high level of responsibility with regard to the validity of the research data is important in all aspects of research. In relation to insider research, this responsibility is similarly significant. In this context, due to the common demographic between the research

participants and I it was important that I did not seek out certain responses from the research participants. I had a responsibility to remain as impartial as is ever possible in any research.

It was decided to conduct one interview with a range of carefully constructed and ordered questions to test the process. This practice produced a number of themes such as social class, structure, agency, identity, masculinity, emotional intelligence and rational choice theory that are explored throughout this research. These issues had not been pre-determined or influenced. The relevant literature was then sourced to enhance these issues. This process and further interviews with different research participants highlighted that although there was a common statistical demographic between the research participants and I, each of us had our own unique individual experiences and influences that impacted on our commonalities. It is vital that gathering data as an insider is given careful attention especially concerning questions about insider bias and validity (Murray & Lawrence, 2000: 16-34).

Ontology

My ontological position which may be described as my view of the world is that there are a multitude of societal, familial and personal reasons that influence the demographic that is common in so many males before they enter prison for the first time. The experience of Imprisonment is simply and harrowingly another commonality amongst a large group of males from disadvantaged backgrounds (O'Donnell, et al, 2008). It is these areas that this research will focus on in the hope of change amongst policy and practice to reduce the numbers of males entering prison in Ireland.

Epistemology

This leads on to my epistemological position which may be described as the theory of knowing or how I will reinforce my ontological position. This will be conducted in three ways. Firstly, I will conduct one-to-one semi-structured interviews with a number of ex-prisoners who possess a similar demographic to my own and each-other, being that they too are early school leavers who have experienced imprisonment in Ireland. Secondly, I will review some of the relevant literature that provides a more in-depth insight into the

personal issues such as identity, masculinity, power, emotional intelligence and choice theory and how and why they are impacted by the oppression that is shaped by the structure of society. Finally, I will revisit a prison in Dublin to give a talk and workshop on adult education. This prison visit will enable me to compile field notes of the current situation for people in prison and to explore the level of structure and agency that currently exists for those in such a position.

Conceptual Framework

“A conceptual framework is a visual or written product that explains, either graphically or in a narrative form, the main things to be studied-the key factors, concepts or variables and the presumed relationships among them” (Huberman, 1994: 84).

Issues such as social class, the unequal distribution of wealth, oppression, power and politics, education and structure and agency that link, overlap and intertwine will be explored. These are the over-arching concepts that are linked to early school leaving and Imprisonment amongst males in Ireland. The more micro subsequent aspects of the over-arching concepts are issues such as masculinity, identity, emotional intelligence and choice theory will also be explored to provide the overall conceptual framework of this research. The emergent themes are examined from the theoretical perspectives of theorists such as Karl Marx (1844), Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Iris Young (1990), Erving Goffman & Talcott Parsons in Wallace & Wolf (1999), Raewyn Connell (1995), Daniel Goleman (1996) and John Scott (2000) respectively.

The research approach will be from a critical realist perspective as the view that the aforementioned over-arching concepts that comprise of societal institutions such as social class, power and politics etc. are not completely static and that change and fluidity and movement is possible by exploring and addressing the afore mentioned subsequent aspects of oppression, identity etc. that lend to shape the lives of those affected.

The reason a critical realist perspective is most appropriate here is that it establishes that things exist apart from our knowledge and experience of those things. In addition, it argues for a structured and differentiated view of reality in which stratification, difference and change is central. The relevance of this research adopting a critical realist perspective is

enhanced by Roy Bhaskar's Critical Realism theory which includes three aspects. Namely, *the Real, the Actual and the Empirical* (Bhaskar, 2000). The *Real* relates to the mechanisms that have generated the *Actual* events. The social construct of social class and Structure & agency in Dublin, Ireland is an example of the *Real* in this research. The *Actual* is actual events which have been generated by the mechanisms of the *Real*. This research explores the theories of masculinity, identity, emotional intelligence and choice theory etc. that have been affected due to the mechanisms of the *Real*. The *Empirical* relates to the observable experiences. This will be done by exploring the amount of early school leavers that experience imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland.

Previous Research

I continued with education upon release from prison and in 2014 I was in the final year of a three year degree course in Maynooth University when I decided as part of my Undergraduate research project that I would revisit the personal devastation amongst male prisoners that I had witnessed first-hand some years previously.

I conducted a research project with the title: *Lessons Learned: Educational Opportunities for Males in Irish Prisons* in June 2014. It was while I was undertaking this research that I became aware of a study that had been undertaken by UCD students in 2008 which had explored the recidivism (re-offending) rates amongst male ex-prisoners when the common demographic amongst males in Irish Prisons emerged.

Table 2.1 shows that in 2008, the Institute of criminology at University College Dublin, facilitated by the Irish Prison service, published a study of recidivism in Ireland. (O'Donnell, et. al, 2008). They studied the demographic characteristics of the Irish prison population. Most of the group studied were male, unmarried and were under 30 years of age. More than half the group had not taken any formal state exams and had no job before imprisonment. This was stated to be similar for those in comparable countries (O'Donnell, et al, 2008).

In response to this study which was highlighted by Alan Shatter, the then Minister for Justice, Equality and Law in Ireland in his annual speech to the Irish Penal Reform Trust in September 2011 he stated that...

“What is clear is that sending offenders to prison without tackling the underlying social conditions of their criminality – the lack of skills, education and employment while they are in prison only serves to reinforce the cycle of criminality” (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2011).

From my experience as a prisoner and from completing my research in 2014 it became clear that only a very small portion of prisoners engage with education while in prison. My previous research highlighted that most prisons have a population of around 500 prisoners at any one time and the student capacity within the prisons education units was around 100. Furthermore, there were classes such as Spanish and Computers which hold equal relevance in any education unit. However, with large numbers of students suffering with Literacy issues and with very little recognition or attention given to this, Spanish and Computers became less relevant which may be one reason for high recidivism rates (Educational Opportunities for Males in Irish Prisons, 2014).

What is Methodology?

A methodology is a general approach to studying a research topic. It establishes how one will go about studying any phenomenon. It presents the theory, method and practice to be undertaken and explains why it will be done in a particular way. Furthermore, it clarifies how it will be concluded with relevance to the research topic. In social research, two of the main examples of methodologies are: research using quantitative methodology and research using qualitative methodology. Like theories, methodologies cannot be true or false, only more or less useful. The most useful methodology adopted for this research is a qualitative methodology which is often concerned with inducing hypotheses from field research as opposed to a quantitative methodology which is often concerned with formulating specific responses through the method of surveys (Silverman, 1993).

Qualitative research

As previously mentioned, this research explores the link between early school leavers and imprisonment among males in Dublin, Ireland. In addition, the combination of my personal experience of early school leaving, imprisonment, sharing a common statistical demographic to male prisoners in Dublin and conducting previous research around Educational

opportunities for males in Irish prisons and the supporting literature on this subject has aided the formation of my world view, my ontological position.

My ontological position has also been highlighted throughout this research as being that there are a multitude of societal, familial and personal reasons that influence the demographic that is common in so many males before they enter prison for the first time. The experience of Imprisonment is simply and harrowingly another commonality amongst a large group of males from disadvantaged backgrounds. The reason for this is because my own experience of imprisonment heightened my awareness of this phenomenon of social reproduction where there were and still are generations of the same families sharing the same horrific experiences.

This is why a qualitative research approach is deemed most fitting for this research as it locates the researcher in the world. The methodology of qualitative research has developed over-time through the Social Science discipline that has identified, developed and highlighted that the world is made more visible by the interpretive, material practices within qualitative research. The meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a human or social issue is approached with assumptions and a world view and viewed through a theoretical lens (Creswell, 2009).

Semi-structured interviews which are a common research technique in qualitative research are usually conducted in a natural setting for the research participants. The research participants in this research were all interviewed in an Education centre that we all frequented. This provides a space for a relaxed atmosphere which enables the research participant to think and reflect in a familiar environment. Furthermore, this enables the researcher to observe a possible variety of reactions and different tones used by the research participants that may hold multiple meanings. Overall, a more rich, informative, safe interview can occur in a familiar setting which enhances the aspects of listening and inter-action that is given such significance in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009).

The natural setting for the semi-structured interviews is so significant because it can be the basis on which further aspects of qualitative research may prosper. The ability to observe personal meanings, reactions etc. exhibited by the research participants enables the researcher to interpret the process and decipher if any changes may be needed to research

questions or which theoretical avenue may be most appropriate to explore. This process also aids the researcher to conduct a more holistic approach to the research where theoretical links, findings of common themes and an in-depth analysis are each expanded upon due to initiating a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative Versus Quantitative

Qualitative research enables the researcher to hear and provide a space for possible silenced voices and identify variables that may be measured. A qualitative research approach provides a complex detailed understanding of a certain issue. This approach can empower individuals simply by listening to them and trying to discover, the position and perspective of the research participant on a certain issue and how they navigate their way through life while experiencing the impact of the issue. Qualitative research is used to develop theories when partial or statistical theories exist on the issue which may not capture the complexities of the issue (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative research is more relevant in certain modes of measurement. It is also quite often the basis on which qualitative research is conducted. It is more scientific, statistical and arguable limited with regard to in-depth knowledge of an issue. The why and the how of an issue is more difficult to encapsulate through quantitative research. "To level all individuals to a statistical mean overlooks the uniqueness of individuals in our studies" (Creswell, 2009).

There are a variety of qualitative Methods which may be used. However, the four major methods used by qualitative researchers and which will also be used for this research are: observation, analysing literature, interviews and recording and transcribing. The reasons this work conducts the methodology from a qualitative research approach are expanded upon in the methods section which follows.

Methods

This research is based on an overall qualitative method. The approach taken here is a mixed methods approach that consists of Literature analysis, semi-structured interviews with key informants and field notes taken from the afore-mentioned prison visit. A biographical research approach will be utilized from the prison visit. This is done in the form of taking

field notes after the prison visit as it is not ethical to interview prisoners or take notes inside a prison without the correct permission. This biographical research approach fits into the holistic approach that is possible within qualitative research and which has been alluded to in previous chapters here (Zinn, 2004). The literature that is used adds a theoretical lens to the interviews and field notes. The literature is analysed from the theoretical perspectives of the already mentioned theorists such as Karl Marx (1844), Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Iris Young (1990), Erving Goffman & Talcott Parsons in Wallace & Wolf (1999), Rouyn Connell (1995), Daniel Goleman (1996) and John Scott (2000) respectively.

There are a variety of other additions from theorists and sociologists which will each be highlighted throughout this work. The semi-structured interviews are all conducted with individual research participants that frequent the same education centre as I so there is a level of familiarity between each of us.

The method of sampling used for this research is a non-probability purposive and convenience method of sampling. Where certain elements i.e. the interviewees are selected for a specific purpose and this is known as a non-probability purposive sampling method. This method is utilised here due to the unique position and experiences of the elements in question (Schutt, 2009: 172-173).

They each possess a direct insight into the subject under research/analysis here which makes the reason they were specifically identified as purposive and elements of this purposive research will be revisited in the Ethics section that will follow. However, this does not make them generalizable as they are a small number of individuals with certain experiences of this research topic and not the entire population related to this area. The availability and access to each of these interviewees has deemed this method convenient as the cohort group all frequent the same education centre (Schutt, 2009: 172-173).

Furthermore, an inductive method of qualitative research was deemed most appropriate for this research as the overall aim was to gather relative data from various policies and literature and to contrast and compare it to the invaluable data collected from the semi-structured interviews in order to obtain an overall better level of understanding around the issues that link early school leavers and imprisonment amongst males in Ireland.

Research participants

It was decided to interview representatives that would provide a wide range of perspectives due to the diversity of their experiences of being male early school leavers who had experienced imprisonment in Ireland. A current manager of an educational centre that caters for ex-prisoners, a teacher who currently teaches in Irish prisons who were both also once prisoners within Irish prisons and a number of ex-prisoners who's age range varies roughly from 20-60 years of age have been chosen as each has a unique experience and opinion on the main research topic of this work. The range in age will add weight to the harsh reality amongst the individuals over four decades in order to highlight the reality of social reproduction in this research area. This diverse group would help to make the findings reliable (Schutt, 2009: 172-173).

Access Negotiations and Recruitment

Access to the manager, teacher and ex-prisoners was available due to a personal knowledge and engagement with an education centre in Dublin that is often frequented by ex-prisoners who are at various levels of educational attainment and who are experiencing and in need of a wide range of personal and societal issues. The help of a current teacher in a prison in Dublin enabled me to gain access to the prison to discuss adult education and highlight various supports for people currently in prison. This also enabled me to take reflective field notes post visit. These methods of access, negotiations and recruitment enabled the recruitment of specific interviewees that would only serve to en-rich the content of this research. The interviewees were initially approached on a face-to-face basis due to my connection with the education centre. At this point each interviewee agreed to take part and each expressed an eagerness about the research in question. A copy of the proposed research questions were given to each of the interviewees and an explanation about the format of the interviews i.e. length of time, confidentiality, consent forms, recording methods etc. was explained to each which they all understood and agreed to.

Data Collection Methods

Before data collection began, a detailed explanation was given to each of interviewees as to the purpose of this study. It was then again explained to the interviewees that the use of an electronic recording device was to be used and each interviewee agreed to this. This would enable a transcription of the interviews and an analysis of the data in detail. It was also put to the interviewees that field notes may be taken during interviews and that other questions may be included when deemed necessary. In addition, it was explained that each of the interviews would last roughly between 30-45 minutes. It was also explained that the interviewee had they had the option to stop the interview at any time and that the recorded information would be immediately deleted in their presence if they so wished. Furthermore, they were all informed that they would receive a copy of the individual transcripts which they could change with me if they chose. Each of the interviews would take place in an education centre in Dublin at different times on different days which suited all parties involved. It must be noted that each interviewee was extremely accommodating with regard to all aspects of the data collection method.

Data Handling and Approach to Data Analysis

All data was handled with the strictest of confidence. No real names are used during transcription in order to abide by the confidentiality agreement with the interviewees. All finalised data shall be stored electronically and safeguarded with an electronic password as agreed upon with the interviewees. The approach to data analysis taken here will be to categorise the data into various themes. Furthermore, the themes shall be analysed in order to highlight the links between them. Themes such as oppression, identity, masculinity, emotional intelligence etc. linked to broader themes of social structures and institutions such as social class in order to provide thematic analysis around early school leavers and imprisonment for males in Ireland as identified by the interviewees provide a structure to the data analysis which will be provided in the latter stages of this work. Further issues of policy, funding, equality and structure and agency will categorise and diversify the data collected from the interviewees.

Methodological Limitations

Most research methods carry a number of benefits and limitations to them. The benefits of the research conducted here are detailed perspectives from the ex-prisoners and those who have worked or currently work directly within the education section of Irish prisons. This provides this research with a number of unique insights into the individual experiences within the common demographic shared by the research participants. In addition, the diversity of the experiences of the interviewees is hugely beneficial. Combining the data gathered with the literature chosen provides the research with a detailed insight into the topic.

One of the limitations that may present itself in the initial stages of the qualitative interviews and data analysis without being addressed accordingly is the fact that I have spent time in an Irish prison and have experienced a number of aspects in relation to the link between early school leavers and imprisonment for males in Ireland. However, this study was carefully thought out with that in mind and a conscious decision was made to remain as impartial as possible throughout the entire process as the issues of positionality and bias were taken into account. A number of ethical considerations were required and are discussed in the following section.

Ethics

Research ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to in the process of this study. The guidelines used were in relation to the safety of the interviewees in participating in this research. Each interviewee participated voluntarily and could opt out at any time and they were given consent forms that explained the entire process. Each interviewee was of sound mind and fully aware of the process in which they had agreed to participate. Their identity is confidential and they are aware of exactly who I am and what the purpose of the study is which is deemed ethical practice when conducting semi-structured interviews (Schutt, 2009: 172-172).

Ethical Considerations

The reason for conducting purposive research required ethical consideration as the particular interviewees were specifically chosen as I knew the participants due to my connection with the education centre in which we all frequented. I was aware that a number of individuals who do frequent the education centre are at various levels of addiction and drug-use. Furthermore, a number of individuals also suffer from varying levels of mental health issues. This led to the interviewees being purposively selected because as far as I knew they did not suffer from any of these issues and it was surmised that they would be more suitable to give consent to the interviews and be fully coherent in relation to the entire process. In addition, the findings of the interviews will be separated from the analysis in this work as it is not entirely clear if the interviewee's have made personal connections between some of the issues that they have discussed. As the researcher, the links have become as clear as personally possible which highlights the issue of consent being given for the findings but not the actual analysis. For this reason it has been ethically considered and decided to separate the findings and analysis sections in this research to minimise unethical practice (Schutt, 2009: 1-15).

Research Questions

The research questions had to be carefully considered and this was done with a lot of help from a University Lecturer and supervisor of this research. The reason for this was due to my prior knowledge of the participants and our shared experience of imprisonment. A negative discourse of the prison system was not the desired topic for this research. Furthermore, consideration was required around the possibility that the participants may have initially agreed to participating due to not wanting or knowing how to say no to me. In addition, the questions had to be carefully considered as the participants may have attempted to answer questions in a way that they thought the research required as we were all ex-prisoners and the research linked to imprisonment which may be described as elements of *insider research* which has been discussed earlier. As previously mentioned, the questions were carefully considered and ordered to avoid this as much as it may be possible and upon interview analysis, this has been satisfactory. Here are the questions that I put to the research participants.

Questions for Research participants

Q.1 What do you think will be the main reason for staying out of prison?

Q.2 What age were you when you left school?

Q.3 What was the main reason why you finished school?

Q.4 What way was school looked upon by your family or community at that time?

Q.5 How did you fill your time when you were finished with school?

Q.6 What age were you when you had your first experience of criminal activity?

Q.7 What was the time difference between leaving school and entering prison for the first time?

Q.8 Did you receive any community education or welfare supports in the time between finishing school and entering prison for the first time?

Q.9 What would you say could be the most important thing that could help young males not end-up in prison in Ireland today?

Q.10 If you could change anything you wanted about your past experiences in relation to entering prison, what would it be?

Reflection & Analysis

Upon reflection the data collection and methods have been satisfactory. Each of the participants has expressed pleasure in having their voices heard. This was extremely important as the research and the research interviews unearthed many individual and personal experiences among the participants. Each of the participants are happy to be re-interviewed should the situation arise. Due to the harrowing reality of some aspects of the participant's experiences, it has been decided to conduct workshops and sessions in the education centre that will be centred around some issues such as masculinity, identity and emotional intelligence although a direct link between the research and the workshops will not be revealed.

Upon analysis of the semi-structured interviews some common themes of masculinity, identity and rational choice theory emerged in relation to oppression, power and social class. It is these themes that will be presented later in this work along with other aspects that link male early school leavers and imprisonment in Ireland.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

The research question here asks what impacts the link between early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. This section of the research presents the findings from the mixed methods approach taken here. This approach has utilized a combination of theoretical literature, semi-structured interviews and field notes from a recent visit to an education unit inside a Dublin prison. The research process has found that there are multiple impacts on early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. The semi structured interviews unearthed various personal and social issues such as social class, structure, agency, masculinity and rational choice theory as the main issues. Furthermore, issues of oppression, power, identity and emotional intelligence reside within these issues as a consequence.

This section displays the findings from theoretical literature from theorists such as Young (1990), Marx (1844), Bourdieu (1984), O'Donnell (2008), O'Connell (2004), Wallace and Wolf, (1999), Kimmel (1996), Connell (1995, 2005) and Scott (2000). In addition, a number of quotes from semi-structured interviews are included as they are found to give voice to the work from the theoretical literature.

As mentioned previously here, the group of research participants were sourced through a purposive, convenient research sampling method. This was due to a personal link to an education centre in Dublin that we all frequent. The group largely consist of the age range of 40-60 years of age. However, there is one research participant who is in the 20-30 age range and this interview was conducted and included for the specific purpose of observing any possible difference of perspective as to the impacts of early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland.

Each of the research participants have experienced early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. The demographic of the group while they were in prison mirrors the research undertaken by O'Donnell et. al, (2008) which can be seen in table 2.1 here where they found that most of the group studied were male, unmarried, and were under 30 years of age. More than half the group had not taken any formal state exams and had no job before imprisonment.

However, although these statistics were common for the research participants while they were in prison, the process of the interviews has also found that this group in particular do not fit these statistics anymore. It is the reasons why they became part of the aforementioned common demographic initially and how they have moved from these statistics that has been found to be most significant in asking what impacts the link between school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland.

Social Class

As already mentioned, Iris Young stated that “oppression refers to structural phenomena that immobilise or diminish a group” (Young 1990: 39-45). The conditions and key concepts of injustice are divided into five different categories by Young as follows: exploitation, marginalisation, cultural imperialism, powerlessness and violence.

The stratification of classes, the unequal distribution of wealth, the economy, employment opportunities and wages is where exploitation is seen the most in Dublin. The actual wages that a worker earns in comparison to the possible vast wealth that workers create through their labour power leads to exploitation (Marx, 1844).

Marginalisation refers to those who are marginalised in society. This may be where they are excluded, ignored or treated or looked upon discriminately for any reason (Marx, 1844).

Powerlessness may be where one is powerless as to the work that they may have to do in order to earn an income (Young, 1990: 39-45).

Cultural dominance/imperialism is where some group’s cultural existence and history is seen by them as being somewhat superior to other groups in society. In this context, this could be in relation to social class. The term *misrecognition* (Marx, 1844) and the term *double consciousness* (Bourdieu, 1984: 170-174) are were people who are oppressed i.e. working class people from Dublin, feel oppressed, exploited, marginalised, powerless and culturally dominated as they see themselves through the eyes of the economically dominant groups in society (Young, 1990: 39-45).

Violence, along with exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness and cultural dominance are all reportedly higher in areas of high poverty and disadvantage which indicates extreme consequences of inequality in society (Young 1990: 39-45).

"I can only ever remember my Dad doing odd jobs here and there. I suppose he did a bit of everything and a whole lot of nothing really. He was a bouncer (a doorman) and he did a bit of labouring here and there and an odd bit of painting and decorating but that was it and it wasn't much. The thing was that we (the family) never saw a penny of any of it. If he went off to work he wouldn't come home till all hours and he'd be steaming drunk and penny-less. My poor mam worked her ass off doing two jobs with six kids to mind and feed at the same time. It really affected me and as soon as I got to second year in school I left cos there was jobs going picking spuds with a local farmer but sure we were ripped off cos we were just kids but I thought I was loaded and I'd feed myself and get my own stuff which I guess made it easier on my mam. My older sister had left after her inter-cert and was hairdressing so she had her own money too. We would both mind our younger sisters and buy them sweets and pay for stuff for the dinner if we needed it and in a small way it all helped my mam. So that's the main reason why I left, I saw a few quid at the end of the week and that was all that counted back then"

This response from one of the research participants highlights the ripple effect that a lack of stable employment and income can affect an entire family. So much so that the children in that family will leave school at a very early age without any significant academic qualifications in order to earn a minimal weekly wage in exchange for employment in a low skilled job. These circumstances have enforced the cycle of exploitation. This was highlighted from another much younger participant when he stated:

"I was wasting my time in that school and sure I never really even went in the first place. My brothers and sisters all left early. Loads of people in the area left early cos it was just a waste of time. You couldn't learn anything if you wanted to. The school I went to was mad. Fights every day and people stoned an all. The teachers couldn't do a thing, they were probably afraid. And anyway, I could get a bit of money for myself staying at home ye no. I wouldn't make a penny sitting in school all day, pure waste of time".

In addition, when I conducted a workshop on adult education inside a Dublin prison in 2016, the issue of employment and income was at the forefront of the group discussions that occurred. When I asked the group what it was that interested them in adult education they clearly identified a need for employment and to be able to provide for their families. Most of the group which had approximately eight people in it, had not completed secondary school and had not ever been employed for longer than six months. They had also re-engaged with various forms of education while being in prison and around half of them identified a sense of achievement in completion of work and a further interest in continuing with education after they are released with the main reason being that they did not see any hope of employment for someone with no skills, training or experience especially when that person has just been released from prison. These findings are in conjunction with Young's five faces of oppression and the previously mentioned work by (O'Donnell et. al, 2008) and (O'Connell et. al, 2004).

Structure and Agency

The literature utilized for this research has shown that the structure of society that arranges social classes in their order in Ireland means that if you are from a working class background there is less chance of educational attainment and progression and this affects the chances of employment and income.

In fact, as already stated here, in Ireland today, if you are attending a school in a disadvantaged area of Dublin there is a 50% chance that you will not sit your Leaving Certificate and a 90% chance that you will not go on to college and a 30% chance that you will have literacy issues. This research argues throughout that this is as a form of oppression (O'Connell, et. al, 2004).

However, this research has also found that there are elements of agency available and that people do have the power to respond to such a negative social construction even though it is shown to be more difficult and limited.

Pierre Bourdieu stated that power is culturally and symbolically created and that through structure and agency it is constantly re-legitimised. This happens through socialised norms and tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking which Bourdieu calls Habitus (Bourdieu,

1984: 170-174). Bourdieu continues by saying that Habitus is neither determined by structures or a result of free-will, but created by an inter-play between the two over time. He states that these are dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures and that shape current practices and structures also. For Bourdieu, Habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, without any conscious concentration' (Bourdieu, 1984: 170-174).

"That's what happened to me in the Unit (Mountjoy Training Unit) I started going back to the school, I just got an opportunity to go to college then. It wasn't even in my head to go to college. I was just going to school for a pass-time but then I just loved it and I got into doing sports, health and fitness and I loved it and that was it. Doors just started opening and now I'm out in college, you know what I mean?? Just for doing the right things, it's brilliant it is".

This quote from one of the research participants emanated the statements and actions that were taking place within the Dublin prison that I visited. During a group discussion almost all the group identified an initial return to education to manage the boredom of prison life. However, during the process of their interaction with other prisoners from different parts of the prison and especially the staff, they saw it as somewhat of a social aspect to their restricted lives inside. They stated that they had been treated very well by the prison education staff and they mentioned being treated like a human and not a prisoner. I summarised that they had been provided with a space to use their limited, difficult but powerful agency and they had taken it by choice.

To continue, the above mentioned literature, the quote from the research participant and the biographical research undertaken inside the prison all reflect the literature written by Erving Goffman where in *symbolic interactionism*, he states that we have the power for social change through our interactions with others. How we act and interact holds much more freedom and agency. This social psychological perspective holds the view that social action is not the passive compliance of norms and values and that it is creative and dynamic. It is based on meaning, gestures, symbols and expectations. It is the product of more individual encounters (Wallace and Wolf, 1999: 218-244).

Furthermore, it was interaction with others that another of the research participants stated provided him with the power to utilise his agency.

“I had been in and out for years and I had been up to all sorts. Looking back now I can see what helped me to stay out of prison and I didn’t know it then but it was actually on my last sentence ever which was over 20 years now that I got involved in education. I had been using (taking drugs) for years and my life was a wreck altogether. Anyway, I had a few years to do and I decided that I was gunna brush up on my reading and writing while I was inside. I started doing little bits and I absolutely loved it. Within two years I had done some study skills courses and I was encouraged to apply for an Open University course. I did one of the social studies ones, I can’t even remember which one now but anyway I passed with flying colours and I was delighted with myself. I got out then and I did nothing with it cos I was straight back into a life of madness. I was seeing an addiction counsellor at the time and I told them about what I did in prison and they sent me to a therapy group but the therapy group was held once a week in a spare room in a library. This meant that I could go and do my group and pick out some books and taking out books for one week at a time meant that I would read them or take notes from them in one week and that I would have to go to the therapy group cos I couldn’t afford to owe money to the library. When I think of it now, that counsellor was a genius. Anyway, the group therapy was the first time ever I had the chance to explore a lot of issues about my past and how I felt and I really unravelled. So much so that I did get off drugs completely and I am still clean to this day and I got funding to continue with studying and I completed a degree in addiction studies in Trinity and I have been working on drug task force units and in education centres for nearly 20 years and I have a life. And all I wanted to do was brush up on my reading and writing” (laughter).

As stated earlier in this research, it is not only formal education that enhances agency for change. In-formal education has also been just as effective. The combination of formal and in-formal education has led to social action and social change not just inside prison education units but also in the working class communities of Dublin where it has been reported here, that the combination of formal and in-formal education has led to more people voting in nationwide referendums and more people marching and protesting against Government implementations. This magnifies that there is a degree of agency for those in

working class communities in Dublin regardless of the oppression of the structure of society (Department of Education & Skills, 2013).

Masculinity

“Masculinity is a public enactment, demonstrated and proved in the public domain before the evaluative eyes of other men” (Kimmel, 1996: 45). Thus, suggesting that male identity is a central concern in a man’s life. Ideologies of Masculinity are constructed through the evaluative eyes of the brotherhood of man along with the male peer group where they are constantly sustained and reproduced (Kimmel, 1996: 45).

Further findings from the literature gathered for this research have highlighted that women have a considerable role in the masculinities of boys and men. Masculinity relates more to gender relations and the position of men in a gender order. Furthermore, masculinities can change and can be both internally complex and multiple which can have a considerable consequence for men (Connell, 2005).

These two findings are explained through the responses from two different research participants who understandably have varying experiences around masculinity.

“I spent most of my time messing about and getting into trouble after I left school if I’m honest. I got into a lot of fights and I suppose I had a bit of a reputation back then. I had four older brothers and I was the youngest boy in the house. There was always fights in and around the estate in them days, there probably still is. You had to fight or you’d be seen as weak and people would make your life hell. You would probably think that having four older brothers would mean you were grand and nobody would touch you. It was the opposite for me. If I got in a fight, people would say ah he only won cos his brothers were there or if you beat him they will batter you. As if to say that I wasn’t winning off my own back, it was just cos of them. So I would arrange fights away from them and say nothing just so I could win and nobody would be able to say anything ye no. That made me worse I suppose cos if I went anywhere and none of my brothers were there I’d be looking for bigger lads and older lads to fight just so I could show everyone what I could do. People were proper afraid of me then cos they knew I’d fight anyone and it’s mad now thinking of it but back then it felt good. If I was out with the lads in town or anything and anyone was starting trouble or annoying

the lads they knew I'd be straight in no questions asked and I'd batter whoever. That made me feel good but I could tell that me mates were afraid of me a bit and I suppose that was good and bad in a way cos they would be afraid to rip you off or anything but they knew you had their back if anything happened ye no"

This is also linked to one of Iris Young's five faces of oppression which is violence (Young, 1990). In this work it is said that violence is used as a means of control and that acts of violence are reported to be higher in disadvantaged areas as other negative experiences merge to somewhat influence the fear of having a lack of control in one's life.

"I spent my time hanging around the estate with the lads after I left school. I would help out at home though so that kinda kept me out of trouble for a while at least. I never got done (arrested) for anything major, stupid stuff really. Minor drug possession and a bit of stolen goods that's it and I had a few stupid sentences. I wouldn't call myself a criminal I just have a record now unfortunately. So ye I would smoke a bit (cannabis) and have a few cans alright but nothing major. As I said I'd be at home most of the time anyway. I had a few younger sisters who were all in school, they were real decent kids so I'd help out minding them an all when me ma was at work. My da was nowhere to be seen so I suppose I was like the man of the house and I'd always give my sisters advice about keeping away from lads an all that. I got on real well with me ma cos I used to help her. I don't think she minded me quitting school cos I was handy to have around and she could rely on me. I started selling a bit of hash, not much but just a bit to get my own free and have a few quid in me pocket. I used to tell me ma I won it on a football bets cos I love the oul football. I'd say she knew I couldn't be that lucky but she was probably afraid to ask. I'd buy my sisters chips and a few sweets so they'd be happy out. It was grand then but looking back now I was doing nothing really with my time only wasting it and that's why I ended up in prison I'd say".

These negative feelings lead to personal struggles with identity and masculinity as people attempt to regain or maintain some level of control. All the other aspects of oppression such as lack of education, employment, addiction and mental health etc. serve to enhance these struggles as violence is seen and used as a means of control inside homes and outside in communities (Kimmel, 1996: 45).

The prison visit unearthed some issues around masculinity although it was difficult as the time and aspect of the conversations were limited in relation to this. However, as previously mentioned, some of the people who were involved in the workshop I conducted did identify with a need to look after their children and girlfriends. They saw this as one of the reasons to re-engage with education while in prison. Not only did they want to be looked upon with respect by their children and girlfriends, they also wanted to be looked upon with respect by their fellow in-mates while in prison. This incorporates Raeywin Connell's work where she discusses the gender influences experienced by five men from working class backgrounds the chapter entitled *live fast die young* in her book *Masculinities* (Connell, 1995, 2005).

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory has been found to be somewhat of a contentious issue among the formulation of theoretical literature for this research. On one hand rational choice theorists have stated that individuals make decisions based on one common goal where they weight up the possible outcomes from any action and they choose the action that will be most profitable for them as an individual. This is known as exchange theory (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

By contrast, rational choice theory has also been said to have outside influences where actions may be decided upon and taken by an individual in order for others to benefit also. This can lead to an individual making choices for the gain of others and the demise of themselves in other ways. This is known as rational choice theory through social action (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

"I have not committed a crime for nearly ten years now maybe speeding or something but nothing too bad. I did a few big stretches (prison sentences) for armed robbery and drug trafficking so I mean nothing like that ye no. I was taking drugs for years and that's what led to me robbing and dealing. I was involved with people who were and probably still are major criminals. It was hard to get away from and to be honest the prison sentence helped me get my life together.

This research participant's re-engagement with education while in prison enabled him to have a daily structure upon release and continue with education. The newly available options have arguably changed his life.

I have a decent job now with a decent wage and I have a little daughter and I'm engaged to be married. Every day for the past ten years I make a choice not to commit crime. It's still hard even now. When money is tight at home I still think to myself that I could make a couple of phone calls and I could easily make a fortune in a few hours. That's actually the thoughts that have been going through my head regularly for the past ten years. I don't though cos I have loads to loose now and it took me a long time and a lot of hard decisions to get myself to where I am now"

It is argued that the education attained by the research participant has afforded him perspective and reflection which has worked in his favour. The massive changes in this individual's life highlight the potential for individuals when they have more equal opportunities available to them, such as with education.

The question of what do you think will be the main reason for staying out of prison was also asked of the youngest research participant, to which he answered:

"I dunno really, it's a tough one to answer. I have no plan to commit a crime but you can never say never. I'm gunna keep coming here (an education centre) for as long as I can so that should keep me out of trouble. Also if people keep their nose out of my business then I'll keep my nose out of theirs. The place is full of rats (garda informants) and if someone gets nicked (arrested) then that's all it takes. If it's someone who doesn't like me or something then they could tell lies about me and get me nicked but if that's me and I got nicked in a group cos one of my mates did something I'm not gunna rat, no way. I'd rather get done for something I didn't do than rat. Apart from that I like it here, I am linked in with some of the staff and they all seem dead sound so ye I'll just keep coming here and hope for the best".

This is linked to the work by Scott on rational choice theory where the significance of considering the impact of Collective Action, Social Norms and Social Structures on one's choice and course of action cannot be ignored (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

There was a combination of individuals making choices for individual gain and individuals making choices through social action which is impacted by collective action, social norms and social structures with regard to the prison visit. As mentioned before, the group had largely decided to re-engage with education while in prison for a variety of reasons which re-enforces the earlier point that rational choice theory is complex and somewhat contentious (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

Conclusion

The findings from the theoretical literature used, the semi-structured interviews conducted and the field notes taken from a recent visit to an educational unit in a Dublin prison have been depicted here in order to put forth the combination of information that has emerged during the process of researching what impacts the link between early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. The function of this process has been formulated to provide the opportunity for analysis of the multiple personal and social issues that have been exposed during the process. It is these issues of social class, oppression, structure, agency, identity, masculinity, rational choice theory and emotional intelligence that are explored through in-depth analysis that follows.

Chapter 5

Analysis

Introduction

This research topic question has asked what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. Initially, the research was going to ask the question as to whether there is a lack of emotional intelligence in the educational curriculum in Ireland. This initial idea stemmed from previous research that I conducted during my undergraduate degree in 2014 which looked at the educational opportunities for males in Irish prisons. It was during the process of that research that I came across a study undertaken in 2008 which is highlighted in table 2.1 in this research. The Institute of criminology at University College Dublin, facilitated by the Irish Prison service, published a study of recidivism in Ireland (O'Donnell, et al, 2008). They studied the demographic characteristics of the Irish prison population. Most of the group studied were male unmarried and were under 30 years of age. More than half the group had not taken any formal state exams and had no job before imprisonment. This was stated to be similar for those in comparable countries (O'Donnell, et al, 2008).

This study combined with my own experience of imprisonment and my research in 2014 fuelled my interest into what was influencing the high number of males in working class areas leaving school early and also a high number of working class males experiencing imprisonment. It was during my research proposal with my supervisor that I decided to change my research topic question to ask what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. This was changed in this way to hopefully unearth more personal information directly from a relevant group of males from Dublin who had each experienced early school leaving and imprisonment.

Although, this research has been gathered through semi-structured interviews, relevant theoretical literature and field notes from a personal visit to an education unit in a Dublin prison, the information is presented as valid in relation to the personal and individual experiences from the research participants. The study by O'Donnell et al, (2008) shows a common demographic among the research participants of that particular study. That is not to say that those statistics are true for all males in prison. Furthermore, this study provides information gathered from semi-structured interviews from a group of males that possess a similar demographic to that of the research participants in the O'Donnell et al (2008) study.

However, it must be noted that each individual experience of early school leaving and imprisonment presented here is not to be seen as being true for others with similar experiences of early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. This research welcomes any challenges or additions of any kind such is the significance of the issues studied here and the personal level of interest in further and continual research in this area.

An analysis of the afore-mentioned theoretical literature, the semi-structured interviews and the field notes taken from a visit to an education unit inside a Dublin prison is documented in the following section. The broader issues of social class, structure, agency, masculinity and rational choice theory are analysed while considering other issues of identity, power, gender roles and emotional intelligence as major factors that impact early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland.

Social Class

Social class has been found to be an important factor when asking what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. Each of the research participants identified one of the reasons for leaving school initially as being somewhat of a felt necessity due to a lack of income as one or both of their parents were unemployed at the time. A lack of employment and income has been identified as being linked to the unequal distribution of wealth between social classes which has been sighted as a form of oppression (Young, 1990: 39-45).

This form of oppression directly affects employment and income as workers are exploited due to their low skilled labour ability which also means that when the mostly manual industries suffer any type of an industry decline, there are masses of working class people left unemployed (Marx, 1844). In addition, an emphasis is put on employment and income over education in working class communities as a means of survival so automatically the chances of educational attainment and/or progression are significantly reduced (O'Connell, et al. 2004).

This reflects O'Donnell's study in 2008, my observations during my personal experience of imprisonment and the visit to an educational unit in a Dublin prison in 2016 where it was

noted that there are high numbers of people from working class areas in prison with a lack of educational attainment to-date (O'Donnell, et al. 2008).

The evidence gathered throughout is interpreted as being that there has been and still is an un-equal distribution of wealth between social classes in Ireland. This has led to high levels of oppression and exploitation in terms of the labour market. High unemployment has ensued which has affected working class communities in multiple social and personal ways which will be discussed further in the proceeding sections. Children of unemployed parents have been brought up in various levels of poverty which has led to a lack of emphasis being put on education and the need for income in order to survive. A consequence of this has seen high numbers of males in working class areas in Dublin leave school without any significant educational attainment. The cycle of unemployment reproduces itself and different levels of crime soon follow.

Thus, there are high numbers of working class males in prison with a lack of employment or educational history which shows that social class is one issue that impacts early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland. However, this is not static and it is argued that there is agency within this structure of society. It is these areas that are analysed next.

Structure and Agency

As mentioned above and throughout this research, in Ireland today, if you are attending a school in a disadvantaged area of Dublin there is a 50% chance that you will not sit your Leaving Certificate and a 90% chance that you will not go on to college and a 30% chance that you will have literacy issues (O'Connell, et. al, 2004). However, each of the research participants who have all experienced early school leaving and imprisonment have all returned to education during or after their time in prison. They have each returned to adult education and at the time of research, each of them were engaging well, had been out of prison for varying amounts of time of no less than two years apart from one participant who has only recently been released from prison and who has engaged with adult education for the first time in over twenty years. Furthermore, all but one of the participants who was much younger than the rest, clearly identified education as a means of engaging with society and not returning to prison.

To continue, each of the participants highlighted education as the main reason for young people to never enter prison. Social interaction through engagement with education has been interpreted as a major factor in forming the individual identities of the research participants as they identify as students, employees, managers and research participants in order to help others instead of prisoners or ex-prisoners. This action has been identified by Erving Goffman as symbolic in terms of its meaning for one's identity and subsequently one's life (Wallace and Wolf, 1999: 218-244).

These individual actions are also interpreted as becoming collective where the increase in the numbers of working class people returning to adult education in Dublin. In 2013 it was reported that over 75% of school leavers go on to Higher and Further Education (O'Connell, et. al, 2004). A structure such as the arrangement of social classes in Ireland has many negative effects. However, there is agency and that has been shown by high numbers of working class people in Dublin in a significantly positive way. Thus, it is argued that whether negatively or positively, structure, agency, power and identity all impact early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin Ireland.

Masculinity

The issue of masculinity is interpreted as being a main factor for the research participants in this study. Displays of masculinity inside the home were uncovered during the semi-structured interviews conducted for this research. Each of the participants identified their sense of need to gather income they could contribute towards the home which reflects the theoretical literature used here to say that women have a considerable role in the masculinities of boys and men. Masculinity relates more to gender relations and the position of men in a gender order. Furthermore, masculinities can change and can be both internally complex and multiple which can have a considerable consequence for men (Connell, 2005).

Furthermore, displays of masculinity outside of the home have been highlighted by the research participants where they stated a level of importance in having a group of friends to spend time with after leaving school. Each of the participants got immersed in various levels of criminality due to their sense of a need to enhance their bond among other young males in their community. This was linked with their lack of emotional support experienced at

home. This in turn is linked to the work by Kimmel on this subject where it is said that ideologies of Masculinity are constructed through the evaluative eyes of the brotherhood of man along with the male peer group where they are constantly sustained and reproduced (Kimmel, 1996: 45).

During my visit to an education unit in a Dublin prison in 2016, there were various interpretations of masculinity noted. There is a “them and us” scenario that exists within prisons where many prisoners display mistrust for any kind of authority i.e. prison staff and to a lesser degree educational teachers. There are unspoken codes of behaviour where interaction that is seen as overly un-necessary by prisoners to prison staff is looked upon as suspicious. Some prisoners stay away from the education unit or get involved in any training while in prison and this is done under the guise of suspicion against staff and displayed openly as a form of masculinity. However, this behaviour is interpreted here as fear. Fear of being exposed as being vulnerable in relation to educational ability in-front of educational staff and fear of being exposed as being vulnerable in-front of their peers who ironically may be experiencing similar feelings.

This level of fear is so strong that it leads to extreme levels of violence in order to hide their true feelings. It is also interpreted that there may be high levels of a lack of knowledge in how to express their true feelings which is linked to a lack of educational attainment. This again reflects the work of Kimmel where these actions are fuelled by a need for a means of control of one’s identity and life and to highlight the impact of masculinity on early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland (Kimmel, 1996: 45). These choices are interpreted as being due to an existence where choices are limited and restricted. An analysis of these choices follows here with an interpretation of rational choice theory and its significance in this research.

Rational Choice Theory

It has been previously noted here that there is a debate around rational choice theory. With regard to what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland the issue of choice cannot be ignored. It is said in rational choice theory that individuals make choices based on a reward and punishment system where more often than not individuals will take the course of action that will be most profitable for them as an individual (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

By contrast, it is also said that individuals make choices through social action which is impacted by collective action, social norms and social structures. This is to say that it is not individual gain that always influences the choices individuals make and that people do make choices that will affect others positively, regardless of the possibility of an individual negative affect on one's self (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

The research participants largely identified a pattern of limited choices around the issue of leaving school as they highlighted a felt need to gain employment and generate an income for themselves and the family home. All of the participants apart from the youngest participant stated that they did not want to leave school early but felt that they should for the greater good of the family home. In addition, there was a pattern that emerged with regard to the choices the research participants made when with their friends and while on the edge of criminality. A need to be seen as equal among the group in order to create a support system that was lacking at home regardless of the consequences which shows choices being impacted by collective action, social norms and social structures (Scott, 2000: 1-15).

The capacity among the research participants as mid-teenage males in working class environments with a lack of family support and a lack of emphasis on education in the home is interpreted as influencing the choices the research participants made due to a lack of emotional intelligence at that time. This interpretation is analysed here with a statement from Daniel Goleman who broadly stated that the emotional lessons we learn as children at home and at school shape the emotional circuits, making us more adept or inept at the basics of emotional intelligence which means that childhood and adolescence are critical for setting down the essential emotional habits that will govern our lives" (Goleman, 1996: 13).

However, a lack of emotional intelligence is only one issue that affects the choices one makes. The semi-structured interviews are interpreted here to show that the individual experiences of the research participants highlights that if you are from a working class background in Dublin, Ireland your choices through life are restricted. They are not extinct but they are undoubtedly limited. The issues around oppression that stem from your social class position have a ripple effect towards agency, power, masculinity, emotional intelligence and rational choice theory and each of these issues impact early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland which ironically are interpreted here as simply being by-products of the over-arching issue of oppression due to one's social class position within society.

Recommendations

It has been noted here that this piece of research is open to be challenged such is the significance of the issues highlighted and the level of personal interest in this area. The social and personal issues that have been presented throughout this research such as social class, oppression, structure, power, agency, masculinity, rational choice theory and emotional intelligence are recommended to take priority within the curriculum in adult education centres and within education units in prisons also in order to provide a space for individuals to explore these areas if they so wish. Once again it must be noted that not every individual that experiences early school leaving and imprisonment will have experienced the range of issues that emerged from the semi-structured interviews carried out for this research.

Furthermore, an inclusion of some of these issues that may be appropriate in second level educational institutions is also recommended in the hope of providing individuals with a space to identify and link any relevant issues to any they may be experiencing in their homes or in their communities. Again, this is not to generalise but to say that if these issues are what are being highlighted as what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment in Dublin, Ireland then a recommendation is the least they deserve.

This chapter has analysed the issues that have emerged and been utilized throughout this research to ask what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland. Issues such as social class, oppression, power, structure, agency, identity, masculinity, rational choice theory and emotional intelligence are analysed through chosen theoretical literature, semi-structured interviews and a visit to an educational unit in a Dublin prison in 2016 in order to explore what impacts early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland. This has led to a recommendation for a longitudinal study over a number of years to work with research participants who are still in prison and who experience the process of preparation for release, release, re-integration into society and survival is recommended to enhance current issues in order to provide further recommendations towards a reduction of this social reproduction.

Conclusion

From being a working class male who has personally experienced early school leaving and imprisonment and from conducting this and previous research which explores issues of education, imprisonment, identity, masculinity, emotional intelligence, family and community which are all in relation to social class, I conclude that most people who hail from a working class background are extremely proud of that position within society. They are fully aware that they are economically below a large portion of wealthy decision makers in Ireland and that they will most likely remain in that economic position for their entire lives. They are fully aware of the negative experiences that the generations of their families and communities with regard to the economic struggles that have and continue to exist are part of being from a working class background.

That said, the people that I have spoken to and myself included would not change their social class position if given the opportunity. People want to improve their circumstances, they are proud of who they are and where they come from and so they should be. It is this unique position of experiencing a multitude of extreme negativity and not wanting to abandon their position but simply improve it from where they are that provides the spirit and drive and passion and hope for a reduction of the negative connotations to being working class in Dublin, Ireland.

This research asks: *what are the impacts of early school leaving and imprisonment amongst males in Dublin, Ireland*. An exploration of the personal issues that are impacted and driven by the wider social issues has been the reason for this research being so important. Issues of oppression, power, identity, gender and emotional intelligence are all discussed under the over-arching concepts of social class, structure, agency, masculinity and rational choice theory throughout this research.

Available Options

As mentioned throughout this research, individuals do have a level of responsibility with regard to decisions they make and the actions they take. However, it is arguably undeniable that there are a multitude of factors that influence the decisions and actions any person takes. This is due to the options that are available at the time of deciding or acting. Thus, if a person has a multitude of options to choose from when making a decision or taking an action then there is most likely more chance of a positive choice with a positive action that will be chosen. If the person has limited options available and limited skills in making a positive decision with a positive action then this is much less likely to be the outcome.

This research concludes that it has not been intentional for people with limited options to make a decision that had a negative outcome, they simply had limited options. An example of this is shown in this research where the research participants who have experienced early school leaving and imprisonment then go on to re-engage with adult and further education and they desist from crime and become contributing members of society. This shows that they never actually made the wrong decisions they simply made decisions based on the options available to them at the time. This illustrates hope, possibility for change and a reduction in the numbers of males who experience early school leaving and imprisonment from Dublin, Ireland.

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