An Exploration of the Links between Male Identity and the Development of the Field of Men's Community Education in Ireland

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A Thesis presented for the Degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dublin City University

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Dublin 9

October 2004

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Abstract

Social, economic, legislative and technological developments ongoing since the 1970s have culminated in profound change in the structure and form of work and of family life today. This changing socio-economic structure has implications for ways in which gender roles and relationships are understood and enacted; and this study is concerned with the impact of such change on men's, particularly marginalised men's, understandings of masculinity. While men's studies as an academic discipline has been developing in the international arena since the 1970s, there is a dearth of scholarship in Ireland on the topic of masculinity; indeed it has only recently emerged as a topic in public discourse. The 1990s witnessed a new social phenomenon in Irish society - the emergence of men's groups in local communities, some of which receive funding within the community education sector. Across three research sites, two men's groups and one practitioners' network, this qualitative study explores emergent models of practice as well as understandings of masculinity and gender relations at play in these sites. This study is therefore located at the interface of two nascent fields of inquiry in Irish research: the question of male identity and the role of men's groups in combating male isolation, social exclusion and educational disadvantage.

The study opens with an overview of the historical development of men's movements, men's groups and masculinity politics in the international arena from the 1970s onward; and discusses the more recent emergence of men's groups in Irish society. It draws on theoretical perspectives from the inter-disciplinary field of men's studies in tracing the historical development of gender identity in Ireland, and in analysing dominant themes in contemporary public discourse on masculinity and gender relations. Findings from the men's groups are presented in case study format wherein idiographic analyses and interpretations are placed in dialogue with theoretical perspectives drawn from relevant academic discourses.

Based on its understanding of the study participants' experiences and perspectives and the project's overall observations, learnings and findings placed in dialogue with a critical analysis of the literature, this thesis proposes a conceptual framework to underpin the development of men's community education through the medium of men's groups in Ireland.

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Introduction

Background Context and Rationale:

As a 'second chance' learner, I am passionately interested in the potential role of education in combating social exclusion and marginalisation. I first engaged with this topic in 1999 when I undertook an MA in Communication and Cultural Studies at Dublin City University, and for my thesis, conducted an ethnographic study of a group of early school leavers attending alternative school in the community. On completion of my MA, I conducted a qualitative research project entitled *Men on the Move: A Study of Barriers to Male Participation in Education and Training Initiatives* (Owens, 2000), further exploring the topic, this time with adult men. The *Men on the Move* study was conducted on behalf of, and published by, AONTAS, the Irish National Association of Adult Education, and was funded by the Further Education Section of the Department of Education and Science.

This doctoral study, funded through a scholarship awarded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, further explores the potential role of education in combating social exclusion, focusing in particular on men's education through the medium of men's groups based in the community. Community-based men's groups have only recently begun to emerge in Irish society and while Cousins (1997) suggests that such groups hold potential for combating social exclusion, he notes their ad hoc approach and calls on stakeholders in the field to work towards developing a more coherent conceptual framework to inform their work. Kelleher & Kelleher (1999) and Owens (2000) agree that men's groups have potential to combat social exclusion and educational disadvantage, highlighting the need for government to support research and dialogue in the field if this potential is to be developed and realised. Thus, the benefit of this scholarship works on two levels. Firstly, it facilitates further exploration of key issues arising from the findings of *Men on the Move* (2000), an endeavour that aims to contribute insights toward the development of a conceptual framework to inform the work of community-based men's groups. Secondly, these insights may assist policy makers, funders and practitioners in tailoring educational policy and practice in accord with men's needs, and in identifying best ways of allocating and utilising valuable resources.

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As this study takes key insights and findings from *Men on the Move* (2000) as its starting point and rationale, these are now outlined.

Across five research sites (three of which were men's groups), the majority of *Men on the Move* (2000) study participants came from the least privileged strata of society, bearing poor educational credentials and living in disadvantaged areas. The findings suggest that the greatest barriers to marginalised men's participation in education are located deep within the self and are linked to the question of male identity, to the question of what it means to be a man in a world that is rapidly changing. The metaphors and phraseology these men used to articulate their perspectives and experiences resulted in my coinage of 'Taboo Zone' as the most apt term for conceptualising these interior barriers to participation, not just in education, but also in wider social spheres.

Taboo Zone oppression could be described as loyalty to a deeply internalised narrow definition of masculinity, which no longer matches today's world, and allegiance to which forecloses the possibility of negotiating alternative ways of being. *Men on the Move* (2000) findings suggest that this circumscribed way of being can be understood as the cumulative effect of negative life experiences that erode belief in the self and diminish the capacity for authorship of one's own destiny and identity. Such experiences include low ranking, or failure, in the 'points race' whereby individuals internalise their accorded value and worth; and as educational credentials influence life-choices, the uncredentialised are often doomed to a life of uncertainty in the labour market and a concomitant sense of powerlessness. Taboo Zone oppression is thus characterised by struggle to reconcile the dominant version of masculinity as 'powerful' and 'breadwinner' with the reality of powerlessness and unemployment, while loss of belief in the self diminishes the capacity to envision and negotiate alternative ways of being.

Thus, changing meanings of masculinity emerged as a central concern in the lives of the *Men on the Move* (2000) study participants, and it was this finding that led me to explore academic discourses on the theme of masculinity and thereby to encounter the, still emergent, field of men's studies – the study of the masculine gender and gender relations being conducted from the *male* perspective.

Drawing on the work of male theorists, *Men on the Move* (2000) highlights complex dynamics within male culture that work to produce and reproduce the dominant version of masculinity, and points to men's groups as a potential site for challenging Taboo Zone oppression through facilitating marginalised men to negotiate alternative understandings of themselves. It is noteworthy that isolation and suicide emerged as key concerns for the study participants, the majority of whom had been acquainted with at least one, but often several, men who had killed themselves. Thus the importance of breaking male isolation as a key potential of men's groups cannot be overstated. *Men on the Move* (2000) found that, in addressing the core issue of male identity and facilitating isolated men to reach new understandings of themselves, men's groups have the potential to act as the first point on a journey to reintegration. From their new understandings, marginalised men can begin to experience themselves as valuable and valued members of society, and thereby become equipped to take another step on the progression route to other forms of education, to training, to employment. Thus, the recent Education Equality Initiative (2000) offers welcome and exciting opportunities for men's development work through the medium of men's community groups[1]. However, as the Government notes:

> 80% of community education participants are women and it is
> evident that there is need for new strategies if more male participants
> are to be attracted into the system[2]
>
> (*Green Paper: Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning*, 1998, p53)

So how can this potentially promising nascent form of education for men be nurtured and developed to parallel the success of women's community education? Arguably through acquiring deeper insights and understanding of men's experiences in today's world; through documenting and evaluating models of practice; and through sharing knowledge, because:

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[1] The term 'men's development work' as a descriptor for their work is used by all practitioners I have encountered over the course of my studies.
[2] While the *Green Paper's* concern with "need for new strategies" manifests in the *White Paper's* (2000) commitment to the establishment of organisational structures to support the development of men's community-based education, the government has, to date, failed to put these structures in place. The importance of implementing structures to support the development of this nascent field is discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

As yet, nothing is written down about men's groups. There is no handbook or guidebook; we simply have to do the best we can. I suppose we'll learn through mistakes and errors and we'll find our way around it.

(Men's community education practitioner, *Men on the Move*, 2000, p48)

In accounting for the success of women's groups, Cousins (1997) suggests that the development of thought and analysis on the position of women in Irish society, that had been ongoing since the 1960s, formed the basis for the development of a conceptual framework to underpin women's development work from the 1980s onward; by contrast, he notes, "such a conceptual framework is lacking in the case of men" (p39). It is thus vital that a similar process of thought and analysis on men's experiences be developed and expanded, if men's groups are to match the success of women's groups. This work of building and recording theoretical perspectives, of sharing insights and ideas, of documenting and evaluating models of practice, so vital to the forging of a conceptual framework for men's development work, has only just begun - the writings of Professor Harry Ferguson, a forthcoming publication *Men's Development Project: Methodology and Practice* by the Men's Development Network in the South East region (due in autumn 2004), and documentation emerging from the Education Equality Initiative (2000) represent pioneering steps in this endeavour. And, in building on the findings from *Men on the Move* (2000), in working collaboratively with men's groups, and in drawing predominantly on academic discourses emerging from the interdisciplinary field of men's studies, this study is offered as a contribution to the task of:

- Forging a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work
- Building and sharing knowledge about men's experiences in today's world
- Articulating the perspectives of marginalised men
- Identifying and sharing models of good practice
- Networking
- Informing policy development in the emergent field of men's community-based education

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While the theme of masculinity has been debated in academia and the media in the international arena during the 1980s and 1990s, it has received little attention until recently in Ireland. So far, only a few voices are participating in the emergent debate on male identity in the Irish media; and no university has developed a dedicated men's studies unit. Tension in this emergent debate may be evidenced in the controversy surrounding the introduction by the Department of Education and Science of the optional *Exploring Masculinities* Programme (2000), at transition level in single-sex boys' schools – a programme designed to facilitate critical reflection and discussion amongst adolescent boys on meanings of masculinity in the new millennium. The controversy evoked by this programme brought key concerns about the meaning of masculinity into the public domain; and thus the issues it raised are discussed in depth in the second chapter of this study, which analyses dominant themes in current public discourse on masculinity and gender relations in Ireland.

While McKeown et al (1998) suggest "the male role and masculinity no longer match the reality of the circumstances in which men live and work" (pxiii), Clare's (2000) publication, *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis*, suggests that some men are experiencing difficulty in defining themselves in the contemporary world. These growing concerns highlight the need for research on changing meanings of masculinity in Irish society and related implications for men's development work. Thus, this study is located at the interface of two nascent fields of inquiry in Irish research: the question of male identity, and the role of men's community groups in combating male isolation, social exclusion and educational disadvantage. While much theorising on gender and gender relations has been articulated by feminist scholarship, the relatively more recent contributions from male scholars has brought an added dimension to academic inquiry in this area that can only serve to enhance understandings of the workings of gender in society. And thus this study draws predominantly on the theoretical perspectives offered by male scholars in the, still emergent, field of men's studies.

Approach:
As Chapter Three offers an in-depth account of the research methodology, this section merely provides a broad overview of the three-stranded approach this project adopted in its qualitative exploration of the links between male identity and the development of men's community education in Ireland. Across three research sites (two men's

groups and one practitioners' network) data was gathered through participant observation, focus group discussions and in-depth interviewing, taking account of the perspectives of participants and practitioners in the field of men's community education. The constant comparative method of data analysis was employed, focusing in particular on the men's language and language use, and the findings are presented within an interpretative-descriptive framework.

Research Site One:

Strand One of the project was located in Ballymun Men's Centre. Ballymun Men's Group is a well-established group in receipt of funding under the Education Equality Initiative (2000-2003) and located in an underprivileged public housing area undergoing regeneration. As participant observer, I explored the philosophical underpinnings and everyday application of the model of practice employed by practitioners in this site. As I observed the study participants engaging in everyday processes and social interactions, I focused on identifying understandings of masculinity and gender at play in this site. As the study progressed, I collaborated with one practitioner in designing a programme for men's development work, and then observed its implementation by this practitioner. On completion of my fieldwork, I conducted in-depth one-to-one interviews with the group members.

Research Site Two:

In Strand Two I moved the project to a 'greenfield' site in Tallaght where, with the support of An Cosán, a community education centre concerned about local men's non-participation in community life, I founded a men's group. The new group was brought into being through inviting eleven targeted men to participate in discussions about the possibility of starting a men's group and organising a ten-week community education programme. By conducting a series of discussions with the Tallaght men, with men from Ballymun contributing their views and ideas, the project facilitated five of the targeted men to reach consensus on a purpose and aim for the proposed men's group; these five men then formed themselves as the Tallaght Men's Group. This strand thus involved establishing a new men's group and facilitating dialogue and exchange of ideas between the two men's groups; and with a new group formed, the opportunity had been created to test the programme for men's development work that I had developed in collaboration with the Ballymun practitioner; again this

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practitioner facilitated the programme while I observed its implementation. On conclusion of the ten-week programme the men requested that a follow-on programme be provided and meeting this request allowed for further exploration of ideas that might inform practice in the emergent field of men's community education. Research activities in this site also allowed for further exploration of understandings of masculinity and gender at play in the world under study. On completion of my fieldwork, I conducted in-depth one-to-one interviews with the group members.

Research Site Three:
Strand Three focused on the perspectives of practitioners in the field of men's community education and on the networking process. On 3rd March 2000, Ballymun Men's Centre hosted a conference on the campus of Dublin City University with the aim of initiating the process of networking ten men's groups under the title Dublin Men's Coalition. At that time the *Men on the Move* project was in its final stage and I was invited to attend as observer at the conference proceedings. The Dublin Men's Coalition was described by the opening speaker as "a bottom-up, political response to issues of male unemployment, education, isolation, depression and suicide". All present endorsed one practitioner's view that "while men's groups are emerging in areas labelled as disadvantaged, such issues are relevant to all male members of Irish society" (notes taken at the conference). In Strand Three I attended as observer at the monthly meetings of the Dublin Men's Coalition, and conducted two two-hour focus group discussions with the membership. By this means, I explored practitioners' emergent ideas concerning men's development work, as well as their experiences of the networking process.

Research Question or Focus of Inquiry:
The qualitative research methodology adopted in this study draws predominantly on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) who, in turn, draw on Glaser and Strauss' (1967) methodological framework. Since this form of inquiry does not begin with an *a priori* hypothesis but seeks to understand a situation as it is constructed by the study participants, the research question is framed as a 'focus-of-inquiry statement'. The focus-of–inquiry statement, which provides initial direction on entering the field under study, may be refined by the researcher as data collection progresses and salient

themes in the participants' world begin to emerge. The focus-of-inquiry statement for this study was framed as follows:

This project wishes to contribute insights towards the development of a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work. It is thus seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the *men's experiences of themselves* and *their perceptions* of:

- what it means to be a man in today's world
- the role of men's groups in men's lives
- the potential of community education as a means for men's development

and seeks to explain how these perceptions influence their engagement with the world.

Research Aim

Based on its understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives, and the project's overall observations, learnings and findings placed in dialogue with a critical analysis of the literature, this study aims to offer insights towards the development of a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work through the medium of men's groups in Ireland. In so doing, it aspires to contribute to the thinking that will inform good practice and thereby make a worthwhile contribution to the shaping and developing of this new form of education for men; a form that holds potential for combating male isolation, social exclusion and educational disadvantage in a rapidly changing world.

Thesis Structure:

Chapter One: The Origins and Development of Men's Movements, Men's Groups and Masculinity Politics

Part One of this chapter offers a review of the literature on men's movements, men's groups and masculinity politics in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia from the 1970s onwards. Part two discusses the more recent emergence of men's groups in Irish society.

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Chapter Two: Understandings of Masculinity and Gender Relations in Irish Society

This chapter draws on theoretical perspectives from the interdisciplinary field of men's studies in tracing the historical development of gender identity in Ireland, and in analysing dominant themes in contemporary public discourse on masculinity and gender relations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The methodology adopted by this study draws predominantly on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) who, in turn, draw on Glaser and Strauss' (1967) methodological framework. Part One of this chapter discusses the epistemological and ontological postulates that underpin the research paradigm informing this study. Part Two explains the methodological model designed by this study, detailing the processes and procedures involved in its implementation. This model takes a dual approach to data analysis, applying manual and electronic methods in tandem, and in this endeavour, draws on the work of Richards and Richards (2000; 2002) who have, throughout the 1980s and 1990s been developing software packages to assist qualitative researchers in data management, analysis, and theory testing processes. Application of this dual approach is explained in detail in part two of this chapter.

Chapter Four: Findings from the Ballymun Case Study

This chapter presents the findings from the Ballymun case study, placing its idiographic analyses and interpretations in dialogue with theoretical perspectives drawn from relevant academic discourses.

Chapter Five: Findings from the Tallaght Case Study

This chapter presents the findings from the Tallaght case study, placing its idiographic analyses and interpretations in dialogue with theoretical perspectives drawn from relevant academic discourses.

Chapter Six: Insights Towards the Development of a Conceptual Framework to underpin Men's Development Work.

Based on its understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives, and the project's overall observations, learnings and findings placed in dialogue with a critical

analysis of the literature, this chapter offers insights towards the development of a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work through the medium of men's groups in Ireland.

Chapter One: The Origins and Development of Men's Movements, Men's Groups and Masculinity Politics.

Part One of this chapter offers a review of the literature on men's movements, men's groups and masculinity politics in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia from the 1970s onward.

Part Two discusses the more recent emergence of men's groups in Irish society.

> I define 'masculinity politics' as those mobilizations and struggles where the meaning of masculine gender is at issue, and, with it, men's position in gender relations. In such politics masculinity is made a principal theme, not taken for granted as background.
>
> (Connell, 1995a, p205)

Those 'mobilizations and struggles' to which Connell refers have their roots in men's responses to second wave feminism from the 1970s onward. Initially, feminist' calls for an end to sexism were greeted with enthusiasm by some men (mostly university students) who supported the struggle through joining consciousness-raising groups dedicated to raising awareness of gender injustice and actively working to bring about change at individual, community and institutional levels. Thus, what has now come to be known as the men's movement was born out of engagement with feminist ideas and a desire to contribute to the development of a more equitable gender order.

Part One of this chapter offers a review of the literature on men's movements, men's groups and masculinity politics in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia from the 1970s onward. Part Two discusses the more recent emergence of men's groups in Irish society.

While some scholarly works are available documenting and analysing the historical development of the men's movement in the United States and the United Kingdom, and a small amount of the early writings of American and British anti-sexist and male liberationist academics and activists are still in print, there is less historical material available documenting and analysing the Australian experience. In 1994, Buchbinder stated that "in Australia, the institutionalisation of men's studies remains in its infancy" (p24); and it is to be hoped that, as the discipline has been developing over the intervening decade, this lacuna will soon be filled. Whatever of its beginnings and earlier significance however, by 1997 Flood could state: "the men's movement now has a presence in Australia's cultural and political landscape; its ideas, issues, images and agendas are in the media and policy-making" (Flood, 1997, p1). Further, it is likely that the availability of new technologies is playing a key role in accelerating the pace at which men's movements are developing, as advanced communication systems

now facilitate linking and networking of groups across a multiplicity of countries; and, indeed, this project's Internet searches confirm symmetry between existing men's groups in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

Part One: A Review of the Literature on Men's Movements, Men's Groups and Masculinity Politics in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia

As men's consciousness-raising and activist groups joined in the women's liberation movement, the American men's movement's moment of birth could be said to have come about when one such group organised a weekend conference devoted to men's issues. In 1975, a men's group, whose members were also participating in a women's studies course at the University of Tennessee, organised the first National Men and Masculinity Conference on their university campus; and these conferences have been held annually ever since at various locations in the United States, usually on college campuses, attracting international audiences. The 29th National Men and Masculinity Conference took place on the 6th, 7th and 8th August 2004 in San Francisco. However, the host of this conference, the National Organisation of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) and its academic wing the Men's Studies Association (MSA), represents but one perspective within the contemporary men's movement. For, if initially united by their empathy with feminist women and their ideas, individual men and men's groups would soon develop differing understandings of feminism, differing interpretations of gender and power, and consequently differing visions for the future; and these sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing, visions would animate masculinity politics from the 1970s to the present day.

In 1987 theorist Martin Fiebert, one of the earliest pioneers of men's studies, suggested that the American men's movement had split into two opposing camps: the profeminists and the promasculinists, divided over the question of who was most affected by society's sexist practices – men or women? Profeminists, the majority of whom had strong ties to the academic community, held that women were sexism's principle victims and that the majority of men derive privilege from living in a sexist society. Promasculinists, the majority of whom were therapists and counsellors, focussed on men's pain and the male need for personal growth, holding that the women's movement, or at least its most radical proponents, had only served to increase tension between the sexes (Doyle, 1995, p9).

Fiebert's explanation was superseded by Kenneth Clatterbaugh's (1990) analysis, which revealed the growing complexity of the American men's movement. At this point, Clatterbaugh identified six strands within the movement, which he named as: the profeminist, the mythopoetic or spiritual, the men's rights, the group-specific, the socialist, and the conservative perspectives. Seven years later Clatterbaugh (1997) refined his analysis, naming eight perspectives as a means of encapsulating the complexity and diversity of the men's movement. Clatterbaugh (1997) identifies: a conservative perspective, constituting both 'moral' and 'biological' conservatives; a profeminist perspective, constituting both 'radical' and 'liberal' profeminists; a men's right perspective; a mythopoetic perspective; a socialist perspective; gay male perspectives; African American men's perspectives; and evangelical Christian men or Promise Keepers' perspective (Clatterbaugh, 1997, pp9-14).

Clatterbaugh (1997) and Messner (1997), the latter also included among the earliest pioneers of men's studies, offer the most comprehensive accounts and analyses of the history and development of the American men's movement, although Messner (1997) offers a slightly different categorisation of perspectives within the movement. Messner's (1997) analytical framework groups mythopoetics and promise keepers together under the classification 'essentialist retreats from feminism'; charts the splintering of male liberationists in two directions – men's rights and profeminists – subdividing the latter into 'radical' profeminists and 'socialist' profeminists; and groups men of colour and gay liberationists together under the classification 'racial and sexual identity politics'. Within this framework, Messner's (1997) analysis focuses on the discourses and practices of the various perspectives, highlighting divergences and convergences in their understandings of gender, as a means of "identifying bridges and intersections where some of these groups might meet, with the goal of transcending single-issue politics in favour of broad progressive coalition building" (p14).

Both Clatterbaugh (1997) and Messner (1997) are concerned with pursuit of just and equitable practice, not just in the sphere of gender per se, but in the interconnected spheres of the economy, religion, culture, sexuality, race and ethnicity where power relations are played out, and thus both theorists point to the importance of masculinity politics for society as a whole:

I believe that the pursuit of social justice in gender and sexual relations necessarily connects with the pursuit of social justice in economic, racial, and ethnic relations. I believe that groups that have organized their discourse and practices around 'men's issues' or 'men and masculinity' have done so as a response to current shifts and crisis tendencies in the relations of power between and among women and men. The practices of such groups will inevitably have an impact on the political terrain – whether the dominant discourse of the group is overtly 'political' or not. Thus, the fundamental question about such groups – indeed, I would argue, the fundamental question that should underlie any sociological examination of contemporary masculinities – is to what extent their actual or potential political impact will impede or advance movements for social justice.

(Messner, 1997, pp13-14)

While noting that each perspective within the men's movement constitutes an aggregate in which there are many voices, divisions and viewpoints, Clatterbaugh (1997) uses the term 'sociopolitical' to emphasise both the social and political import of each perspective:

The way men live, how we see ourselves, and how we are seen are issues of great social importance. But these perspectives on men are also political. They offer an agenda for society as a whole. And each perspective is continually contentious in its discussion of other perspectives.

(Clatterbaugh, 1997, p1)

In Australia, perspectives within the men's movement identified by Pease (2000) and Flood (1997) include: "men's liberationist, profeminist, spiritual or mythopoetic, men's rights and fathers' rights – with differing agendas, emphases and understandings; while personal growth and therapy have been important focuses, increasingly these are being complemented by public political activism" (Flood, 1997, p1).

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In the United Kingdom, Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003) identify: conservative, profeminist, mythopoetic, gay men's collective and men's rights perspectives within the overall movement, concluding that "the men's rights lobby is probably the form of masculinity politics that currently has widest resonance across different societies, including Britain, Australia and the U.S." (p134).

A discussion of all the perspectives identified within the men's movement, and the relationships between them, would demand prioritising breadth over analytical depth. Thus, across the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, this chapter focuses on the discourses and practices of two perspectives whose genesis may be traced to the consciousness–raising tradition and whose reach has extended into the spheres of academia and political activism - the profeminist and men's rights perspectives; and on one perspective whose genesis may be traced to the world of therapy and whose reach has extended into the sphere of popular culture - the mythopoetic perspective.

Examination of these three perspectives, their discourses and practices, and their inter-relationships offers insight into the complex range of, sometimes converging sometimes conflicting, understandings of gender at play both *within* and *between* the various perspectives that make up the men's movement. The complexity of masculinity politics is emphasised in Haywood and Mac an Ghaill's (2003) reminder that: "individual men take up different, including contradictory responses, and the politics of any particular position adopted by men's groups have developed a number of strands; this helps to explain what often appears as a confused history of heterosexual men's involvement in sexual politics alongside confusing shifts in popular understandings of the men's movement across western societies" (p128).

The Emergence of Anti-Sexist Consciousness-Raising Men's Groups
The predominant thinking that informed the earliest anti-sexist consciousness-raising men's groups in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom was inspired by sex-role theory and the idea that traditional sex-roles, whilst oppressive to women, are also oppressive to men – the male sex-role pressurises men to be competitive and successful and forbids emotional expression – thus men should join with the women's liberation movement in its struggle to eradicate sexist practices:

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At the time our group was formed we sensed a collective spirit among the women we knew. It seemed that their lives were opening out – into new groups, experimental relationships, and forms of political action. Their solidarity was carried over into family life, demanding a constructive attitude from men to women's independence. As men, we felt trapped in our own exclusion – not because we were excluded from women's activities, but because we had no equivalent 'liberation' for ourselves. Together we would fall into the conventional 'matiness' of the pub, a mutual backslapping, designed to repress as much as it expresses.

(Tolson, 1977, p10)

Writing from the United Kingdom, Tolson's account of his involvement with the anti-sexist consciousness-raising Birmingham Men's Group has proven seminal on several counts. Not only does it offer rich insights into the consciousness-raising experience from a male perspective, but as early as 1977 Tolson was beginning to conceptualise masculinity in a way that would prompt later theorists to shift thinking beyond sex role theory as a framework for analysing gender and gender relations. Tolson's (1977) analysis operates on three levels. Firstly, he examines "the historical interrelation between cultures of work and masculinity". Secondly, he analyses differing enactments of masculinity, namely: "the two principal masculine character-types in our society: those of the working and middle classes … in the hope that something of the inner structure, the texture, of the masculine experience may emerge". Thirdly, he stipulates: "this [masculine] experience can never be finally formulated: masculinity has a historical development and is continually readapted to new social relations" (p51). Tolson's work is significant in two key areas of the study of masculinity and gender relations. Firstly, his in-depth analysis of the social construction of identity challenged bio-determinist accounts of gender; secondly, he widened the conceptual framework for the analysis of gender beyond that of relations between men and women to include relations *between men*. As Messner (1997) explains:

Significantly, Tolson began to delineate how men's different experiences and interests, grounded in their different – often oppositional – positions in workplaces and the larger political

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economy, led to the social construction of a 'working-class masculinity' that was in some ways distinct from 'middle-class masculinity' ... Tolson's socialist feminist approach offered new and increasingly complex ways to think about masculinity, not as a singular male sex role (as men's liberationists thought of it) or as a singular dominant sex class (as radical feminists saw it). Rather, masculinity began to appear as a multiple reality that is constructed in relation to women *and* in relation to men's varying and opposing class positions vis-à-vis other men (pp56-58).

Thus Tolson laid the foundation for the shift in thinking from the universalising tendencies of men's liberationists to the increasingly complex and sophisticated theorising about gender and power that would develop within the emerging field of men's studies during the 1980s and 1990s. Further, in reflecting on the consciousness-raising experience and his anti-sexist activism, Tolson (1977) points to paradoxes inherent in the concept of 'men's liberation':

But in all our practical activities, we faced an immediate contradiction. As men, as the agents of a patriarchal culture, we remained the dominant gender. ... We failed to confront our political position. We continued to interpret our personalised practices through the politics of feminism. We continued to speak of 'men's liberation'; and to assume we could parallel, even complement, the activities of Women's Liberation. By this token we internalised the masculine paradox – defining ourselves in terms of sexual oppression, as the guilty, oppressive agency – but we avoided the logical outcome. We held on, wishfully, to a kind of negative ideal, a self-destructive utopia (p144).

Tolson's retrospective reflections on 'the masculine paradox', the dilemma it raised for the earliest male proponents of the feminist struggle, and the ongoing dilemma it poses for contemporary profeminists, is discussed in the final section of part one of this chapter which discusses the future of masculinity politics.

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Before leaving Tolson (1977), it is worth noting that there is a dimension of his work to which the literature on men's movements and masculinity politics pays little attention – the role of language in the male consciousness-raising experience – a dimension that is of immense interest to this project's study of social interaction and the construction of meaning through language in men's groups. Thus, Tolson's analysis of the role of language in both the construction and deconstruction of masculinity is considered in the final chapter of this thesis, which offers insights towards the development of a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work through the medium of men's groups.

As in the United Kingdom, many of those involved in 1970s American men's consciousness-raising groups and anti-sexist activism had links with the women's liberation movement and identified with feminist thinking and ideas. The literature cites Jack Nichols' (1975) *Men's Liberation*, Marc Feigen Fasteau's (1974) *The Male Machine* and Warren Farrell's (1974) *The Liberated Man*, as key early writings, all of which acknowledged sexism as a problem for women and Women's Liberation as a necessary movement for the eradication of sexist practices, whilst also pointing to the high cost of 'the male sex role' to men. Warren Farrell, (who would later become increasingly critical of feminist theory and politics) was known in this era as the most public 'male feminist' in the United States. Farrell had served on the Board of Directors of the largest feminist organisation in the United States, the National Organisation for Women (NOW), had founded a men's support network for NOW, was an outspoken advocate of the Equal Rights Amendment and organised public demonstrations in support of feminist' causes. However, it would be Farrell's, and other male liberationist writers' focus on a psychological rather than a wider socio-political framework for analysis of gender and power that would cause divisions in the once unified men's movement - divisions that would lead to the emergence, inter alia, of profeminist and men's rights perspectives, as well as the therapeutic mythopoetic perspective.

The Development of Organisational Structures for Anti-Sexist Men's Activism

In the United States, anti-sexist men's activism began to take more structured organisational form following the seventh annual Men and Masculinity Conference in Boston in 1981. The late 1970s had seen "a push for a national organization that would help to provide for positive alternative masculine roles which are non-oppressive, and to oppose sexism" (Clatterbaugh, 1997, p43). Founded in 1981, The National Men's Organisation renamed itself the National Organisation for Changing Men (NOCM) in 1982, and in 1990 it adopted its present name - the National Organisation of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS). Over the years, the Men's Studies Association, the academic wing of NOCM and NOMAS published journals such as *Changing Men, Men's Studies Review* and *Masculinities*, all of which have ceased publication. NOMAS currently publishes a quarterly journal *Brother*, which is distributed free of charge to its membership and after two quarters is archived on the organisation's website and made available for downloading (http://www.nomas.org). At present, Michael Kimmel, Professor of Sociology at Stony Brook State University of New York, is national spokesperson for NOMAS, co-chair of its academic wing, and editor of *Men and Masculinities*, a scholarly journal published quarterly by Sage.

In the United Kingdom, the organisation Men Against Sexism (MAS) provided leadership for anti-sexist men's activism from the 1970s onward. Spearheaded by the academic Victor Seidler, the organisation soon aligned itself with socialist and radical feminist positions, rejecting the positioning of men as oppressed and focusing instead on men's complicity in the patriarchal oppression of women and gay men; and the journal *Achilles Heel* provided a forum for dovetailing activism and theoretical writings. Although *Achilles Heel* is no longer in print, the *Achilles Heel* website still offers access to back-issues, reading lists, website links and other resources (http://www.achillesheel.freeuk.com).

In Australia, activist and academic Bob Pease, who co-founded an anti-sexist consciousness-raising men's group in 1977, is co-founder of the organisation Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA), formed to provide leadership for anti-sexist men's activism. The online journal *XY (Men, Masculinities and Gender Politics)*, founded by academic Michael Flood, provides a comprehensive forum for theoretical debate,

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discussion groups, reading lists and website links, not just to other anti-sexist sites but to sites representing the many perspectives operating within the men's movement worldwide (http://www.xyonline.net).

The Splintering of the Men's Movement

The splintering of the earliest anti-sexist academics and activists into profeminist and men's rights perspectives arose from debate concerning the adequacy of sex role theory as a framework for analysing the concept of gender oppression. Critics of this theoretical framework, who would soon label themselves as profeminist, argued against the sex role approach on several counts. While sex role theory had positive implications in that it portrayed gender as socially constructed rather than biologically determined, its critics argued that its key limitation lay in its focus on the psychological (men's pain) rather than the institutional (men's privilege) realm, thereby drawing symmetry between 'men's oppression' and 'women's oppression' and thus obscuring relations of power *between* men and women. And, indeed, its critics argued, by universalising the experience of white, middle-class, college-educated, heterosexual men, sex role theory served to obscure relations of power *between men*. As Messner (1997) explains:

> Critics of sex role theory pointed out that we do not speak of 'race roles' or 'class roles' but rather of race and class *relations*. Similarly, a theoretical focus on *gender relations*, they asserted, would help to see oppression as a relational concept: for there to be an oppressed group, there must, in turn, be an oppressor group (p38).

Thus, depending on whether they defined the concept of gender oppression within a social relational or an individualist psychological framework, anti-sexist men began to splinter into profeminist, men's rights, and therapeutic or mythopoetic perspectives; and with this splintering, the concept of power would become an increasingly contentious issue.

As they widened their analysis of gender into a social relational framework focusing more intensely on the institutionalised privilege and power of men as a group over women as a group, those identifying as profeminist "abandoned the language of sex

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roles in favour of a more politicised language of gender relations" (Messner, 1997, p48). By contrast, those who adhered to an individualistic psychological framework for interpreting gender focused on 'men's pain and powerlessness', some of whom looked to therapeutic and mythopoetic groups as a means of 'healing men's wounds' and 'restoring men's power', some of whom looked to men's rights groups which, "by the early 1980s had all but eliminated the gender symmetry of men's liberation from their discourse in favour of a more overt and angry antifeminist backlash" claiming that "it is, in fact, women who have the power and men who are powerless", and therefore "a movement is needed to fight for men's rights vis-à-vis women" (Messner, 1997, p41, p43, p44).

The Men's Rights Perspective

The literature cites Herb Goldberg's (1976) *The Hazards of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Masculine Privilege* and Warren Farrell's (1993) *The Myth of Male Power* as key texts articulating the men's rights perspective and exemplifying the backlash against feminism, as the authors' earlier support and respect for the women's movement gave way to the charge that women are the cause of men's powerlessness. As profeminists focused on men's institutionalised power in the public domain, men's rights advocates developed a strategy to divest this profeminist analysis of the political challenge it posed to men. As Connell (1995a) argues: "Farrell", who "in an early paper did not hesitate to call men a dominant class who need to renounce their position of privilege":

> carefully redefined power by shifting from the public world to the
> inner world of emotion. Men did not *feel* emotionally in control of
> their lives, therefore they lacked power. If women wanted men to
> change, *women* had to make that happen by changing their emotional
> expectations of men (p 208).

Indeed, in a less theoretically subtle response to the profeminist case that men hold a monopoly on power in the public sphere, men's rights leader Richard Haddad (1985) stated: "men really don't have a monopoly on power in public life – they are simply over-represented in decision-making positions in government and industry" (cited in Messner, 1997, p44).

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Although the men's rights perspective has a broad agenda, the literature points to the issue of 'fathers' rights' as its most successful rallying point, as: "fathers who feel that the courts have discriminated against them in child custody rulings simply because they are men, have found men's rights organizations to be powerful vehicles through which to focus their anger and sense of injustice" (Messner, 1997, p45). Messner (1997) points to fathers' rights discourse as having, with some success, co-opted liberal feminist language of 'gender equality' and 'rights' to forge its campaign for legislative reform, reminding however that "what fathers' rights discourse rarely includes is a discussion of fathers' responsibilities to children *before* divorce" (p45). Within the broader men's rights perspective, Messner (1997) notes "slippage in the discourse" from the early men's liberationist language of 'equal oppression' faced by men and women to the "angry antifeminist language of male victimisation" prevailing in contemporary men's rights discourse. Men's rights writers and activists point to men's shorter lifespan, health problems, and divorce and custody rulings as evidence of men's oppression; and claim that men are the 'true victims' of, inter alia, sexist media conventions, divorce settlements and domestic violence. In short, the men's rights perspective argues that, whether pertaining to the workplace or the home, state policy and practice is overprotective of women's interests resulting in discrimination against men (Messner 1997; Doyle 1995; Pease 2000; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 2003).

The American men's rights perspective began to take organisational form with the founding in 1977 of Men's Rights Incorporated focusing on legal and policy reform. In 1980 the Coalition of Free Men, inspired by Herb Goldberg and proclaiming a wide agenda for change, was formed. And in 1981 these two organisations joined with a multiplicity of other men's rights groups to form the National Congress for Men and Children. The first National Men's Rights Conference took place on the 18th and 19th June 2004; with the first day dedicated to lobbying on Capitol Hill, and the second day devoted to seminars and workshops hosted by Warren Farrell amongst other men's rights leaders.

Clatterbaugh (1997) reminds, however, that the men's rights perspective (as all perspectives within the men's movement) constitutes a broad range of viewpoints and stances ranging from a male liberationist 'equally oppressed' interpretation of gender

to the extremely militant antifeminist backlash. A flavour of these viewpoints worldwide may be witnessed on such websites as: National Coalition of Free Men http://www.ncfm.org; Men's Defense Association http://www.mensdefense.org; Fathers' and Men's Rights Links http://www.abs-comptech.com; Families Need Fathers http://www.fnf.org; UK Men's Movement http://www.ukmm.org.uk; Warren Farrell http://www.warrenfarrell.com; and Backlash http://www.backlash.com.

The Profeminist Perspective

Emerging as they did out of the early consciousness-raising men's initiative, if the men's rights perspective has abandoned its original aim - to support the feminist cause - the profeminist perspective has worked assiduously to honour it. While much of the early American profeminist writing is no longer in print, the literature points to extant *A Book of Readings for Men Against Sexism* (1977) edited by Jon Snodgrass, and *Men and Masculinity* (1974) edited by Joseph Pleck and Jack Sawyer, as essay collections containing personal accounts of experiences in men's consciousness-raising groups, important manifestos and theoretical debates; and it would be profeminist men that would develop increasingly complex scholarly analyses of the meaning of masculine gender and men's position in gender relations. In highlighting inadequacies of sex role theory, Pleck's (1981) *The Myth of Masculinity*, provided a launch pad for this expansion of analytical frameworks for the study of masculinity within the emergent field of men's studies; as Kimmel and Messner (2001) recount:

> Building on Pleck's (1981) work, a critique of the sex role model began to emerge. ... Most telling was the way in which the sex role model ignored the ways in which definitions of masculinity and femininity were based on, and reproduced, relationships of power. Not only do men as a group exert power over women as a group, but the definitions of masculinity and femininity reproduce those power relations. Power dynamics are an essential element in both the definition and the enactments of gender. ... Shapers of the new model looked at 'gender relations' (p xiv).

And it is this focus on 'gender relations' and 'power dynamics' that has underpinned profeminist theorising on gender throughout the historical development of men's

studies as an academic discipline. Indeed, the origins of men's studies in the American academy may be traced to the leadership of the profeminist National Organisation for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) who, in 1981 set up the Men's Studies Task Group that would become the Men's Studies Association in 1982, which remains as the academic wing of NOMAS today.

Discussion of the full ambit of profeminist thinking lies beyond the scope of this chapter, and thus the following paragraph but briefly outlines the guiding principles informing this body of scholarship. However, the chapters to follow place theoretical perspectives arising from such scholarship in dialogue with themes drawn from public discourse on masculinity and gender relations in Irish society, and themes drawn from the lives of men who participated in this study.

Whether operating out of a 'radical' or 'socialist' framework, it is fair to say that a critique of patriarchy lies at the heart of profeminist theorising. In summary, profeminist academics theorise the patriarchal order as a system of unequal relations of power between men and women, and between men; and while men as a group are acknowledged as being privileged by patriarchy, the 'cost' of such privilege is deemed high, most notably in its negative impact on men's relational capacities. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach, profeminist scholars theorise about all aspects of the masculine gender and gender relations from "a feminist-informed perspective", with a stated commitment "to supporting the continuing struggle of women for full equality". Across a wide ranging field of analysis, the National Organisation of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) and the Men's Studies Association "advocate a perspective for enhancing men's lives that is pro-feminist, gay-affirmative, anti-racist and committed to social justice; our goal is to change not just ourselves and other men, but also the institutions that create inequality" (Men's Studies Association a Division of NOMAS at http://www.nomas.org).

While the establishment of the Men's Studies Association (MSA) in 1982 laid the foundation for the development of men's studies as an academic discipline, by the late 1980s a number of its founding members suggested that the association should operate independently of its parent organisation the National Organisation of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS). This proposal sparked a philosophical rift among the

membership as some wished to remain affiliated to NOMAS and its profeminist guiding principles for men's studies while others rejected the tenet that men's studies be guided exclusively by feminist principles. While those holding the former viewpoint continue to adhere to feminist principles in their scholarly work and activism, those of the latter viewpoint founded a separate association in September 1991 – the American Men's Studies Association (AMSA), which publishes *The Journal of Men's Studies*. Thus within the still developing, field: "men's studies, once a strictly pro-feminist discipline, has become more diversified, and representatives of many currents in the men's movement, particularly the mythopoetic current, are voicing their opinions and concerns" (American Men's Studies Association, http://www.mensstudies.org/); and it is to the mythopoetic perspective that this chapter now looks.

The Mythopoetic Perspective

> The kind of masculinity politics that is currently most talked about,
> especially in the United States, is focused on the healing of wounds
> done to heterosexual men by gender relations.
>
> (Connell, 1995a, p206)

Drawing inspiration from the Jungian concept of archetypes, the world of mythology and fairy tales, and the male initiation rites of pre- and non-industrial cultures, the mythopoetic leadership offers a therapeutic model of practice whereby men can gather together to 'heal their wounds' and 'reclaim their deep masculine' in a world distorted by an 'overbalance of feminine energy'. While the mythopoetic perspective had a presence in the United States in the 1980s, it was the publication of Bly's *Iron John: A book about men* (1990) that precipitated much fuller expression of this perspective as hundreds of thousands of (predominantly middle-class) men began flocking to mythopoetic sites in search of psychic healing (Kimmel and Kaufman, 1994, p259).

Although *Iron John* is by far the most influential mythopoetic text, the literature cites Moore and Gillette's (1990) *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*, Meade's (1993) *Men and the Water of Life:*

Initiation and the Tempering of Men, and Jungian psychologist Hillman's (1972) *The Myth of Analysis*, as popular reading among mythopoetics. The mythopoetic message is predominantly spread by its charismatic leaders (Bly, Hillman and Meade counting among the most eminent) whose touring activities include delivering lectures and facilitating workshops, seminars and weekend retreats for their followers.

Mythopoetic discourse frames men as "wounded" victims of contemporary society - men have lost touch with their "inner warrior" and have become "too soft". The mythopoetic perspective attributes these wounds to the cumulative effect of women's over-involvement in the "civilizing" process (mother wound) and of fathers' failure to pass on "distinctly male values" to their sons (father wound). To redress this imbalance, mythopoetic leaders provide "sacred spaces" for men to form "psychic bonds" with each other and with their forefathers, as a means of reacquainting themselves with the "deep masculine" (interchangeably named as inner 'Wild Man', 'Hairy Man', 'Warrior', 'King') and thereby reclaim their lost power (Bly, 1990).

In these sacred spaces, mythopoetic practice or 'soul work' includes: disclosure of personal experiences and emotions, frequently concerning relationships with fathers; engaging with myths and fairy tales in search of the 'deep truths' they hold about life and manhood; reciting poetry; singing, dancing and drumming; participating in sweat-lodges; and engaging in male bonding and initiation rituals. Bly (1990) points to society's failure to implement appropriate male initiation rites and sets out a five-stage rites of passage programme for his followers on their journey to redemption and renewal:

> First, bonding with the mother and separation from the mother (we
> do this moderately well, and the second not well at all, particularly in
> the suburbs and the ghetto). Second, bonding with the father and
> separation from the father (we often postpone the father bonding
> until we are fifty or so, and then separation still has to be done).
> Third, the arrival of the male mother, or mentor, who helps a man
> rebuild the bridge to his own greatness or essence. King Arthur is an
> example of such a male mother (this step happens haphazardly if at
> all). Fourth, apprenticeship to a hurricane energy such as the Wild

Man, or the Warrior, or Dionysus, or Apollo. When he has done well, the young man receives a drink from the waters of the god (such a drink is the one thing the adolescents are asking for). And finally, fifth, the marriage with the Holy Woman or the Queen (pp181-182).

It could be suggested that the popular appeal of the mythopoetic perspective may lie both in its theatricality and in the opportunity it affords men to communicate with other men in a non-competitive, supportive, even playful environment; for, the 1990s witnessed the proliferation of mythopoetic therapists and journeymen hosting retreats for thousands of 'weekend warriors', not just in the United States, but also in Australia and the United Kingdom.

Mythopoetic discourse and practice is critiqued by profeminist academics on a number of grounds. For instance, in drawing on Jungian concepts, mythopoetic leaders explain gender relations as guided by timeless truths about the human psyche which speak of the need for balance between masculine and feminine energy, thereby offering a conceptual framework wherein feminism is interpreted, not as a political challenge to unequal relations of power between men and women in the concrete world, but as an abstract force that is upsetting the natural balance and thus suppressing the masculine (Connell, 1995a, pp 12-14). This de-politicisation of gender power relations through use of archetypal psychology is also critiqued by Brod (1995) who, arguing from a social constructionist perspective, holds: "the processes by which we become engendered are a function of manufactured difference being imposed on us" thus "any theory which tells us the solution lies either in a new improved masculinity or in the recovery of some real or essential manhood cannot solve the problem, because that theory is itself part of the problem; it solidifies an idea of gender that needs to be dissolved" (p95).

While profeminists acknowledge 'men's pain' (such as limited relational capacities, health problems, lower life-expectancy than women) they place their psychological analysis within a wider socio-political framework, explaining 'men's pain' as the 'costs of being on top', the costs men pay in aspiring to traditional masculinity, in upholding their privileged status in gender relations – an explanation that leads to

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critique of the patriarchal order (see, for instance, Messner 1995, 1997; Kimmel, 1995). By contrast, "the self-absorption that is an important practical consequence of masculinity therapy, and the translation of social issues about men into questions of pure psychology, are connected with the profound interest this group has in limiting the revolutionary upheaval in gender relations that was on the agenda in the early 1970s" (Connell, 1995a, p211).

Wolf-Light (1995) points to prejudicial messages encoded in the myths and fairy tales drawn upon in *Iron John* and used by mythopoetic leaders as material for their workshops and retreats:

> The development that takes place in *Iron John* unfolds in a distinct social framework, reflecting the political values of the time in which it was set. These values included the subordination of women, slavery, racism, religious intolerance, a strict hierarchical structure built upon wealth and power, and the acceptance of violence as a means of obtaining what you wanted, particularly through warfare.... Unfortunately, by turning a blind eye to the historical framework and romanticising the stories, the prejudices become enshrined rather than recognised and challenged. If we wish to work with myths as reflecting deep psychological truths we must be fully aware of the political values that they are embedded in (p216).

Thus, a key undercurrent in the overall profeminist critique of the mythopoetic perspective centres on the latter's de-politicisation, or ignoring, of the issue of power, not just in the sphere of gender but also in the sphere of the economy, religion, culture, sexuality, race and ethnicity where power relations are played out. For instance, concerning gender relations, in divorcing the psychological realm (men's pain) from its socio-political context (men's institutionalised privilege), Bly "sidesteps" a key political concern of profeminism: "that men, as a group, benefit from a structure of power that oppresses women, as a group" (Messner, 1997, p19).

Schwalbe (1995a, 1995b, 1996), who conducted a qualitative study of mythopoetic followers exploring how their participation "affected the meanings they gave to their

identities as men", offers an analysis of such men's political stances. Schwalbe (1995a) points to "two revealing ironies in the politics of mythopoetic men" (p201). Firstly while Schwalbe's study participants "were critical of the behaviour of corporations and government, they avoided saying that these institutions were run by men", opting instead for the "unspecified, genderless 'they'" as the targets of their criticisms (p201). Secondly, Schwalbe's study group "were uninterested in collective action to address these problems", a disinterestedness that Schwalbe suggests "is as one might expect, since the white, middle-class mythopoetic men did not do so badly in reaping the material benefits of the economic system they occasionally criticized" (p201). Schwalbe's analysis leads him to conclude:

> These men were selectively apolitical. They did not want to see that it was other *men* who were responsible for many of the social problems they witnessed and were sometime affected by. To do so, and to talk about it, would have shattered the illusion of universal brotherhood among men … Talk about power, politics, and inequality in the external world was incompatible with the search for communitas, because it would have lead to arguments, or at least to intellectual discussions, rather than to warm emotional communion.
>
> (Schwalbe, 1995a, pp 201-202)

The mythopoetic leadership's divorcing of the psychological realm from its socio-political context and mythopoetic followers' tendency to prioritise 'warm emotional communion' over 'talk about power, politics and inequality', lead Messner (1997) to the conclusion:

> In short, the mythopoetic men's movement may be seen as facilitating the reconstruction of a new form of hegemonic masculinity – a masculinity that is less self-destructive, that has revalued and reconstructed men's emotional bonds with each other, and that has learned to feel good about its own 'Zeus power' (p24).

While profeminists argue: "the mythopoetic quest is misguided because it reproduces masculinity as a power relation – the power of men over women and the power of

some men over other men", they see its huge popularity as "an indication that millions of men have been forced to grapple with what it means to be a man" (Kimmel and Kaufman, 1994, p283); and, indeed, this discussion of but three perspectives from within the overall men's movement demonstrates the depth and complexity of men's grappling with meanings of masculinity - each perspective constitutes a broad range of voices and viewpoints concerning the meaning of masculine gender and men's position in gender relations, as well as understandings of the best way forward for men. So what could be said about the future of masculinity politics?

The Future Direction of Masculinity Politics?
In the current debate, scholars in the field of men's studies are looking both within and beyond the men's movement for potential sites wherein a politics of masculinity could lead to eradication of unequal relations of power between men and women and between men.

For instance, within the men's movement, whilst their theoretical underpinnings differ vastly, Schwalbe (1995b) does not rule out the possibility of developing some level of coherence between profeminist and mythopoetic perspectives in pursuit of gender justice. As this chapter demonstrates, a key divergence between these perspectives lies in the mythopoetic tendency to focus on the psychological domain (men's pain) in isolation from its wider socio-political framework (men's power and privilege), while profeminists focus on the relationship between the psychological and socio-political, concluding: "men's pain is caused by men's power", it is the cost men pay for holding their position of dominance, and thus the patriarchal order is damaging to many men as well as to women (Kimmel, 1995, p366). Thus, Schwalbe (1995b) suggests, the challenge of attracting mythopoetic men towards a profeminist perspective involves 'connecting heads and hearts':

> Two things that have to be done are, first, to respect where the men
> are at psychologically, and two, to show how a sociological analysis
> of gender inequalities can be ultimately more empowering than any
> psychological view. ... What I would like to see, in other words, is
> the mythopoetic men link their rejection of the iron cage of
> rationality, of alienated work, of competitive relationships among

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men, and of soulless culture, to a project that recognizes how these things harm us all, men and women – and more so people of colour and working-class women and men than relatively well-off middle-class white men. This will require sociological thinking and a more radical political consciousness ... Feminist theory offers some of the most powerful intellectual tools available for making those connections (p331).

Dash (1995) and Kimmel (1995) concur that a key positive aspect of the mythopoetic perspective lies in its provision of a site wherein men can communicate with each other at a deeply personal level, disclosing their fears and failings, hopes and dreams, and expressing emotion in a mutually supportive and non-competitive way. Thus, Kimmel (1995) argues, facilitating men to communicate in this way makes mythopoetic practice "an explicitly counter-homophobic project" (p370 – Kimmel's theory on the role of homophobia in reproducing inequalities in the gender order are discussed in chapter two). Kimmel's qualification, however: "if emotional expression is the good news, then inadequate political contextualization is the bad news" (p370) is supported by Dash, who, first and foremost a profeminist but also a mythopoetic, aspires toward linking men's 'inner work' to a broader political vision and strategy:

> Mythopoetry may already have set its course irrevocably. But if we don't try, mythopoetry will probably continue to be apolitical at best and antifeminist at worst. If we succeed, the rewards would be significant. We may be able to reach outside our tiny circle of profeminist men. And we may get to have a men's movement with a personal / spiritual focus and an activist focus.
>
> (1995, p360)

Bly and Kimmel have begun to develop a level of dialogue between their respective perspectives in recent years. Kimmel invited Bly to address a National Organisation of Men Against Sexism meeting in 1996; and in the same year, Bly invited Kimmel to address a mythopoetic meeting. However, given the profeminist and mythopoetic vastly differing interpretations of gender and power, it is, perhaps, more likely, as

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Messner (1997) suggests, that mythopoetic men may more readily identify with the men's rights perspective than with the profeminist perspective:

> Mythopoetic focus on men's pain – and the barely submerged suggestion that women, especially feminists, might be responsible for much of this pain – creates a psychological and organizational potential for antifeminist politics. … It is easy to speculate that those mythopoetic men who do have an interest in participating in overt gender politics (as opposed to individual spiritual growth or therapy) might find themselves attracted to the men's rights movement (p93).

Clatterbaugh (1995) concurs:

> If I were to make one prediction about the future of the mythopoetic movement as presently constituted, it is that a substantial part of it will be captured by the men's rights movement. There is too much common ground between the two perspectives and the necessary ongoing feminist critique will lead to tighter nonfeminist and antifeminist alliances. … The men's rights movement, on the other hand, is fighting a hopeless battle – claiming men are the real victims – based on gross distortion of social reality and fanatical antifeminism (p61).

If, as Clatterbaugh (1995) suggests, the men's rights lobby is inspired by fanaticism and its claims are based on gross distortion of social reality, in Australia at least, this perspective's catch-cries for rolling back feminist gains appear to have been heeded:

> The Federal Liberal government has already begun rolling back some of the gains made, reasserting traditional masculinity through its economic and family policies. While it is easy to point to new media images and styles of masculinity in existence, it is more difficult to claim that the lives of men in general have changed. Yes, men can now cry on TV, but the institutionalised power relations between and among men and women have hardly gone away.

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In divorcing the psychological from the institutional realm, mythopoetic and men's rights discourses ultimately frame men as victimised by contemporary society. The mythopoetic perspective frames men as 'wounded' by society's attempts to 'feminise' them; and to redress this imbalance, provides a homo-social site wherein men can gather to recover their lost 'deep masculine' essence. The men's rights perspective frames men as 'wronged' by too much feminist influence in the policy arena; and to redress this wrong, provides a forum wherein men can lobby for reversal of state policies. Arguably then, the discourses and practices of these perspectives pit the masculine gender (usurped) against the feminine gender (usurper) as competitors in a zero-sum power game - offering a conceptual framework for interpreting gender that forbids attention to the structural inequalities between men and women and between men upon which the patriarchal order rests. And thus ignoring structural inequalities, the mythopoetic and men's rights perspectives portray pursuit of gender justice as a source of unity and solidarity among men, and pose no challenge to the patriarchal order.

By contrast, in focusing on the institutional as well as the psychological realm and offering the counter-logic that men's pain is a by-product of men's privilege, that men as group wield power over women as group, and some men wield power over other men, the profeminist perspective confronts the 'the masculine paradox' identified by Tolson (1977):

> But in all our practical activities, we faced an immediate contradiction. As men, as the agents of a patriarchal culture, we remained the dominant gender. We failed to confront our political position. ... By this token we internalised the masculine paradox – defining ourselves in terms of sexual oppression, as the guilty, oppressive agency – but we avoided the logical outcome (p144).

and grapples with 'the logical outcome' – that the pursuit of gender justice demands challenging the patriarchal order and thus cannot be a source of unity and solidarity among men:

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The structural problem of counter-sexist politics among men needs to be stated plainly, as it is constantly evaded. Familiar forms of radical politics rely on mobilizing solidarity around a shared interest. That is common to working-class politics, national liberation movements, feminism and gay liberation. This *cannot* be the main form of counter-sexist politics among men, because the project of social justice in gender relations is directed *against* the interest they share. Broadly speaking, anti-sexist politics must be a source of disunity among men, not a source of solidarity. There is a rigorous logic to the trends of the 1980s: the more men's groups and their gurus emphasized solidarity among men (being 'positive about men', seeking the 'deep masculine'), the more willing they became to abandon issues of social justice.

(Connell, 1995a, p236)

As members of the dominant gender then, profeminist men acknowledge the difficulty of reconciling the contradiction and paradox inherent in their pursuit of gender justice. And thus identifying with Tolson's earlier dilemma – "in a certain sense, we were like imperialists in a rebellion of slaves" - Connell looks beyond the men's movement for potential sites wherein a politics of masculinity could lead to gender justice:

The best prospects for masculinity politics may be found outside pure gender politics, at the intersections of gender with other structures. There are situations where solidarity among men is pursued for other reasons than masculinity, and may support a project of gender justice, especially where there is explicit solidarity with women in the same situation. These situations arise in labour and socialist parties, the unions, the environmental movement, community politics, anti-colonial resistance movements, movements for cultural democracy and movements for racial equality.

(Connell 1995a, p235 & p237)

Contemplating the role of the National Organisation of Men Against Sexism, Messner (1997), whilst admiring the work of this organisation, supports Connell's concept of 'alliance politics' as a key strategic means of overcoming the contradictions inherent in men, as men, fighting for gender justice:

> I admire the work that NOMAS men do in their communities to stop violence, to educate about and agitate for equality and justice. But my sense, following Connell (1995), is that profeminist activism among men is best accomplished not through a 'men's movement' but in schools, in political parties, in labor unions and professional organizations, in workplaces, in families, and through supportive alliances with feminist and other progressive organizations that are working for social justice.
>
> (Messner, 1997, p102)

While Kimmel too supports the idea of alliance politics, he places a high practical and symbolic significance on the role of NOMAS and the potential for gender justice to be brought about from within the men's movement:

> I agree with Connell that a profeminist men's movement is shot through with contradictions. But so what? ... The idea that there are men who do support feminism and create an organization to spread that word is more than just contradictory. It does something else. It creates a visible organizational pole, a blip on the political screen, to which other people can respond. ... It suggests that there can possibly be some men who do support feminism as men, who support gays and lesbians as straight people, who support people of color as white people ... I decided a long time ago that I would rather get messy with the contradictions than remain aloof from real political life.
>
> (Kimmel, cited in Messner, 1997, p102)

However, if profeminist men hold differing views on the most apt political strategies to adopt in furtherance of their cause for the eradication of institutionalised sexism,

they are in agreement that developing men's studies as an academic discipline constitutes a central plank in this endeavour. As early as 1987, Brod pointed to the ideological role of "androcentric scholarship" in reproducing male dominance and to the potential for men's studies to "emasculate patriarchal ideology's masquerade as knowledge" through offering alternative interpretations of gender (p264). In the same year, Kimmel, amongst other men's studies pioneers, challenged male academics to respond to theoretical perspectives on masculinity and gender relations developed by feminist and gay scholars:

> Now that these scholars have raised these issues, it is imperative that men begin to examine their own experiences, not as parasites or as intellectual bullies, but as committed social scientists for whom the intellectual task of deconstructing masculinity is vital and important.
>
> (1987a, p279)

And the field of men's studies has been growing slowly but steadfastly in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia over the intervening years. Profeminist academics have also extended their reach into the wider education system designing and implementing courses aimed at raising awareness of inequalities between and among the sexes and promoting an ethos of gender justice among students, whilst also highlighting ways that gender inequality is reproduced through the hidden curriculum and gender regimes of educational institutions (see, for instance: Connell 1995a, 2000, 2002; Kimmel 1987, 2000).

Arguably, the ongoing pursuit of social justice will demand adoption of multiple strategies (education, political activism, alliance politics, addressing men's pain within a framework that links the psychological and socio-political realms, and ongoing scholarly analyses) if just and equitable relations are to be realised, not just in the sphere of gender but also in the interconnected spheres of the economy, religion, culture, sexuality, race and ethnicity where power relations are played out.

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Part Two: The Emergence of Men's Groups and Masculinity Politics in Irish Society

While men's groups have been emerging in local communities since the early 1990s, no nationwide survey has been conducted recording the number of such groups, their geographical locations, their sources of funding, and the purposes they aim to serve; and only a handful of research reports have been published documenting the workings of individual men's groups. In the absence of a central source dedicated to charting the emergence of men's groups in Ireland, tracing the historical development of this social phenomenon remains a piecemeal and inconclusive endeavour; particularly, as government department websites do not specifically breakdown their records of funding allocations by gender.

In 1997, the then Department of Social Community and Family Affairs commissioned Mel Cousins to review its scheme of grants to locally-based men's groups; a scheme it had initiated in 1994 in response to a recommendation by the Second Commission on the Status of Women (1993) that funding for women's community groups should be extended to include men. The Commission offered the following rationale for this recommendation:

> There is a real problem for men at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid because the positive incentives that have encouraged their wives to seek change have, in many cases, passed them by. Yet their traditional role no longer exists. The automatic assumption that they controlled family finances and decision-making is gone. While children may benefit from seeing their mothers behaving more independently and confidently, men can feel threatened.
>
> (*Report to government*, January 1993, pp 86-87)

Thus, the earliest funding for men's groups in Irish society was allocated as a support for marginalised men coping with changing gender roles and concomitant changing meanings of masculinity. Between 1994 and 1996, a total of two-hundred-and-twenty groups were funded under this scheme, of which 10% were funded for all three years, 20% were funded for two years, and over two-thirds were funded for one year only;

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groups funded under the scheme tended to be relatively recently established and relatively small locally-based stand-alone men's groups; 80% of grants to men's groups in this period went to personal development work, with only 10% going to the establishment of new groups, and 10% going to jobs and skills related projects (Cousins, 1997, p8, p20-21, p36). However, despite their strong focus on personal development, Cousins (1997) deemed these earliest men's groups to be only 'of limited success' in their endeavours, suggesting:

> Perhaps one of the weaknesses of much work in this area to date has been an assumption that models which have worked with women's groups can simply be transferred to men's groups. The record to date would suggest that this is not the case (p39).

Cousins (1997) suggests that the thinking and analysis on women's position in Irish society that had been ongoing since the 1960s provided the basis upon which a conceptual framework could be developed to underpin the work of women's community groups from the 1980s onward; by contrast, he notes, "such a conceptual framework is lacking in the case of men" (p39). It is arguable that a key difference between the development of women's groups and men's groups hinges on the notion of change – the former developing as a site for *initiating change*, the latter developing as a site for *responding to change* – and, given the absence of comprehensive debate and analyses on changing meanings of masculinity in Ireland, it is hardly surprising that the earliest men's groups should be bereft of an ideational base to underpin and inform their work, leading Cousins (1997) to:

> … the overall conclusion of this review is that there is a shortage of ideas upon which to spend money. The key recommendation of this review is, therefore, that the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs should prioritise investment in the development of ideas in the area of personal and community development for men and in the sharing of good practices in the future development of the scheme (p40).

Two years later, Kelleher and Kelleher (1999) included three men's groups and one men's network in their *Review of the Social Impact of Locally-Based Community and Family Support Groups*, commissioned by the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs. While Kelleher and Kelleher (1999) point to the emergence of ideas and perspectives for men's development work, their research brief does not include analysis of these nascent methodologies. These researchers also point to the potential for men's groups, if adequately resourced and supported, to act as a site for men to explore changing meanings of masculinity:

> Men's groups are at an early stage of development. They are making an important contribution in supporting men to engage in personal development and to identify issues of concern to men. Groups are beginning to develop methodologies on how to organise and develop men's groups. It is difficult to engage men in this process of development. Their links with broader regional groups are important in order to encourage solidarity, group confidence and the development of a broader understanding of men and their role in society. Given their stage of development and the challenges they face, it is important that these groups are resourced. It is also important that a regional and national framework be put in place to support the development of an infrastructure of locally-based men's groups (p58).

Between 1999 and 2004 emergent men's groups received funding and support from a range of disparate sources such as: Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, Department of the Environment, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, European Structural Funds, Vocational Educational Committees, Area Based Partnerships, Millenium Fund, religious and charitable organisations and trust funds, private donators; although much of the work of these groups remains undocumented, or at least unpublished. It was, perhaps, the Department of Education and Science's expansion of the Women's Education Initiative to include men (Education Equality Initiative 2000) and its ring fencing of funds from the Back To Education Initiative (2003) for community groups, that offered the best opportunity for men's groups to establish themselves more firmly in their communities, widen their platform for men's

development work, document and evaluate their developing methodologies, and share emergent ideas and perspectives. However, the low level of participation of men's groups in these government initiatives suggests that men's development work is still only at a very fragile stage in its development and may be struggling to survive.

Only seven of the one-hundred-and-twenty applications for funding in Phase One of the Education Equality Initiative (2000–2003) came from men's groups, and only five of these groups secured funding. These groups were: Ballymun Men's Centre (BMC); Blanchardstown Men's Outreach Project (BMOP); Men's Education Initiative, Mevagh, Donegal (MEI); the Men's Education Project of the Men's Development Network, Waterford (MEP); and Local Education for Adult Progression for Traveller Men, Bray, Co. Wicklow (LEAP). While the ninety-seven applications for funding under Phase Two of the Back To Education Initiative (2004-2006) included twelve men's groups, only two were successful, namely the Men's Education Initiative, Mevagh, Donegal (MEI); and the Nexus Project for Elderly Rural Men in two West of Ireland Communities (telephone conversation with Joanna Farrell, Further Education Section at the Department of Education and Science, Friday 26th March 2004). Sixty-four groups were approved for funding under the community strand of the Back To Education Initiative (2003–2004) of whom fifty-nine proceeded with activity, and of whom only three specifically targeted men - two in Dublin and one in Leitrim; and thus a total of forty-eight men have participated in the Back To Education Initiative to date (telephone conversation with Berni Judge, Further Education Section at the Department of Education and Science, Monday 31st May 2004).

In 2002, the Department of Education and Science commissioned Drury Research to conduct an evaluation of the seventeen projects (comprising five men's groups and twelve women's groups) that participated in Phase One of the Education Equality Initiative (2000-2003). It is regrettable that, due to the limited resources of individual projects and inadequacies in the initiative's administrative system, Drury (2003) could access but a "limited supply of documented information detailing projects' processes and practices" (p1). Drury suggests that, while the National Women's Council of Ireland had been appointed as Support Service for the initiative: "the removal of the evaluative role from the Support Service's remit appears to have discouraged projects from documenting and capturing ongoing project lessons", a lacuna that leaves Drury

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pointing to the ongoing "need for a detailed analysis and evaluation of each of the projects to understand the emerging broader social and educational themes" (Drury, 2003, p2).

Drury worked to a broad remit within a relatively short timeframe (one year), thus, despite the qualitative dimension to the project's methodology, Drury's report is characterised more by description of activities than by in-depth observation and analyses of processes operative in the seventeen community groups funded under Phase One of the Education Equality Initiative (2000-2003). Nonetheless, the Drury report is a welcome contribution to the task of recording models of practice emerging in the field of men's community education. However, as men's groups have only recently emerged in Ireland, it is regrettable that Drury, while *pointing to the role* of men's groups in facilitating men to negotiate meanings of masculinity, does not explore *processes by which this role is concretised*, nor what understandings of masculinity and gender relations are at play within this emergent social force in Irish society.

It is welcome and noteworthy that the Men's Development Network in Waterford is nearing completion of its privately funded publication outlining its key practices and learnings. This publication, *Men's Development Project: Methodology and Practice*, due in autumn 2004, has been in preparation since 2000 and will thus undoubtedly contribute greatly to the task of building and sharing knowledge about men's development work. The Men's Development Network is also in the process of expanding its website (http://www.mens-network.net) which will soon offer access to its annual reports, work plans, conference papers, press releases, and in-house documentation. Arguably, these forthcoming innovations by the Men's Development Network will generate much-needed dialogue between participants, practitioners and researchers in the field of men's development work in Ireland.

Although not specifically focusing on the concept of men's groups per se, four research reports published in Ireland between 2002 and 2004 raise awareness of men's issues and highlight a need for the development of support structures for men who are re-negotiating their roles in the face of profound economic and social change.

For instance, Corridan's (2002) report on adult men's participation in literacy programmes in the Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DALC) suggests that some men are experiencing difficulty in redefining their roles, and thus recommends: "that DALC develop a men's programme, which would extend beyond basic education to an exploration of a range of issues relevant to men's lives" (p53).

King et al. (2002) are also concerned with adult participation in education, seeking in particular to identify gender differences in learning styles and possible implications for educational policy and practice. Although their quantitative instruments (Kolb's Learning Style Inventory and Allinson and Hayes' Cognitive Style Index) yielded contradictory results, these researchers conclude: "there are no significant differences in the way adults, both women and men, learn" (p120). From their qualitative data, however, King et al., identify gender differences in *approaches* to education, suggesting that a deeply internalised traditional definition of masculinity poses a barrier to some men's participation in education initiatives: "second chance education does not, it would appear, sit comfortably with traditional masculine values – breaking ranks is a risky undertaking" (p33). In referring to the inner world, to the risk that breaking rank with traditional masculine values can pose to an individual identity, King et al., echo the notion of Taboo Zone oppression as loyalty to a deeply internalised narrow definition of masculinity, which no longer matches today's world, and allegiance to which forecloses the possibility of negotiating alternative ways of being.

In their in-depth qualitative study of homeless men in Dublin, Cleary et al. (2004) set out to explore the relationship, if any, between the notion of a 'crisis in masculinity' and men's real-life experiences of marginalisation. The researchers' conclusions highlight the relationship between social class and the construction and negotiation of gender identity:

> The conclusion of this report is that despite challenge and confusion amongst men there is no general crisis of masculinity. What is evident is the increasing isolation and alienation of a particular grouping of men who are in this situation [homeless] due to a combination of structural, familial and personal factors. ... In

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today's society, plural rather than unitary identities are to the fore and those who can accumulate identity-enhancing resources have a better chance of maintaining psychological equilibrium. Conversely those who accumulate risks in an uncertain sociological environment will be vulnerable. Some categories of men, mainly young, working class men, have found these social and economic transformations difficult because they are confined by their gender and worldview (pp127, 130).

The finding that some men have difficulty redefining themselves in today's world "because they are confined by their gender and worldview" resonates with the suggestion of the debilitating impact of Taboo Zone oppression on some men's capacity for creativity and fluidity in constructing and reconstructing identity. Importantly, these researchers' highlighting of the relationship between social class and gender identity is indicative of the need for men's groups to act as a site for marginalised men to question systems and structures (whether these be socio-economic and/or psychological) that oppress them.

Of the four recently published Irish research reports, Stakelum and Boland's (2002) study of men's health issues is of most relevance to this thesis, as it comprehensively foregrounds the implications for men, and for society, of traditional interpretations and enactments of masculinity. Stakelum and Boland's (2002) findings are of particular significance to this study as the themes they identify and address overlap with the themes emerging in public discourse on gender sparked by the *Exploring Masculinities* controversy; and thus these researchers' findings are discussed in depth in the following chapter of this thesis. It is noteworthy that Stakelum and Boland (2002) highlight the need for debate and analyses on men and masculinity, appealing beyond the health sector to the government and academic departments "to make a concerted effort to challenge current masculine ideologies" (p54).

The Emergence of a Profeminist Perspective in Ireland
There is, however, little evidence of academia offering a comprehensive response to Stakelum and Boland's (2002) appeal. In Ireland, there is a dearth of published scholarship concerning the male gender and men's position in gender relations and no

university has established a dedicated men's studies unit. This dearth of scholarship may be evidenced in a recent lecture series held in Trinity College Dublin entitled *Boys, Men and Masculinities* at which male academics from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and South Africa presented papers, with no representation from Ireland[3].

Although not currently residing in Ireland, Professor Harry Ferguson (formerly of University College Cork and University College Dublin, now at the University of the West of England) has been the most notable Irish male academic focusing on the study of the male gender and gender relations. Thus, over the course of the chapters to follow, theoretical perspectives offered by Professor Ferguson are placed in dialogue with themes in public discourse on gender in Irish society and with themes arising from this study's findings. While in Ireland, Ferguson combined scholarly analyses with practical work related to his involvement with MOVE (Men Overcoming Violent Experiences) where he worked with male perpetrators of domestic violence; and Ferguson and Synnott's (1995) *Intervention into Domestic Violence in Ireland: Developing Policy and Practice with Men Who Batter* provides an example of such dovetailing of theory and practice. While in Ireland, Ferguson was also involved in organising a number of workshops and conferences as fora for discussion and analyses of the male role; and, both working and writing from a profeminist perspective, has been an advocate of the idea of men's groups as a site for challenging traditional understandings of masculinity and gender relations:

> Men's groups are still a minority interest in terms of the actual numbers involved. Nevertheless, the development of a so-called 'men's movement' is proving important as one response to the need for men to engage together in critical dialogue about our lives and roles, find support and take responsibility for a positive (re)construction of masculinity and gender relations (1997, p4).

Based on the available evidence, it could be concluded that men's groups are emerging predominantly in communities characterised by economic and social

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[3] This lecture series was co-hosted by the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies at Trinity College and the Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Education and Science and was presented over the course of the academic years 2002–2003 and 2003–2004.

deprivation, providing a site for marginalised men to negotiate understandings of themselves and their relation to the world. By what processes are men negotiating meanings of masculinity? What understandings of masculinity and gender relations are at play in men's groups? It is the endeavour of this project to offer some answers to these questions through the in-depth analyses of social processes operative in two men's groups presented in the case study chapters.

The Emergence of a Mythopoetic Perspective in Ireland:

Through word of mouth, this project accessed evidence of the emergence of a mythopoetic or spiritual perspective in Irish society. Enquiries with members of the Dublin Men's Coalition led to an introduction, by telephone, to Gerard Moore, a student at Milltown Institute of Theology who is engaged in a doctoral study of masculine spirituality in Ireland and is a member of a men's spirituality group. Moore agreed to participate in a telephone interview with this project:

Following the teachings of Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM whose discourse and practice may be accessed at http://malespirituality.org, Moore describes his group as "a Christian mythic men's group that draws on myths and Judeo-Christian teachings as its sources of truth and guidance for male spiritual journeying". Moore's group participates in "New Age Warrior retreats for men" that "draw on the wisdom stories of *Iron John*, *Parsifal* and *Camelot*" wherein group activities include "a three-stage rites of passage programme for males". Moore explains stage one as "separation from mother, father and childhood"; stage two as "a period of trials and ordeals wherein males undergo the humiliation necessary for accessing sacred mysteries and attaining realignment with the cosmos – this stage involves receiving a wound"; and stage three as "re-entering society as an adult male who has been given the right to the symbols of power, to be used for the good of the community". Over the course of his research Moore intends to ascertain the number of men's spirituality groups operating in Ireland but as he is currently only at the preliminary stages of his work, he could only guess that there may be ten to twelve such groups in Dublin, each comprising ten to twelve members (telephone conversation with Gerard Moore, Tuesday 25th May 2004).

Moore's contribution suggests that understandings of gender underpinning men's spirituality groups in Ireland are informed by a fusion of the Judeo-Christian and Jungian concept of 'natural difference', a conceptual framework that often works to affirm rather than challenge inequalities between the sexes.

The Emergence of a Men's Rights Perspective in Ireland

A men's rights perspective has been emerging in Irish society throughout the 1990s, with Parental Equality, AMEN (Abused Men) and the Men's Council of Ireland counting among the most notable groups representing this perspective:

Founded in 1993, Parental Equality, at http://Ireland.iol.ie/~pe focuses on fathers' rights pertaining to questions of custody and access to children and distribution of family resources in cases of marital breakdown, as well as questions related to the rights of unmarried fathers, lobbying for change in the way the family court responds to these questions. Concerns voiced by those campaigning on behalf of fathers' rights, the complexity of these concerns and possible ways of addressing and resolving these contentious questions are discussed in chapter two, which deals with dominant themes in public discourse on gender and gender relations, and also in the final chapter, which offers insights towards a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work.

AMEN (Abused Men) focuses predominantly on men's rights pertaining to the question of domestic violence. This organisation holds that men and women equally perpetrate, and are equally damaged by, this form of violence; and its website offers a multiplicity of research findings to support this claim. Founded in December 1997 as a support service for abused men, AMEN holds that "male victims of domestic violence are not treated equitably by the state agencies"(http://www.amen.ie). The question of gender ratio regarding perpetration and damage is addressed in chapter two, which also addresses concerns regarding the institutional framework's response to male victims of domestic violence.

The Men's Council of Ireland (MCI) describes itself as "an umbrella organisation open to local and national men's groups, and other groups, that agree with the aims and objectives of the MCI" (http://www.menscouncil.com). Founded on 9th December

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2002, the MCI website lists a myriad of aims, objectives and functions, stating that its "main function is to articulate issues affecting men's lives and campaign on men's behalf"; and its listed issues include inter alia: "the destructive effects of the anti-man family law system on fatherhood; the exclusion of the male perspective from decision-making processes and the formulation of public policy; misandrist tendencies in the media, academia, and public policy; the low priority accorded to men's health; the high rate of male suicide; the isolation and marginalisation affecting certain groups of men". The MCI website states that the organisation represents ten men's groups, a claim that this project cannot verify, as the organisation does not list its members on the Affiliation section of its website. Themes and issues raised by the Men's Council of Ireland are addressed in depth over the course of the chapters to follow.

This project does not dispute the validity of men's rights concerns and the need for institutional reform to reflect today's realities, for men and for women, in both the public and private spheres. However, varying degrees of antifeminist sentiment may be witnessed in the discourses of men's rights groups in Ireland, and it is of concern that the conceptual framework for interpreting gender underpinning this perspective – women as winners and men as losers in a zero-sum power game - works to 'legitimise' such anti-feminist rhetoric (while depicting feminism as a monolithic misandrist school) and to ignore structural inequalities between and among the sexes.

Summary and Conclusion:
Part one of this chapter considered the origins and development of men's movements, men's groups and masculinity politics at international level from the 1970s onward. Focusing on the discourses and practices of three perspectives: the men's rights, mythopoetic and profeminist perspectives, it explored understandings of masculinity and gender relations underpinning each perspective, as well as relationships between these perspectives. Finally it considered the possible future direction of masculinity politics in the international arena, concluding that multiple strategies will be required (education, political activism, alliance politics, addressing men's pain within a framework that links the psychological and socio-political realms, and ongoing scholarly analyses) if just and equitable relations are to be realised, not just in the

sphere of gender but also in the interconnected spheres of the economy, religion, culture, sexuality, race and ethnicity where power relations are played out.

Part two considered the more recent emergence of men's groups in Irish society since the early 1990s; concluding that such groups are emerging predominantly in deprived communities, providing a site for marginalised men to negotiate changing meanings of masculinity in the face of profound social and economic change. It highlighted the need, firstly, for a nationwide survey to establish a broad picture of this social phenomenon; and secondly, the need for in-depth studies of social process and of understandings of masculinity and gender relations at play in individual men's groups. As yet, then, little is known about the thinking that informs the discourse and practice of individual community-based men's groups, whether or not they draw on profeminist, mythopoetic and / or men's rights' interpretations of gender and gender relations. Part two sought to identify the extent to which these three perspectives may be evidenced in wider society in Ireland. It identified the work and writing of Professor Harry Ferguson, although not currently living in Ireland, as representing a profeminist voice; it identified a, presumed small, number of men voicing a mythopoetic perspective; and a relatively larger number voicing a men's rights perspective. So what could be said about masculinity politics in Irish society?

According to Connell's definition of masculinity politics, offered as this chapter's opening quote, insights into masculinity politics in Ireland may be gained from consideration of the controversy surrounding the introduction of the optional *Exploring Masculinities* (2000) programme at senior cycle level in single-sex boys' schools; for, undoubtedly, 'the meaning of masculine gender' and 'men's position in gender relations' are at issue for participants in the public debate sparked by the introduction of this programme. Thus, as a microcosm of wider societal tensions, key themes from this debate are analysed in chapter two.

Chapter Two: Understandings of Masculinity and Gender Relations in Irish Society.

This chapter draws on theoretical perspectives from the inter-disciplinary field of men's studies in tracing the historical development of gender identity in Ireland, and in analysing dominant themes in contemporary public discourse on masculinity and gender relations.

Our lives have changed dramatically, but what has not changed are the ideas we have about what it means to be a man. The structure of our lives has changed, but not their culture, the ideologies that give that structure meaning. This is what social scientists used to call *'culture lag'*, where the technology and institutional framework of a society changes more rapidly than the culture's stock of meanings and interpretations of social structure.

(Kimmel, 1996, p44 [my italics])

Undoubtedly the most significant catalyst for change in the structure of Irish men's lives has been the phenomenal increase in female participation in the workforce and decline in male participation rates over the past three decades: "between 1971 and 2001, the number of females at work in Ireland grew by 140%, as opposed to 27% for males" and "between 1991 and 2001, overall employment grew by 79% for women as opposed to 34% for males" (Coughlan, 2002, p4). And the implications of this change for enactments and understandings of gender have prompted Irish society to begin grappling with its 'stock of meanings' concerning gender roles in general, and male identity in particular.

Part One of this chapter traces the historical development of understandings of masculinity and gender relations in Irish society. It outlines key social, economic, and political factors that influenced Ireland's transition from a predominantly rural agricultural polity to today's knowledge-based society; and focuses on the impact of these factors on the form and meaning of masculinity and gender relations. Part two analyses dominant themes in contemporary public discourse on masculinity and gender relations and evaluates whether these issues and concerns could be deemed indicative of a 'culture lag' in Irish society.

In drawing on theoretical perspectives emerging from the interdisciplinary field of men's studies, this chapter focuses predominantly on the works of profeminist theorists Professor Harry Ferguson (Ireland), Professor Michael Kimmel (United States), and Professor Bob Connell (Australia).

Part One: The Historical Development of Understandings of Masculinity and Gender Relations in Ireland

This section analyses changing meanings of masculinity and gender relations across three historical epochs, within each of which the nature and pace of change accelerated more rapidly than in its predecessor. In the first, de Valera's Ireland, the era of the farmstead economy, the years 1930 to 1970 marked the shaping and defining of traditional male identity in a newly independent nation state. The second epoch, the industrial economy of the 1970s and 1980s, brought alternative ways of enacting masculinity shaped by new experiences in cities and towns, in a nation gaining an increasingly international outlook. Finally, in the 1990s, the decade of the Celtic Tiger economy, ways of enacting masculinity further diversified as information technology increasingly impacted on the workplace and home, in a nation that had taken its place in the global order.

De Valera's Ireland: The Farmstead Economy, 1930 – 1970

Following the turbulent birth of the Irish Free State, the 1930s witnessed the shaping, defining, and copperfastening of traditional Irish male identity. With Anglophobic passion and building on the cultural nationalism of preceding decades, de Valera worked unrelentingly to dismantle the Constitution of 1922 and carve a unique identity for Ireland. De Valera's creation, *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (1937), gave institutional expression to his cultural ideal for an infant polity; and enshrined a value system for national life that would obtain until at least the 1970s. Two related features of de Valera's Constitution have implications for Irish male identity and gender relations - its specificity concerning the function and status of 'woman' in Irish society, and its reinforcement of Catholic social values as a blueprint for living. As Connell (1995a) points out, any attempts to understand or explain male identity must take cognisance of masculinity as a relational concept:

> Masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation. To put it another, perhaps clearer way, it is *gender relations* that constitute a coherent object of knowledge for science. Knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of knowing gender relations. Masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations. They are inherently historical; and

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their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change (p44).

Applying Connell's analytical framework then, values and ideas about gender roles and relations expressed in the Constitution, and the evolving ways those ideas are interpreted by the legislature, have ongoing implications for shaping the 'configurations of practice' that give structure and meaning to the everyday lives of men and women. Laws deriving from the state's interpretation of de Valera's ideals impact on the lives of individuals, the balance of interests, and the direction of social change in Ireland.

Between the 1930s and 1970s, successive legislatures institutionalised the doctrine of gender separatism based on 'natural differences' expressed in de Valera's references to "differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function", to "woman's life within the home" and to "mothers' duties in the home" (articles 40.1 and 41.2, *Bunreacht na hÉireann (Constitution of Ireland)* (1937). However, by vesting power and privilege in men, and withholding social and economic rights from women, the state forged an understanding of gender as a hierarchal relationship between men and women. Institutionalisation of this hierarchical gender relation in a legal and social framework that would obtain for three decades, coupled with the pervasive role of Catholicism in everyday life, form the linchpin for understanding traditional male identity and 'configurations of practice' in Irish society between the 1930s and 1970s.

The privileged position of the Catholic Church in politics and society lent a theocratic character to the institutional framework that shaped and defined traditional Irish male identity. In this framework, gender roles were rigidly defined, demarcated, and policed; gender orthodoxies governed every stage of the life cycle for men and women. For men: celibacy before marriage, sexual union within indissoluble marriage for the sole purpose of procreation, and providing for one's family, were held up as the ideal of manhood. For women: wholehearted commitment to wifely and motherly duties was held up as the ideal of womanhood. Arguably, these governing orthodoxies served to further the convergent interests of church and state; for as long as they obtained, the spiritual values of the church would be upheld, and the farmstead

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economy would flourish. From the 1930s to the 1970s, church–state policy and practice shaped an oppressive and repressive 'configuration of practice', characterised by double standards and taboos that would blight the lives of many Irish men and women, even to the present day.

In keeping with both Catholic spiritual values and the needs of the farmstead economy, a moral code outlawing sexual union before marriage and endorsing sexual intimacy within marriage as solely for the purpose of procreation was rigidly enforced by church and state. The low marriage rate of the farmstead economy and rigid policing of sexual mores generated a sense of mystery and secrecy about sexuality for a large cohort of Irish men and women. Policing of Catholic doctrine on sexual relations and punishment for transgression was primarily directed toward women. Married women were policed through a ban on contraception; and unmarried mothers were severely punished through social ostracisation and incarceration in Magdalene Homes where "their children were routinely removed to the infamous [religious run] reformatory or industrial schools, where many were seriously abused" (Ferguson, 2001a, p122). The enormity of the scale of clerical physical and sexual abuse is only beginning to be realised as continuing pressure from victim support groups, not just in Ireland but worldwide, succeeds, in piecemeal fashion, in extracting admissions of guilt from an ever-intransigent Catholic hierarchy.

Thus, a tightly controlled, yet duplicitous and contradictory moral climate provided the bedrock for the formation of traditional gender identity in Ireland. As Ferguson (2001a) points out, church–state collusion in producing 'configurations of masculinity and femininity' strove toward the ideal of the "virtuous mother, the living embodiment of Our Lady – humble, pious, celibate and yet fecund; and the disciplined, chaste, working man who would become the god-fearing priest or good breadwinning father" (p122). Arguably, this moral high ground and idealisation of the Irish family, cultivated a climate of denial and secrecy concerning transgressions within the family unit. Such denial and secrecy may be inferred from the absence of such topics as domestic violence and child sexual abuse from public discourse up to the 1970s: "child sexual abuse constituted less than one per cent of cases dealt with by the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children prior to the 1980s" (Ferguson, 2001a, p121).

Successive legislatures' reproduction of the ideological construction of gender as a hierarchical relation shaped a 'configuration of practice' that, by withholding social and economic rights from women, vested power and privilege in men in both private and public life up to the 1970s. In particular, the law compelling women to leave their jobs in the public sector upon entering marriage sanctioned male superiority in the workplace and home. In the workplace, it endorsed the concept of men's 'entitlement' to work. In the home, as sole provider, it endorsed his personal authority over his dependents. Denied the right to unemployment assistance, married women were rendered completely dependent on the reliability and goodwill of their husbands. Until the Succession Act (1965) came into force in 1967, a husband could legally disinherit his wife and leave her homeless in his will. Up to the 1970s, a wife who was treated unfairly or brutally by her husband had no access to free legal aid; neither had she a right to exclude him from the family home, which was almost invariably his. Indeed, "if she fled the home, her husband had a right to damages from anyone who enticed her away, or who harboured her or committed adultery with her – actions based on the notion that a woman was the property of her husband" (Scannell, 1988, p127 & p132).

Thus, it is fair to conclude that up to the 1970s, gender inequality was deeply embedded and unchallenged in the 'configuration of practice' in Irish society. Femininity was constructed as fulltime dedication to caring and motherhood, economic dependency, and absence from public life. Masculinity was constructed as entitlement to the breadwinner role, to public power and private authority; and fatherhood (unmentioned in the constitution), divest of its nurturing dimension, was synonymous with authority and discipline. This is not to suggest that all men, or even a majority of men, treated their wives and children harshly, but rather, the concept of man as the embodiment of power, and as superior to woman, had been institutionalised to shape a 'configuration of practice' that would come under increasing challenge in the 1970s.

Connell borrows the concept of 'hegemony' (from Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci's theorising of class relations) for his analysis of masculinity and gender relations. Hegemony refers to "the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (Connell, 1995a, p77). The concept of

'ideology as struggle' is central to this perspective, which can be applied to analysis of gender, race, and class relations. This analytical framework postulates that all communication and all meanings have a socio-political dimension. The groups with power dominate not only the production and distribution of resources, but also of ideas and meanings; the social order is organised in their interest and the ideological system derives from it, working to justify and naturalise the constructed reality. The hegemonic process involves winning widespread consent to the ideological system so the constructed reality becomes accepted as commonsense, natural, fair, and inevitable. Upon winning hegemony then, the accepted ideal of masculinity and femininity becomes the context within which individual men and women make sense of themselves, their relation to each other, and to the world. But hegemonic victory is never complete or stable; resistances arise because of the contradictory experiences of everyday life – when individuals or groups experience a discrepancy between the dominant ideology and the reality of their personal lives. Thus, the hegemonic process is continuous: ground won by the dominant ideology must be constantly defended and justified, competing definitions must be subordinated or marginalised, lest new definitions win hegemony, and new realities be constructed:

> Masculinities are created in specific historical circumstances. They
> are liable to be contested, reconstructed or displaced. The forces
> producing change include contradictions within gender relations, as
> well as the interplay of gender with other social forces.

(Connell, 2000, p219)

Within this analytical framework, the government's Programme for Economic Expansion (1958) implemented in the 1960s laid the foundation for profound structural change that, by 1970, would produce contradictions within gender relations, and the dominant ideology of gender as a hierarchal relation would be called into question.

The Industrial Economy, 1970 - 1990
Ireland's late industrialisation process brought new opportunities and challenges to Irish men. Migration to expanding cities and towns distanced young people from the direct gaze of the parish priest heralding the start of the slow decline of the moral

authority of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Shift from the farmstead to the industrial economy increased marriage prospects for the cohort of men not destined to inherit the family farm: "the marriage rate (marriages per 1,000 population) grew from 5.5 in 1960 to 7.1 in 1970" (Curtin, 1986, p157). In contrast to the traditional arranged marriage, newfound ideas of mutual choice, love, and compatibility underpinned the emerging nuclear urban family form. It is fair to speculate that this nascent concept of individual autonomy and negotiation in gender relations posed challenges to the traditional understanding of masculinity in Ireland.

Changing ideas about gender roles and identities arising from the industrialisation process were amplified by increasing access to television in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, the weekly television chat show hosted by Gay Byrne, *The Late Late Show*, became a, frequently controversial, key forum for exchanging new ideas and challenging dominant ideologies right up to the 1990s. In view of women's increasing presence in the urban workforce [from one in thirteen in 1971 to one in five by 1984], and the range of social and economic rights denied them, it is understandable that public discourse on gender in this period should focus on women's role and status in society (Breen, et al., 1990, p117). It is regrettable, however, that concomitant changing meanings of masculinity did not become a topic of debate in the public sphere, or academia, during this period. Public discourse and scholarly analyses of the impact of change on men's lives in the 1970s and 1980s would have offered insights into internalised understandings of masculinity and the fit between such understandings and changing reality in the gender order.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the hegemonic version of masculinity as authoritative and all-powerful in both the public and private sphere was vigorously defended in the power arena. Despite a profoundly changed social and economic reality, throughout this period "imaginative tactics were employed by legislators, trade unions and employers to deny or delay women's social and economic rights"; and those concessions that were gradually granted had to be "forced on representatives by either the courts, the women's movement or the EC" (Scannell, 1988, pp132-3). The reluctant and recalcitrant stance adopted by Ireland's male leadership suggests an understanding of equality measures as 'granting concession'

rather than 'formalising an entitlement', a stance that could be deemed indicative of a deeply internalised understanding of men as superior to women.

Nonetheless, by the closing stages of the industrial era, legislative reform, no doubt influenced as much by the changing needs of the economy as by external pressure, had begun to institutionalise the notion of gender as an equal relation. New legislation embraced both the public and private domains of gender relations. In the public sphere, for example, women were granted the right to work after marriage, to pregnancy leave, to equal pay and equal social welfare allowances. In the private sphere, for instance: Family Home Protection Act (1976) granted married women the right to prevent the sale of the family home without their consent; Family Law Protection of Spouses and Children Act (1981) provided for exclusion of violent spouses from the family home; and the Family Planning Acts of 1979 and 1986, granted women gradual access to contraception facilities (Scannell, 1988, pp132-3). Thus, by the 1990s, the two-way ebb and flow of ideas, values, and principles between the institutional framework and the culture's 'stock of meanings' gave way to legislative reform that would pave the way for new 'configurations of practice' to develop in Irish society.

How did this erosion of men's symbolic and formal power over women impact on understandings of masculinity and gender relations? It is perhaps inevitable that, in any such instance, a 'culture lag' will exist between formalisation of a concept through law and individuals' internalisation of it as part of their personal value system and as a new norm in everyday custom and practice. It is also perhaps inevitable that any new cultural value will be internalised immediately by those who perceive it as a gain; and more slowly by those who perceive it as a loss, thereby producing tension and 'culture lag' within segments of society. Kimmel (1996) suggests that 'culture lag' arises where "the technology and institutional framework of a society changes more rapidly than the culture's stock of meanings and interpretations of social structure" (p44). Clearly then, public discourse at times of change is a vital mechanism for striving towards consensus on a 'changing stock of meanings' and thereby minimising 'culture lag'.

Given the absence of public discourse on the implications of the legislative reform of the 1970s and 1980s for inherited meanings of masculinity, and accelerated pace of change during the 1990s, it is hardly surprising that possible indicators of 'culture lag' should begin to emerge in Irish society in the final decade of the millennium. The emergence of men's pressure groups in the 1990s and increasing popularity of the phrase 'masculinity in crisis' could be deemed indicative of a 'culture lag' – of a 'crisis of meaning' for some men because their inherited ideas and values jar with new ideas and values recently enshrined in the institutional framework rendering it difficult to make sense of the world.

The Celtic Tiger Economy, 1990s

Arguably, the complexity of life accompanying Ireland's transition, in the space of a mere decade, from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy, coupled with decline in the moral authority of the Catholic Church, posed profound challenge to inherited understandings of masculinity and gender relations. By the end of the decade, not just the gender composition of the workforce, but the very nature of work had changed utterly as skills for the information age superseded the skills of industrial labour; and "by 1996 fathers were the exclusive breadwinner in only half of all families with dependent children" (Ferguson, 2001a, p124). Further, in an increasingly secular society, erosion of traditional taboos concerning sexual mores gave way to profound diversification in family forms and norms: " by 1996, eighteen per cent of all families with children under fifteen were headed by lone-parents"; and, "at present, some thirteen percent of one-parent families in Ireland are headed by men" (Ferguson, 2001a, p124). Thus, by the end of the 1990s, religion and the indissoluble family with clearly defined gender roles, the familiar framework for defining oneself in Ireland, had all but vanished.

While the dearth of research literature exploring the impact of such profound and rapid change on understandings of masculinity in Ireland has already been highlighted, findings from recent studies reviewed in the previous chapter suggest that some men are experiencing difficulty in finding a fit between their inherited understanding of masculinity and the reality of their everyday lives. Stakelum and Boland (2002) suggest: "while men acknowledge, and to a great extent accept, the changing role of women, the findings reveal that some men are having trouble letting

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go of traditional male roles" (p54). In their exploration of men's health issues, commissioned by the North Eastern Health Board, these researchers found "the macho principle", the traditional model of masculinity as 'breadwinner', 'strong', and 'invulnerable', to be a guiding principle in the lives of many men, and often detrimental to their physical and emotional health. In living by 'the macho principle', loss of the breadwinner role is perceived as a failure of manhood, a collapse of authentic identity, while the 'myth of invulnerability' compels men to 'tough it out' in silence, dooming them to suffer inner turmoil, despair and isolation (Stakelum & Boland, 2002).

In exploring barriers to marginalised men's participation in education and training initiatives, the *Men on the Move* (2000) project reached similar conclusions concerning the limiting and debilitating impact of the macho imperative. Research participants repeatedly cited 'this macho thing' as a barrier to education, and their explanations of the term revealed their perception of the breadwinner role as the sole source of identity, self-affirmation, and meaning. Thus, bereft of skills for the new labour market, yet hankering after the breadwinner role at all costs, education was perceived by the study participants, not as a mechanism for adjusting to change and improving life chances in the information age, but rather, as a 'cop out from the Celtic Tiger' (p30). Absence of the traditional framework of clearly defined gender roles and ways of being demands that individuals invent and reinvent themselves over the course of a lifetime in a world characterised by flux and uncertainty; a process Giddens calls the 'reflexive project' of constructing identity. Participants in the *Men on the Move* (2000) project highlight the difficulty, for some men, in undertaking this 'reflexive project', suggesting that some are experiencing a deep sense of confusion and fear arising from loss of a pre-existing framework for understanding masculinity:

> I think that for some men the idea of not having a pre-ordained role
> is frightening. They're frightened 'cos they've spent so much of their
> time being expected to do certain things and understanding that
> they're going into a certain role. But now those roles are being torn
> down around them and they're being told 'go your own way' and
> they don't know where to go. They've never had to think like that

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before. For the first time they have to think for themselves, and I think a lot of men are afraid of that.

(Owens, 2000, p31)

Given the lengthy duration of the Irish State's interpretation of gender as a hierarchal relation and its safeguarding of the breadwinner role for men, it is hardly surprising that some men should experience confusion and fear when suddenly finding themselves in a new 'configuration of practice' that says 'go your own way', undertake your own 'reflexive project'. And it is, perhaps, to be anticipated that this loss of old certainties may give rise to a reactionary response from some men. For arguably, an internalised understanding of masculinity as superior to femininity produces a conceptual framework for men to perceive equality measures, not as rights but as concessions to be granted women at men's discretion, and thus, for some men, when finding themselves in a disorientating uncertain new 'configuration of practice', it makes sense to protest 'enough is enough, we've conceded too much and now we're the losers' – a recurring theme in men's rights discourse. The conceptual framework, approach, and concerns of the men's rights perspective are discussed in depth in part two. For now though, it seems fair to suggest that men's rights' protestations and calls to 'turn back the clock' might be best understood in terms of Kimmel's observation: "we tend to search for the timeless and eternal during moments of crisis, those points of transition when old definitions no longer work and new definitions are yet to be firmly established" (1994, p120).

Part one of this chapter has suggested that up to the late 1970s the ideology of gender as a hierarchal relation had been institutionalised and gone largely unchallenged in Irish society. It could be suggested that the assumption of male superiority in this construction of gender has obviated the need for male scholarship to concern itself with 'gender issues' thus perpetuating an understanding of men as gender-free beings, a conceptual inheritance that may, in turn, account for delay in male academics' conceptualising and theorising of men as gendered beings, despite challenge and change in the gender order from the 1970s onward. As Lohan (2000) argues:

Scholarship in Ireland has been slower than in other countries to re-cast gender studies to incorporate the study of men and

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masculinities. It has been slower to appreciate that unlocking limitations on life-spaces for women means opening up the means by which *both* masculinities and femininities are constructed in everyday life to be 'different' from one another – complementary but, at the same time, unequal. Studies of masculinity confront patriarchy by presenting a mirror to the male gaze. The reflection reveals not the lives of gender-free human beings or a singular masculinity but, as others have argued, a complex of masculinities and a complex of power between masculinities. ... The argument here is that to open up the way men create and sustain gendered selves is an important way of examining how gender is implicated in power-relationships (p167, 168).

Thus, in a 'configuration of practice' wherein masculinity has long been a privileged and taken for granted construct, it is understandable that change in the gender order should give way to a 'crisis of meaning' for some men – indicative of the need for the culture to analyse, debate and re-negotiate its 'stock of meanings', not just concerning a complex of power between men and women, but also, importantly, a complex of power between men. And, by the closing stages of the millennium, *Exploring Masculinities* (2000) would prove a catalyst for such debate to commence.

Part Two: Dominant Themes in Contemporary Public Discourse on Masculinity and Gender Relations

As a consequence of European Union legislative diktats, and Ireland's transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy, the current legislative framework has moved beyond de Valera's rigid demarcation, by gender, of the private and public spheres, providing a more fluid and wider context for both men and women to define themselves. Unlocking limitations on life spaces for women has, in turn, produced diverse ways of enacting masculinity. Are these diverse forms of masculinity equally valued and validated in the culture's 'stock of meanings'? What ideologies of gender are at play in the hegemonic process? And what ideology of gender could be said to be hegemonic in the 'configuration of practice' in contemporary Ireland?

The controversy evoked by the introduction of the optional *Exploring Masculinities* (2000) programme at senior cycle level in single-sex boys' schools could be deemed a microcosm of tensions between differing ideologies of gender being played out in the wider social dynamic. For instance - the abrasive critique of this programme voiced by journalist John Waters, opinion columnist with the *Irish Times* and consultant editor of *Magill*; the men's rights opposition to the programme, and this perspective's success in having it made the subject of public review in spring 2001; and the Department of Education's commissioning of Michael Kimmel to assess the validity of charges made against the programme - have brought competing understandings of masculinity and gender relations into the public domain. Thus, analysis of issues raised by the *Exploring Masculinities* controversy offers a useful freeze-frame for exploring ideologies of masculinity and gender at play in the wider hegemonic process in Irish society.

The remainder of this chapter explores masculinity politics in Irish society through analysing dominant themes in public discourse on masculinity and gender relations sparked by the *Exploring Masculinities* controversy[4]. This analysis has a twofold aim - to evaluate whether concerns voiced in the debate could be deemed indicative of 'culture lag' in Irish society, and to identify the ideology of gender that could be said to be hegemonic in the 'configuration of practice' in contemporary Ireland.

Rationale for the introduction of *Exploring Masculinities* (2000)

Exploring Masculinities was authorised by the Equality Committee of the Department of Education and Science when the legislative framework of the European Union placed increasing emphasis on the concept of equality and, in turn, legislative reform in Ireland gave way to the Education Act (1998), Employment Equality Act (1998), and Equal Status Act (2000). In a new legal framework, enshrining the principle of

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[4] As Mac an Ghaill et al. (2002) note, the *Exploring Masculinities* controversy was characterised by conflation of issues specifically pertaining to education with broader social issues predominantly concerning gender meanings and representations. These researchers also note that the controversy was characterised by sustained media attention rather than comprehensive public debate, and this media attention "was sustained by a small number of contributors among which specific individuals were over-represented" (piv). It is of significance to this project, however, that the over-represented individual voices were those articulating the men's rights perspective, and thus the controversy can be considered of importance for it brought this perspective's interpretation of gender into the public domain and offers an opportunity to place men's rights' concerns in dialogue with profeminist theories on the male gender and gender relations. This project, therefore, prioritises the dimension of the controversy concerned with gender meanings and representations over those concerned with wider educational issues.

equality for all, and outlawing discrimination on grounds of sex, race, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation, a number of government-sponsored reports and research endeavours highlighted gaps between principle and practice in Irish society – a 'culture lag' between enshrinement of a principle and its incorporation into the culture's lived value system. Throughout the 1990s, reports by the Economic and Social Research Institute, Joint Oireachtas Committee on Women's Rights, Second Commission on the Status of Women, and Task Force on Violence Against Women, pointed to the need for ideational change to underpin and endorse legislative reform (*Exploring Masculinities*, pv).

Need for ideational change was, perhaps, most pointedly highlighted by findings on second-level schoolboys' perceptions of masculinity and gender in a research project conducted in 1989 and repeated in 1999 (Lynch, 1999). This study found that, with few exceptions, the boys predominantly equated masculinity with physical strength, height, and sporting ability; and high levels of fear were reported toward gay males. On a broader level, the boys' knowledge of, and concern with, gender inequality was found wanting; as was their attitude toward minority groups. In short, these research projects identified high levels of sexism, prejudice, and discrimination in male youth culture (*Exploring Masculinities*, pvii).

Thus, aiming to address the gap between the enshrined principle of equality between and among the sexes and the lived practice of sexism and discrimination, the Equality Committee of the Department of Education and Science authorised a team of four male and three female teachers, to develop a programme to "promote understanding of and respect for diversity" (*Exploring Masculinities*, ppv-x). A male co-coordinator was charged with overseeing the programme's design, piloting, and implementation stages; and with spearheading ongoing in-service support and training for teachers. *Exploring Masculinities* is funded by the European Social Fund under the Equal Opportunities Actions measure in the Human Resources Development Operational Programme. Thus located within the legislative framework of the European Union and Ireland, as well as the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, proponents of *Exploring Masculinities* (2000) claim that the programme has a clear democratic mandate.

Exploring Masculinities became an option for single-sex boys' schools in September 2000. Its module topics include: new life choices arising from changing gender roles; the value of unpaid as well as paid work; relationships between men and women, and between men; health; sexuality; violence; racism; and sport. Best thought of as a process rather than a product, *Exploring Masculinities* aims, in particular, to raise critical awareness of power dynamics and inequalities between and among the sexes, and to facilitate adolescent boys to critically reflect upon changing meanings of masculinity and their future roles in society (*Exploring Masculinities* ppv–x). Given these stated aims, it is fair to conclude that the motives for introducing *Exploring Masculinities* coincide with the profeminist aim of challenging inequality, not just between men and women, but also between men.

While the education system is by no means the only socialising agent in a child's life, there can be no doubt that it plays a powerful role in transmitting cultural values and thus, by its policy and practice, creates institutional definitions of gender. Arguably, in promoting an ethos of tolerance, justice, and equality between and among the sexes, and in creating spaces for dialogue and critical reflection, *Exploring Masculinities* has potential to facilitate young males to negotiate a wide range of understandings of masculinity as they enter adulthood in an increasingly fluid and flexible gender formation. It is fair to conclude that proponents of the programme advocate that diverse ways of enacting masculinity be equally valued and validated by Irish society.

Issues Raised in Response to *Exploring Masculinities* (2000)

An Attack on Traditional Forms of Masculinity
The notion of valuing and validating diverse forms of masculinity is vigorously and vehemently opposed by John Waters in his denouncement of *Exploring Masculinities* as "an attack on manhood", an "intellectually dishonest vehicle for eliminating traditional forms of masculinity from coming generations". Waters argues that "the approach is as if to empower the most weedy, unathletic boy in the class and bring the rest down to his level", and accuses the programme of "creating the conditions for feminist supremacy" and of "active promotion of homosexuality" (Waters, 2000, *Irish Times*, 24th October). Lynch and Devine reply that Waters' argument "betrays a

disdain for boys who lack interest in sport, and an exclusionary and dismissive attitude to those whose understanding of masculinity may be different from his own" (Lynch and Devine, 2000, *Irish Times*, 7th November). These exchanges offer an opportunity to draw on academic theories concerning the role of traditional masculinity in upholding inequalities in the gender order[5].

Waters' exclusion of unathletic and gay males from his definition of true manhood, and his denigration of women, affirm theories that identify homophobia and sexism as key organising principles in the enactment of traditional masculinity, and in reproduction of inequalities in the gender order (see, for instance: Kimmel, 1994, 1996; Ferguson, 1997, 1998b; Connell, 1987, 1995a). Men's studies analyse, not just relations of power between men and women, but also relations of power between men, and the dynamics in social practice by which these power relations are created and sustained:

> To recognize diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance, and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on. There is gender politics within masculinity.
>
> (Connell, 1995a, p37)

Kimmel (1994) holds that within the traditional ideological construction of masculinity as 'strong' and superior to 'weak' femininity, acquisition of male identity involves taking "flight from the 'feminine" - the project of acquiring status as 'real man' through proving that one is not 'sissy'. Thus in schoolyard culture, a crucial site of identity formation, denigration of 'the feminine' becomes the central organising principle in the bid for social acceptance. In this dynamic, hierarchies of masculinities are established through the 'evaluative eyes' of the peer group, with those who fall short of the ideal being subordinated and marginalised through 'sissy' or 'gay'

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[5] The analysis to follow focuses on setting Waters' understanding of masculinity in dialogue with academic discourses concerning the social construction of traditional masculinity; thus, the antifeminist dimension of Waters' approach is discussed in more depth under the themes of domestic violence and male suicide.

labelling, and sometimes through violence; a dynamic that sustains and reinforces hegemony for stereotypical masculinity (Kimmel, 1994, 1996).

In Kimmel's analytical framework, denigration of the feminine in the acquisition of traditional masculinity and policing of this process by the 'evaluative eyes' makes masculinity "a homosocial enactment" and widens the meaning of homophobia beyond fear of gay men per se. Homophobia, he argues, is the constant fear "that other men will unmask us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men" (Kimmel, 1994, p131). Homophobia could thus be explained as a controlling dynamic within male culture, setting men in constant competition with each other, and upholding a hierarchy of masculinities that keeps homosexual males in a subordinated position. Through the process of ideologically devaluing the feminine, sexism, in turn, becomes the controlling dynamic for keeping women in a subordinated position in the gender order; however, while such a 'configuration of practice' privileges men as a group over women as a group, men do not benefit equally from this 'patriarchal dividend' – within masculinity politics some men are marginalised by virtue of their ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation (see also: Connell, 1987).

Within this analytical framework, Waters' claim that *Exploring Masculinities* aims "to empower the most weedy unathletic boy and bring the rest down to his level", renders him complicit in the social dynamic by which masculinities that differ from the hegemonic model are subordinated and marginalised. *Exploring Masculinities*, on the other hand, has potential to undermine this social dynamic through creating spaces for dialogue and critical reflection on meanings of masculinity, thereby engendering an ethos of equality and respect for diversity.

Waters could, perhaps, be considered the embodiment of 'culture lag' and contradiction in the 'configuration of practice' in Ireland; a figure trying to make sense of a world where old definitions no longer work and new definitions are yet to be firmly established. In his response to *Exploring Masculinities*, Waters staunchly upholds the familiar traditional definition of manhood yet simultaneously tries to debunk aspects of that definition and forge new understandings of masculinity. Perhaps, the most notable example of this contradiction lies in Waters' attempt to

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uphold the traditional definition of masculinity as 'strong' while simultaneously introducing a new understanding of men as victims, particularly as victims of domestic violence. Waters' criticism of *Exploring Masculinities* for its "skewed attitude to domestic violence" sparked what might be called 'the gender symmetry debate' between representatives of the men's rights group AMEN (Abused Men) on one side, and Michael Kimmel on behalf of Department of Education and Science, on the other (Waters, 2000, *Irish Times*, 24th October).

Domestic Violence

Gender symmetry refers to the idea that perpetrators and victims of domestic violence are equally divided between men and women, the case made by Waters' side. The gender asymmetry perspective holds that, while some men are indeed victims of domestic violence, the majority of perpetrators are male, the case made by Kimmel. Each side calls on research findings to support its case, with disagreement centring on whether or not these research methodologies are flawed and, as a corollary, whether or not the findings may be generalised to the wider population. (For details of these heated exchanges see *Irish Times*: Kimmel, 4th December 01; Waters, 7th January 02; Cleary 10th January 02; Kimmel, 17th January 02) Kimmel's comprehensive analysis of the body of research literature in question points to selectivity in sampling, categorizing, and measuring procedures in studies that find gender symmetry, rendering it untenable to generalise such findings to the national population (Kimmel, 2001a). This project supports Kimmel's conclusion, which does not suggest that men are never victims of domestic violence, but rather that men constitute the vast majority of perpetrators.

There can be no doubt that debunking the myth of male invulnerability can only have positive implications for men and therefore Waters is offering a valuable contribution to public discourse on gender. It is regrettable however, that his case is presented as a refutation of "the gospel according to the domestic violence industry" rather than critique of dynamics in social practice that work to sustain and reproduce the myth of male invulnerability (*Irish Times*, 24th October, 2000). While Waters is indeed a much-needed voice in public discourse on gender, his anti-feminist rhetoric can only produce animosity in gender relations, and reduce possibilities of working toward equality between and among the sexes. Thus, while Waters' contribution may, in the

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long run, prove beneficial for men: "the great injustice is that it undermines the legitimacy of responses to abused women and falls within a wider masculinity politics that advocates on behalf of men's rights at the expense of a broader equality agenda" (Ferguson, 2001a, p128).

Kimmel (1996) suggests that a 'culture lag' can arise where "the technology and institutional framework of a society changes more rapidly than the culture's stock of meanings and interpretations of social structure" (p44). A reverse form of 'culture lag' can, however, also occur – where the institutional framework lags behind or fails to reflect change in the culture's stock of meanings and interpretations of social structure. Stakelum and Boland's (2002) findings affirm this reverse form of 'culture lag', highlighting as they do, a gap between the institutional framework and the lived realities of male victims of domestic violence. Stakelum and Boland (2002) point to, for instance, awkwardness and embarrassment that occurs when male victims present to their GPs, many of whom "are not equipped to deal with this new social phenomenon"; suggesting that, in the main, male victims of domestic violence "suffer in silence, ostracized by a society that still refuses to accept that women too can be perpetrators of violence"; and recommending that AMEN be supported by the state to enable it to cater to a wider cohort of men (p22, p44)[6]

Fatherhood
Changing roles in the family and workplace carries implications for the enactment of fatherhood, with fathers increasingly expected to relate rather than dictate to their children. Ferguson (1998a, 1998b) and Kimmel (2000) argue for the nurturing dimension of males, absent from the traditional definition of masculinity, to be acknowledged, cultivated and valued. These theorists' focus on fatherhood aims, not just toward attaining equality in the division of labour, but also toward enhancing the male experience through widening definitions of masculinity. Acknowledging and developing men's caring capacities, they argue, serves to deepen and expand ways for men to experience and value themselves above and beyond the breadwinner role. In this view, Waters' protest that *Exploring Masculinities* fails to place enough emphasis on fatherhood, which he describes as "unquestionably the most important role a man can fulfil in his life", has much value in terms of its capacity to widen understandings

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[6] This project has subsequently learned that the AMEN refuge has closed.

of masculinity (*Irish Times*, 24th October, 2000). Indeed, by his recent lawsuit, Waters symbolically defended the sanctity of his fatherhood role in the public arena (see Appendix 1 for media coverage of this lawsuit).

Changes in family forms and norms have resulted in the emergence of the 'non-resident father', 'unmarried father', and 'lone father' in the 'configuration of practice' in contemporary Ireland. As a member of, and spokesperson for, the 'lone father' category, Waters articulates the concerns of fathers' rights groups and serves to highlight a 'culture lag' – a gap between the institutional framework and lived realities of many contemporary fathers.

De Valera's emphasis on the role of motherhood, albeit used by legislatures to restrict women's rights as workers, at least bestowed constitutional protection on their rights as mothers. No such constitutional protection is given to fathers. Further, the constitutional definition of the family as a marriage-based unit negates rights for unmarried biological fathers. Thus, in circumstances of conflict between mothers and fathers, rights afforded to all categories of fathers are dependent upon the discretion of the family courts. And, noting judgment trends, Waters claims that the court system is biased in favour of women (see, for instance, *Irish Times*: 18th June 01; 30th July 01; 15th January 02).

Clearly, in every case, court judgments concerning custody and access rights for parents involve complex and sensitive issues wherein the interest of the child is always of primary concern. Unfortunately, as cases are heard in camera and proceedings are neither recorded nor published, there is no public information available by which judgments can be analysed, rendering it difficult to ascertain whether Waters' claim of gender bias is valid. McKeown and Ferguson (1998), however, note: "anecdotal evidence suggests that the court system tends to weigh custody and access decisions in favour of mothers" thereby endorsing traditional gender roles of mother as primary carer and father as provider, rather than the idea of joint parental responsibilities in the private and public spheres (p164). Waters' claim thus highlights both the need for transparency in the court system (while protecting individual identities), and the need for widening the constitutional definition of the family to include new family forms. As McKeown and Ferguson (1998) suggest, a

more inclusive approach to fathers' rights could be realised through Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights which guarantees every person respect for 'family life', and has been interpreted to include non-marital family life but yet requiring existence of family ties between mother and father. Such institutional reform could protect the rights of a biological father who has, or has had, a relationship with the mother before or after the birth of the child, whilst withholding rights from biological fathers outside of relationship with the mother. Exercise of these rights would be regulated by law and always in the best interest of the child (pp157-159).

Stakelum and Boland's (2002), findings affirm the existence of a 'culture lag' between the institutional framework and lived realities of some fathers. Citing, for example, the case of a separated father unable to sleep overnight in the 'parents' room' of a children's hospital because it housed only women, the researchers suggest: "separated fathers feel demeaned by a system that seems to reinforce the societal notion that mothers are always the better carers" (p23). Stakelum and Boland point to similar assumptions underpinning lone fathers' engagement with the educational system and social welfare system "where entitlements are granted as a matter of course to women, but men have a more difficult time in proving their entitlements" (p36).

Male Suicide

The alarming increase in male suicide is another key concern in public discourse on gender in Ireland. "In 1998, suicide ranked as fourth highest cause of years of potential life lost for males in Ireland, superseded only by deaths from circulatory diseases, cancers and respiratory diseases; with 40% of the deaths occurring in males aged thirty years and under" (Department of Public Health, 2001). The organisation Aware (1998) suggests that suicide could be considered the outcome of "a domino effect of three components: depression and related disorders; traumatic losses in life; and the added depressing effect of alcohol abuse or illicit drug use" (p3). Aware (1998) thus offers a useful organising framework for exploring this harrowing phenomenon:

Depression and Related Disorders: Although causal factors are many and complex: "psychiatric disorders, usually depression, or an intoxicant problem is present in 90% of people who take their own lives"; and "mental health disorders, especially depression, remain the highest risk factor for suicide" (Aware, 1998, p3; Department of Public Health, 2001, p64). The role of ill health, especially depression, in contributing to suicide is alarming when considered against findings that "young people, young males in particular, are less likely to attend their GP and are, therefore, less amenable to help" (Department of Public Health, 2001, p61). Stakelum and Boland (2002) suggest "the macho principle which equates illness with weakness", accounts, to a large extent, for males' reluctance to engage with the health system; but, by its failure to develop men's health promotion initiatives, the health service endorses their absence (p19); thus:

> Male patients and health service providers, it seems, are locked together unwittingly in perpetuating male gender myths based on sexual difference and society expectations. Men's health is thus, inextricably tied up in the image of the perfect man, with illness being perceived as a loss of masculinity (p24).

It is fair to suggest that one response to the multi-dimensional problem of male suicide lies in reducing male alienation from the health system: a response requiring reappraisal of both the culture's 'stock of meanings' concerning masculinity and of the institutional framework. In response to Stakelum and Boland's findings, however, reappraisal of the institutional framework has brought a welcome development: the appointment, in 2003, of a Men's Health Coordinator by the North Eastern Health Board. The new incumbent is charged with taking account of the male perspectives articulated in Stakelum and Boland's (2002) study to develop and implement a meaningful proactive strategy for men's health in the region; and, it is to be hoped that other regional health authorities may follow suit.

Traumatic Losses in Life: The second component in the domino effect identified by Aware (1998) includes a range of circumstances, one or more of which, can have a devastating impact on someone who is already struggling with depression. Such circumstances include: loss of a parent, sibling, close friend, or life partner; inter-

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personal conflict, particularly with a parent or romantic partner; relationship and family breakup; humiliating experiences such as being arrested or subjected to corporal punishment; failure at school or work. Of these circumstances, unemployment is frequently cited as a key significant causal factor in male suicide, yet "while there is a clear statistical association between unemployment and suicide, especially in men, what this connection is, is not clear" (Aware, 1998, p7). Aware suggests that this connection could either reflect the effect of unemployment on mental health or the increased risk that people with psychiatric disorders have of being unemployed. In their study of the links between mental health, unemployment, and suicide, Hawton and Rose (1986) "attribute the primary effect to psychiatric illness, resulting in both unemployment and suicide" (cited in Aware, 1998, p7). Given the statistical link between high unemployment rates and male suicide, primacy of mental disorder in the chain of events could, perhaps, explain the conundrum that Ireland's male suicide rate increased four-fold during the 1990s, a decade of high employment. Despite this conundrum, the Department of Public Health (2001) warns: "unemployment should always be considered a high risk factor because of the impact on self-esteem" (p59); a warning that endorses the need for challenging the way stereotypical masculinity is enacted and reproduced, so that men, especially unemployed men, can find alternative ways of valuing themselves above and beyond the breadwinner role:

> When a man loses his status in the public domain of work, he is not equipped to deal with the loss of self. Men's emotional health has not been sufficiently nurtured to allow men to value themselves outside the context of work. Failure in this domain can, the men believed, lead to emotional and often physical suicide
>
> (Stakelum and Boland, 2002, p34)

As Stakelum and Boland suggest, failure to nurture male emotional health can render some men bereft of coping, even survival, mechanisms, when their whole sense of meaning and identity collapses with loss of the breadwinner role. Through assigning traits and thereby justifying roles, gender ideologies regulate ways of being in the world. The stereotypical definition of masculinity as 'strong' and superior to 'weak' femininity serves to justify traditional 'male provider - female nurturer' roles.

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Arguably, this construction of masculinity has two-fold implications for men. It inextricably links male self worth and value to the breadwinner role; and it demands a constant show of 'strength', of 'manly' behaviour. In this understanding of masculinity, it is likely that loss of the breadwinner role, the source of affirmation and self-worth, could give way to a collapse of meaning and identity for some men; while upholding a show of 'manly' behaviour prohibits admitting to inner turmoil lest it be perceived as a sign of 'weakness' – a dilemma that dooms some men to 'suffer in silence' and jeopardizes their well-being. Ferguson (1998b) draws on the work of American academic and family therapist Terence Real to explore this dilemma. In theorising the acquisition of stereotypical masculinity as 'the repudiation of the nurturing self', Real echoes Kimmel's theory of the acquisition of masculinity as the "flight from the 'feminine'". Real holds that in acquiring traditional male identity, boys learn to deny and negate their inner world - 'to replace inherent self-worth with performance-based esteem' - as they come to measure and value themselves by their success in the public domain; a process he calls the 'passive trauma' of traditional masculinity. Real, Kimmel and Ferguson view the acquisition of traditional masculinity as a negative achievement, less an acquisition and more a disavowal of aspects of self, and therefore, a loss. Adhering to the imperatives of traditional masculinity leads to "an acceptance by males of psychological neglect, a discounting of nurture and the turning of the vice of such abandonment into a manly virtue" (Ferguson, 1998b, pp210-215). A possible detrimental outcome of trying to live up to the 'manly virtue' of not showing weakness in the face of adversity is starkly articulated by one participant in the *Men on the Move* (2000) project:

> For most men, when something happens, they would take the suicide
> route rather than admit they are weak. A man can't talk about his
> feelings to other people, he's not supposed to do that, so they burn
> him up and eat him away from the inside. Then all he can do to make
> them stop is to end them. And the only way he sees to end them is by
> taking his own life. It's probably the only way he can find peace.
>
> (Owens, 2000, p33)

While the causes of male suicide are complex and multi-dimensional, the scale of the phenomenon demands thorough exploration of every potential risk factor and every

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possible preventative measure. In this endeavour, it is vital that the 'passive trauma' of traditional masculinity, the psychological processes that work to disconnect males from their inner world and prevent them from acknowledging pain, be countered. It is difficult to disagree with Stakelum and Boland's (2002) appeal that "initiatives which focus explicitly on male emotional issues need to be developed if we are serious about tackling men's health" (p40).

The Depressing effect of Alcohol Abuse or Illicit Drug Use: The third component in the domino effect identified by Aware lies in "the depressing impact that alcohol excess or illicit drug use can have on a person struggling with depression and rejection, even when the substances are consumed on a single occasion" (Aware, 1998, p15). Aware holds that depression appears to be the most commonly experienced first sequence in the domino chain, amplified by the demoralising effect of emotional trauma, and compounded by alcohol abuse. Aware (1998) suggests, however, that for young people the chain of events may commence with substance abuse, and thus stresses the need for educational programmes for young people "to emphasise the link between alcohol abuse, depression and suicide, and the role of drug taking in inducing suicidal inclinations" (p23). Stakelum and Boland (2002) concur. In noting high levels of alcohol consumption and other risk-taking behaviours in male youth culture, these researchers conclude that: "masculinity rules men's decision-making process and behaviours with far reaching implications for their health and well being" (p6).

While a wide range of possible precipitating factors is identified in the 'domino effect' model, the inclusion of sexual orientation among these factors is of particular concern in the study of masculinity. The Department of Public Health (2001) notes: "there is evidence to suggest an increased risk of suicide symptoms and recurrent depression amongst homosexual men; young males who are homosexual may have difficulty in 'coming out', with one of the consequences of this confusion over their identity being an increased risk of suicide" (pp59-60). This evidence of increased risk of suicide symptoms among homosexual men renders it imperative that respect for diversity within masculinity be cultivated, not least in schoolyard culture where, at a critical stage in the acquisition of identity, the 'evaluative eyes' of the peer group

signal whether or not one is an acceptable and accepted human being[7]. It is noteworthy that one of the most vigorously opposed module topics in the *Exploring Masculinities* programme has been that of male sexual orientation. While decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1994 and legislation outlawing discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation has enshrined the principle of equality between heterosexual and homosexual men, outrage at *Exploring Masculinities'* acknowledgement of homosexual identity is indicative of a gap between principle and practice in Irish society - a 'culture lag' that must be narrowed in the interest of suicide prevention among the gay community; indeed, in the general interest of promoting respect for diversity[8].

Without doubt, a complex mix of physiological, psychological and sociological factors contribute to the problem of male suicide; and the task of identifying precipitating factors and preventative measures is an ongoing and difficult endeavour because every act of suicide represents an individual response to a unique set of circumstances. Despite this complexity, the potential for educational programmes to assist in reducing the suicide rate cannot be underestimated: "The attitudinal shift that Aware believes society needs to go through, if it is to effectively address suicide prevention, is only likely to come about by addressing the issue in or before the early teenage years" (Aware, 1998, p22). Aware and the Department of Public Health emphasise the need for educational programmes to include: promotion of positive attitudes to mental health; awareness raising of links between alcohol, depression and suicidal inclinations; development of problem solving skills and a creative approach to life; engendering an ethos of emotional communication, of caring for self and others; promoting understanding of and respect for diversity (Aware, 1998; Department of Public Health, 2001). While it is clear that the education system cannot solve all of society's problems, it nonetheless has a moral duty to ensure that all its pupils are equally valued and encouraged to flourish; and to promote an ethic of

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[7] It is worth commenting that Lynch and Lodge's (2002) study of power relations in the school environment found "high levels of homophobia" across the twelve schools included in the study. Pointing out the absence of "a recognized space in the education programme of these schools where issues of sexual orientation could be discussed in a safe and inclusive way", these theorists conclude that by its "silence" the institutional framework contributes to the subordination and marginalisation of gay identity. Indeed, in reviewing Irish educational research on the topic of sexual orientation, Lynch and Lodge note that this awesome silence prevails "not only in schools but also in the research literature" (pp 136-137).

[8] It may be noted that legislation decriminalising homosexuality was introduced in 1994 by female Minister for Justice, Máire Geoghegan Quinn.

justice, and equality as it prepares young people for responsible participation in wider society.

Stakelum and Boland (2002) highlight the need for the institutional framework to act in concert with men in addressing the problem of men's health and male suicide:

> The study of how gender influences men's health and illness is in an early stage of development. Health, as this study seems to suggest, is one of the most clear-cut areas in which the damaging impact of traditional masculinity is evident. The burning question now is: how can we continue to mobilize a broad spectrum of social scientists, medical researchers and public health advocates, along with men themselves, to think about how, as it were, 'to do masculinity differently'? (p50).

This project supports the view that "it is no longer sufficient to describe patterns of illness, what is now urgently needed is exploration of the socio-cultural meanings attached to illness"; an endeavour that will require linking descriptive epidemiological findings to qualitative analysis of meanings attached to the enactment of masculinity (Stakelum and Boland, 2002, pp50-54). Findings arising from such a concerted approach could, in turn, contribute to cohering the institutional framework and the culture's 'stock of meanings' toward new understandings and insights, and therefore toward new approaches to the harrowing problem of male suicide.

Given the complexity and gravity of the problem of male suicide, it is disappointing that Waters and Mac Giolla Bhain (spokesman for AMEN) should use this sensitive and disturbing issue to wage gender warfare and suggest that *Exploring Masculinities* has the potential to put young men at risk of taking their own lives:

> The suicide figures for young males in this state are currently running at – depending on the region – between five and ten times the rate for females. The core reason for this is the loss of identity, self-confidence, and meaning in the lives of young men. There is every risk that this programme, introduced by stealth by

unaccountable and invisible people, will make this situation far worse.

<div align="right">(Waters, 2000, Irish Times, 24th October)</div>

It was feminist ideas that created *Exploring Masculinities* – a programme that makes me shudder when I think of the negative effect it will have on young Irishmen. It will be inflicted on them at precisely the stage they are about to enter the age group where they are at highest risk of taking their own lives.

<div align="right">(Mac Giolla Bhain, 2001a, Irish Times, 22nd November)</div>

Arguably such contributions can do little to assist meaningful inquiry into possible causes and solutions to the complex problem of male suicide; inquiry, which, by the very nature of the phenomenon under study, can never yield definitive answers. The link Waters and Mac Giolla Bhain draw between male suicide, feminism and *Exploring Masculinities* is undeserving of response in the context of the suicide debate as it fails to acknowledge the complexity of the issue and contributes nothing to the search for possible preventative measures. However, the link they draw between male suicide and feminism demands response within the wider context of debate on gender relations in Ireland:

The most pressing question facing this society is: why do men, particularly young men, kill themselves more frequently than women do? ... It is to sociology, not pharmacology, that our question must be addressed. ... All current Irish social policy is based on the template of feminism. ... These are the glory days for the misandrist elite that runs this state's social policy. ... The upcoming generation of young men in Ireland is having its potential restricted by a society that rejects and derides manhood as at best an embarrassing and unfortunate condition.

<div align="right">(Mac Giolla Bhain, 2001b, in Magill, November, pp14-18)</div>

This project endorses the validity of men's rights' concerns – the plight of male victims of domestic violence, the absence of constitutional protection for fathers, the

in camera rule in the family court and its failure to document case proceedings and criteria for judgements, and the poor relationship between segments of the male population and the health and welfare agencies – and advocates institutional reform to address these concerns[9]. Arguably though, the conceptual framework for interpreting gender underpinning the men's rights perspective – women as winners and men as losers in a zero-sum power game – works to 'legitimise' anti-feminist rhetoric and to ignore structural inequalities between and among the sexes – a conceptual framework that can only work to heighten tension in gender relations and thus reduce the possibility of men and women working together in pursuit of gender justice for all. It is disappointing that, rather than engage with the wide range of feminist theoretical perspectives, many of which critique the patriarchal order as damaging to many men as well as to women, these prominent spokesmen for men's rights choose to depict feminism as a monolithic misandrist school.

What could be said of Mac Giolla Bhain's claim that "current Irish social policy is based on the template of feminism … these are the glory days for the misandrist elite that runs this state's social policy"? Responding to this claim offers an opportunity to combine statistical evidence with academic theory in an analysis of gender power relations in the contemporary 'configuration of practice' in Irish society.

Gender and Power in the Workplace

The Employment Equality Act (1998), Parental Leave Act (1998), Equal Status Act (2000), and family-friendly workplace measures enshrine the principle of gender equality in both the public and private spheres. In principle then, Irish social policy and legislation aspires toward breaking down the gendered division of labour by offering men and women equal opportunities, choices, and rewards in balancing their responsibilities and commitments to both work and family. However, statistical evidence of gender bias in pay and power structures suggests a 'culture lag' – a gap between the enshrined principle of equality and everyday lived gender relations.

Women's increasing participation in the workforce and decline of the male stereotype as sole or main breadwinner offers new opportunities for sharing of parental responsibilities and for each parent to seek self-fulfilment in both the public and

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[9] The final chapter incorporates these concerns into its proposed conceptual framework for men's development work.

private domains. The importance of reshaping masculinity into a more flexible and emotionally fulfilling role so that men, especially unemployed men, can find new ways to value themselves has already been highlighted in the discussion of fatherhood in this chapter. However, the dominant meaning of masculinity and fatherhood has implications for gender power relations too: "although a coalescence of male and female gender roles has taken place in our society in recent years, there is strong evidence that men continue to prioritise work, even above their roles as fathers" (Stakelum and Boland, 2002, p36). Stakelum and Boland's findings suggest that, despite a visible coalescence of gender roles, traditional understandings of masculinity and the gender order continue to inform the lives of many men. It is arguable that, although the principle of gender equality is enshrined in law, everyday custom and practice belies lived commitment to this ideal, producing contradiction between elements of the institutional framework itself.

Such contradiction may be evidenced in the discrepancy between equality legislation that aspires toward breaking down the gendered division of labour and the low symbolic and monetary value that continues to be accorded the child rearing sphere of life – reflected in the government's failure to support the development of a comprehensive national childcare system and in workplace practice that penalises uptake of family-friendly measures, both in terms of remuneration and promotion. In workplace culture that economically and symbolically devalues the parental role, it is hardly surprising that Stakelum and Boland (2002) should find: "men continue to prioritise work, even above their roles as fathers" (p36). Arguably, institutionalised practices that discourage men from equally valuing the caring and providing dimensions of their role as fathers reinforces the traditional ideological link between masculinity and the breadwinner role, between femininity and the caring role, and works to reproduce the gendered division of labour and inequalities in the gender order:

> Over an 18-year work span, the average male earns €242,570 more
> than his female counterpart due to a combination of lower pay rates
> and the effects of career breaks to meet family commitments
>
> (Joan Carmichael, cited in *Irish Times*, 9th March 2002)

Carmichael, Assistant General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, was speaking at the launch of the Gender and Pay (GAP) project, a project initiated by congress, aimed at closing the 15.5% pay gap between men and women. Carmichael affirms that, despite promulgation of the ethic of equality: "equal pay is still a myth rather than a reality" in Irish society. It is to be welcomed that the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation "has agreed in principle to co-operate with congress in identifying areas where gender-proofing policies can help tackle the problem" (*Irish Times*, 9th March 2002); although research commissioned by the confederation demonstrates that attainment of gender equality demands much more than articulating a commitment 'in principle' (Coughlan, 2002). It demands vigorously challenging ideologies of gender that work to sustain inequality, so that the enshrined principle of gender equality be accepted, internalised and enacted in the culture's lived value system. Coughlan (2002) borrows Wirth's concept of the 'glass ceiling' to demonstrate how, despite a visible coalescence of gender roles, invisible or ideological forces work to sustain traditional separatist and hierarchal enactments of gender. The 'glass ceiling' is best described as a process operative within the hegemonic struggle, an "invisible, impenetrable barrier preventing women's movement into positions of real influence and decision-making, rather than a fixed point beyond which advancement is impossible" (Coughlan, 2002, pp14 & 27).

Thus, in Corporate Ireland, where women comprise only "three percent of managing directors, eight percent of chief executives, twenty-one percent of senior managers and thirty percent of middle managers" (p5), Coughlan (2002) identifies a range of formal and informal practices that sustain a 'glass ceiling' on women's access to wealth, status and self-fulfilment in the public domain. For instance, low take-up by men of family-friendly measures and lack of a comprehensive childcare system militates against women's ability to compete equally with men for high rank in the workplace (p15). Characteristics identified as 'masculine', such as forcefulness, aggressiveness, objectivity and competitiveness tend to be elevated as traits best suited to management; while those identified as 'feminine' such as cooperativeness, flexibility, subjectivity, and intuitiveness tend to be dismissed as ineffective traits for management (p15). Unclear selection criteria for promotion allows considerable scope for discretion by senior management, discretion that is likely to be influenced by personal and in-house attitudes toward women (p14). Women tend to be excluded

from in-house male networks or 'old boys' clubs' which often act as an informal vehicle for career advancement; and women's ability to combine management with family commitments is often questioned by male colleagues (p14). In view of women's low representation in the upper echelons of Corporate Ireland, these but few examples from Coughlan's findings offer insight into the way formal and informal practices work to sustain and reinforce a separatist and hierarchal ideology of gender in the hegemonic process.

Arguably though, while the gendered division of labour privileges males, it has negative implications for both men and women. While it limits women's opportunities for fulfilment and reward in the public sphere, it also limits men's opportunities to reverse the 'passive trauma' of masculinity identified by Terence Real, that is, opportunities to subordinate 'performance-based esteem' to 'inherent self-worth' as fuller participation in the private sphere offers new ways of valuing themselves.

The 'glass ceiling' process also carries negative implications for the economy. As Coughlan (2002) suggests, workplace culture that fails to tap into the skills and competencies of all its employees, that fails to accommodate and support flexibility and diversity, militates against economic success in the global information age:

> In these rapidly changing times, it is imperative for Ireland to take
> and maintain its place as a progressive and knowledge based
> economy. In such an economy, flexibility, innovation, creativity and
> adaptability are key requirements. These requirements will only be
> met in organisations that draw on and harness the energies of *all* of
> their resources (p27).

While the Employment Equality Act (1998) does not make provision for 'positive discrimination', it does permit 'positive action' and 'equal opportunity' measures in the workplace. However, as Coughlan's (2002) findings demonstrate, introduction of such measures have, in the past, "prompted a backlash, mainly from men, but also from women who claim they have been stigmatised by efforts to bring about inclusion and equal opportunity" (p23). Such backlash and tension in gender relations is, perhaps, understandable when considered against Kimmel's theory that "competing equally for rewards that we [men] used to receive simply by virtue of our sex actually

feels like discrimination; equality will always feel uncomfortable for those who once benefited from inequality" (Kimmel, 2000, p191).

This project supports the view that a possible way to promote and nurture an ethos of gender equality in Corporate Ireland would be to adopt a 'diversity management' approach to the workplace. While 'positive action' measures are usually taken to rectify discriminatory practices carried out in the past, 'diversity management' has a broader base and "views diversity as a strategic approach to business that contributes to organisational goals" (Coughlan, 2002, p23). 'Diversity management' focuses on maximising productivity and creativity at a time of rapid cultural and sociological change. It centres on developing an inclusive workplace where diversity is valued and accommodated. A key advantage of this approach is that it moves beyond the concept of 'equal opportunity' to promote fairness and support for all employees. Thus, factors inhibiting employees from contributing fully to their jobs are seen, not as a personal or gender problem, but as an organisational problem to be rectified in the interest of both the organisation and employee (p23). It is arguable that implementation of 'diversity management' practice could, in time, assist in breaking down gender bias and in bringing greater flexibility to the workplace, so that both men and women could more easily balance their commitments to work and family. The Irish Business and Employers' Confederation is involved in a number of projects in the 'diversity management' area; indicating a will, not just to support equality 'in principle', but to take active measures to promote it.

Gender and Power in the Political Arena
Statistics issued by the National Women's Council of Ireland demonstrate that the privileged position men hold in Corporate Ireland is mirrored and matched by their over-representation in the political arena (National Women's Council of Ireland, 2002a; 2002b). These publications point to the stark under-representation of women at every level of the power structure and call for legislation to make fifty per cent of funding for political parties dependent on maintaining a forty-sixty gender balance among candidates selected for election. Despite increasing female participation in public life, the percentage of women elected to Dáil Éireann has risen by only five percent in the past twenty years, currently standing at 12% of Dáil membership. The percentage of women elected as councillors remained unchanged at 15% in both the

1991 and 1999 local elections, only increasing to 17.75% in the 2004 local election (National Women's Council of Ireland). In other decision-making fora, for instance, women comprise only: 26% of Vocational Education Committee membership; 20% of Health Board membership; 12% of Regional Authority membership; 9% of Civil Service Secretaries General; 7% of High Court Judges (National Women's Council of Ireland, 2002a; 2002b).

The most recent general election (May 2002) has yielded no change in the gender composition of elected representatives: and thus the 29th Dáil comprises "a male dominated, middle-aged, Catholic and double-jobbing group" (Cullen, *Irish Times*, 22nd May 2002). It is fair to suggest that the composition of the 29th Dáil seems more representative of de Valera's nation than it does of a cosmopolitan state participating in the knowledge-based global economic order.

Thus, the privileged position men hold in the corporate and political arena clearly belie Mac Giolla Bhain's (2001b) claim of a "misandrist elite running this state's social policy".

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter traced the historical development of understandings of masculinity and gender relations in Ireland. It demonstrated that, up to the 1970s, an ideology of gender as a hierarchal relation had been upheld by an institutional framework that vested power and privilege in men and withheld civil rights from women in a rigidly defined social order. By the 1990s, due to changed needs of the economy and predominantly EU mandated legislative reform, the principle of gender equality had been introduced into the institutional framework of a society now characterised by a more flexible social order. As one means of engendering this ethic of equality in the culture's lived value system, the Equality Committee of the Department of Education and Science offered *Exploring Masculinities* (2000) as a curricular option for senior cycle single sex boys' schools; a site where research projects had identified a high prevalence of discriminatory and sexist attitudes. Some publicly-aired critical responses to *Exploring Masculinities* reflected broader societal tensions concerning gender meanings and representations; with media coverage of the controversy being characterised by over-representation of the men's rights perspective. The *Exploring*

Masculinities debate provided this project with an opportunity to identify men's rights' concerns and place these concerns in dialogue with profeminist theories on masculinity and gender relations. The analysis of issues and concerns raised in this debate had a twofold aim: to evaluate whether such concerns could be deemed indicative of 'culture lag' in Irish society and to identify the ideology of gender that could be said to be hegemonic in the 'configuration of practice' in contemporary Ireland.

Analysis of issues raised in the *Exploring Masculinities* debate identified instances of 'culture lag' in the two-way ebb and flow of ideas, values and principles between the institutional framework and the culture's 'stock of meanings' concerning gender.

Instances of where the institutional framework lags behind the everyday realities of some men's lives were identified most notably in the constitutional realm - in the continued absence of constitutional protection for the fatherhood role and continued narrow constitutional definition of the family that fails to reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary family forms. Institutional culture lag was also identified in health agencies' delay in developing proactive policy and practice that names and responds to men's particular needs, such as the need for male victims of domestic violence to receive fuller acknowledgement of their plight; and the need for children's hospitals to extend overnight facilities for parents to include fathers, especially lone fathers. In failing to acknowledge and accommodate changing realities in men's everyday lived experiences, the institutional framework plays a role in upholding traditional understandings of masculinity and the gender order.

Instances of contradiction within the institutional framework were identified in the discrepancy between equality legislation aimed at breaking down the gendered division of labour and workplace practice that, in penalising uptake of family-friendly measures, works to reproduce the gendered division of labour, while governments' failure to support the development of a comprehensive childcare system further works to sustain this imbalance. Coughlan's (2002) analysis of everyday lived gender relations identifies a range of formal and informal practices that work to impose a 'glass ceiling' on women's access to wealth, status and self-fulfilment in public life thereby sustaining and reinforcing a separatist and hierarchal ideology of gender; thus,

despite a significant increase in female participation in the public sphere from the 1970s onward, women remain vastly under-represented in the upper echelons of corporate and political life (Coughlan 2002; National Women's Council of Ireland 2002a, 2002b). These continued imbalances in the gender order are indicative of a 'culture lag' or gap between the enshrined principle of equality and everyday lived gender relations.

As an idea, the *Exploring Masculinities* programme, and reactions to it, encapsulate two instances of 'culture lag'- one between the institutional framework and the culture's 'stock of meanings' concerning gender, and one between elements of the institutional framework itself. Men's rights' resistance to *Exploring Masculinities* constitutes an instance whereby ideas and values residing in the culture's 'stock of meanings' concerning gender lag behind those expressed in the institutional framework. While this project endorses the validity of men's rights concerns, most notably the absence of constitutional protection for fatherhood, 'culture lag' may be evidenced in men's rights' critique of *Exploring Masculinities* as "a vehicle for eliminating traditional forms of masculinity ... for active promotion of homosexuality ... for creating the conditions for feminist supremacy". Clearly, ideas about gender underpinning men's rights discourse lag behind those of an institutional framework that has enshrined the principle of equality between the sexes, decriminalised homosexuality, and offered *Exploring Masculinities* as a means of engendering this ethic of equality in the culture's lived value system. Thus, in the hegemonic process, men's rights discourse and practice works to sustain and reproduce traditional understandings of masculinity and the gender order.

While the Department of Education and Science offered *Exploring Masculinities* (2000) as a means of promoting the principle of gender equality enshrined in law, its low level of uptake by individual schools demonstrates 'culture lag' between elements of the institutional framework itself. Of the eighty-one schools that requested copies of *Exploring Masculinities* when it became available in 2000, only twenty-one affirm that they have engaged with the programme. Of these twenty-one schools, eleven affirm that they have integrated all or some of the modules into their curricula in the past and intend to continue using the programme in the future; the other ten schools affirm that they have integrated all or some of the modules into their curricula in the

past but do not intend to use the programme in the future. A research endeavour to qualitatively explore responses and reactions of individual schools to *Exploring Masculinities* is currently underway and the findings will, most likely, reveal many complexities[10]. Nonetheless, the failure of a majority of schools to implement a government sponsored initiative aimed at challenging gender inequalities demonstrates tension between elements of the institutional framework, tension that can only further contribute to the reproduction of traditional understandings of masculinity and the gender order. Further, given that media coverage of the *Exploring Masculinities* debate was characterised by over-representation of the men's rights perspective, a finding by Mac an Ghaill et al., that "media attention contributed to the decision of some schools to suspend use of the programme", demonstrates the impact of this perspective in the hegemonic process as Irish society grapples with its 'stock of meanings' concerning gender (2002, piv).

In conclusion, legislative reform and the onset of the information age have broken down the once-rigid demarcation, by gender, between the public and private spheres, providing a more fluid and flexible context for men and women to define and value themselves. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, this more fluid and flexible context has witnessed change in the *enactment* of gender, but little change in the *meanings and values* attached to masculinity and femininity. In the current gender formation, the male role is defined primarily as breadwinner and secondarily as nurturer, and the female role is defined primarily as nurturer and secondarily as earner, and thus the ideology of gender as a separatist and hierarchal relation remains hegemonic in the contemporary 'configuration of practice' in Irish society. This is not to deny that some, perhaps many, gender relationships in the private sphere may be predicated on egalitarian principles. Rather, it is to conclude that, as evidenced the *Exploring Masculinities* controversy, dominant ideological discourse and practice in the public sphere continue to sustain and reproduce inequalities between and among the sexes.

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[10] Funded by the Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Education and Science, Orla McCormack, a student at the University of Limerick is undertaking this study. During the academic year 2003-2004 Mc Cormack conducted a survey of the eighty-one schools that requested *Exploring Masculinities* to establish their levels of engagement with the programme (sixty-four schools responded, yielding a 79% response rate). During the academic year 2004-2005 Mc Cormack will conduct a qualitative inquiry into the reactions of a random selection of the sixty-four schools, and further, will seek out parents' perspectives on the programme (telephone conversation with Mc Cormack, 7th September 2004). Mc Cormack's findings will offer a welcome and valuable contribution to scholarship concerned with gender power relations in contemporary Ireland.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The methodology adopted by this study draws predominantly on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) who, in turn, draw on Glaser and Strauss' (1967) methodological framework.

Part One of this chapter discusses the epistemological and ontological postulates that underpin the research paradigm informing this study. Part Two explains the methodological model designed by this study, detailing the processes and procedures involved in its implementation. This model takes a dual approach to data analysis, applying manual and electronic methods in tandem, and in this endeavour, draws on the work of Richards and Richards (2000; 2002) who have, throughout the 1980s and 1990s been developing software packages to assist qualitative researchers in data management, analysis, and theory testing processes. Application of this dual approach is explained in detail in Part Two of this chapter.

Conventional investigators tend to reject idiographic interpretation as useless – what good does it do to know about a single site only? Of course, such evaluations are made in terms of what is taken to be science's central purpose: prediction and control. If some other purpose is postulated, as for example, *verstehen* (understanding, or meaning experienced in situations), then the idiographic position becomes not only tenable but mandatory.

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p216)

It is the endeavour of this project to understand and explain its study participants' perceptions of what it means to be a man in today's world, and to explore the construction and negotiation of meaning through social interaction in men's groups; thus it is this 'other purpose', the pursuit of *verstehen* from which this project derives its mandate to adopt an 'idiographic position'. However, while the endeavour to access the domain of perceptions and meanings provides the rationale for this project adopting a qualitative methodological technique, it does not mean to undermine the value of quantitative techniques within the social sciences. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) point out: "even the sociologists of the Chicago School, often represented as thoroughly interactionist in outlook and arch-exponents of participant observation, employed both 'case-study' and 'statistical' methods" (p9); and this project supports the view that qualitative and quantitative techniques may be considered as valuable complementary approaches to investigating the social world.

Part One of this chapter draws predominantly on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) in its discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of the phenomenological paradigm and their implications for research practice. Part Two explains the methodological model designed by this project, detailing the processes and procedures involved in its implementation.

Part One: Philosophical Underpinnings of Qualitative Research

Arising as it did out of a broad range of academic disciplines and schools of thought, qualitative research does not encompass a unified code of methodological techniques or single overarching philosophy. The qualitative approach to social research is most

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commonly associated with the phenomenological perspective: "a strain of interpretive sociology that tries to study social behaviour by interpreting its subjective meaning as found in the intentions of individuals; the aim then is to interpret the actions of individuals in the social world and the ways in which individuals give meaning to social phenomena" (Schutz, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p77). The qualitative approach is associated, inter alia, with: symbolic interactionism, the study of ways in which meanings emerge through social interactions; ethnomethodology, the study of methods used by people in everyday life to account for, or make sense of, their activities, both to themselves and to others; semiology, the study of the use of signs and symbols in the construction of meaning. Qualitative perspectives have begun to emerge in well-established disciplines long associated with quantitative methodology, for instance, psychology; while newer disciplines, such as media and cultural studies and women's studies tend to take a qualitative framework as their starting point for investigating the social world. This is not intended as an exhaustive list of fields of study that draw on qualitative methods, rather it is intended to convey the increasingly broad reach of qualitative inquiry within the social sciences, and by extension, the diversity of methodological approaches employed by qualitative researchers.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest that the axioms or assumptions about the social world underpinning the positivist paradigm differ greatly from the assumptions about social reality underpinning the phenomenological paradigm, and it is these differing sets of assumptions that shape the way researchers approach social inquiry – with those adopting a positivist position tending toward quantitative methodology and those adopting a phenomenological position tending toward qualitative methodology. These differing sets of assumptions encompass five key axiomatic stances concerning: the nature of reality (ontology); the relationship of knower to known (epistemology); the possibility of generalisation; the possibility of causal linkages; and the role of values in inquiry (axiology). These five key points of difference between the positivist and phenomenological paradigms concerning these axiomatic stances may be outlined as follows:

Axioms About	Positivist Paradigm	Phenomenological Paradigm
1. **The nature of reality**	Reality is single, tangible and fragmentable into independent variables and processes, any of which can be studied independently of the others; inquiry can converge onto that reality until, finally, it can be predicted and controlled.	There are multiple realities. These realities are socio-psychological constructions forming an inter-connected whole. These realities can only be studied holistically. Given the multi-dimensionality of these realities, prediction and control are unlikely outcomes of inquiry, although some level of understanding (verstehen) can be achieved.
2. **The relationship of knower to known**	The knower can stand outside what is to be known. True objectivity is possible.	The inquirer and the 'object' of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable.
3. **The possibility of generalisation**	Time- and context-free generalisations are possible (nomothetic statements).	Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses are possible (idiographic statements).
4. **The possibility of causal linkages**	One event comes before another event and can be said to cause that event.	Events shape each other. Multi-directional relationships can be discovered.
5. **The role of values**	Inquiry is value-free.	Inquiry is value-bound; values mediate and shape approaches to, and engagement in, the research process.

[Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985), pp 36-38 and Maykut and Morehouse (1994), pp11-13]

Arguably, the differing axioms or postulates underpinning these paradigms have implications for individual researchers in designing a methodological model and for the research community in identifying the criteria upon which the worthiness and authenticity of research projects are to be judged. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the

term 'naturalistic inquiry' to describe the form inquiry takes in the phenomenological paradigm; and they suggest that the implications for research operating within this paradigm relate to fourteen key characteristics of naturalistic inquiry, characteristics that can be "justified by their logical dependence on the axioms that undergird the paradigm, and by their coherence and interdependence" (p39). As this project draws heavily on the principles and practices of phenomenological research as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), these fourteen characteristics of naturalistic inquiry and their implications for research operating within this paradigm are now discussed.

1. Research is conducted in the natural setting:

Naturalistic inquiry is conducted "in the natural setting or context of the entity for which study is proposed because naturalistic ontology suggests that realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts - the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p39). Within this paradigm Axiom 1 (constructed realities) and Axiom 3 (generalisations) specify that social realities cannot be separated from the world in which they are co-constructed and research observations are inevitably time- and context-dependent; thus "no phenomenon can be understood out of relationship to the time and context that spawned, harboured, and supported it" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p189).

The importance of the researcher entering into, and gaining the fullest possible understanding of, the context in which social phenomena occur is related to Axiom 2 that the knower cannot stand outside of what is to be known, and Axiom 4 that all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping rather than being the subjects of linear causation. As the researcher's arrival inevitably disturbs the context to be studied, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend 'prolonged engagement' and 'persistent observation' as fieldwork procedures for allowing disturbances to settle and thus reducing the risk of distortions; these procedures, and their application in this project, are discussed in more depth in part two of this chapter.

Axiom 5 that inquiry is value bound, places a moral obligation on the naturalistic researcher to adopt a self-critical approach throughout the research process. The naturalistic inquirer does not set out to test an *a priori* hypothesis; he or she enters the

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field with an open mind about what is to be discovered, but acknowledges that an open mind is not an empty mind, that judgements may be influenced by the inquirer's everyday assumptions and beliefs; thus the challenge for the naturalistic researcher lies in engaging in an ongoing process of 'epoche' as a means of identifying and then setting aside one's own assumptions and values:

> *Epoche* is a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation. *Epoche* helps enable the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a fresh and open view without prejudgement or imposing meaning too soon. This suspension in judgement is critical in phenomenological investigation and requires the setting aside of the researcher's personal viewpoint in order to see the experience for itself
>
> (Katz, cited in Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p123)

Thus the stance of the researcher operating within the phenomenological paradigm is complex because it involves interpreting the value systems and meaning systems of study participants whilst remaining constantly aware that one's own perceptions intersect with the act of interpretation; and therefore it is incumbent upon qualitative researchers to adopt a stance of 'active reflexivity' by "constantly taking stock of their actions and their role in the research process and subjecting these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their 'data'" (Mason, 1996, p6).

While the axioms that undergird each of the research paradigms are inter-dependent, dialogue between advocates of each paradigm focuses predominantly on Axiom 2 (the relationship of knower to known) and Axiom 5 (the role of values) culminating in what may be called the 'objective versus subjective' debate. Concerns regarding objectivity and subjectivity are complex as they underpin all aspects of the research endeavour impacting on such issues and decisions as to: 'who' or 'what' is to be the focus of the research? to what purpose?; with what instrument is data to be collected?; how is the data to be analysed?; by what criteria are the findings to be judged? what are the implications of the findings for those under study, for the funding agency, for the researcher, for wider society?

These interrelated issues for research operating within the phenomenological paradigm are addressed across Lincoln and Guba's fourteen-point framework, but before moving to the second point of this framework, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) point to taken for granted assumptions underpinning the words 'objective' and 'subjective' in research discourse, they offer alternative assumptions that impart the meanings assigned to these words within the phenomenological paradigm, and they propose a language shift in the 'objective versus subjective' debate that is worthy of note:

> Word meanings can be slippery. Defining words is also a political act. It is in part because of the political nature of word meaning that we use *perspectival* rather than *subjective*. Within the historical development of research the word objective has come to mean true, factual and real. By default, subjective has come to mean partially-true, tentative and less-than-real. However, one might take another look at the word objective and develop a different sense of the word. An object is a thing, an entity. An object is other; to be objective is to make something into other. To be objective is to be cold and distant. Within this framework, subjective also takes on a different meaning: to be subjective is to be aware of the agency, that is, of action. From the phenomenological point of view, subjective is synonymous with agency or with the actor's perspective. To be subjective, therefore, is to 'tend' to the subject. ... Further, qualitative researchers understand that they are also subjects or actors and not outside of the process as impartial observers. ... Words carry meanings, even meanings that are not intended; therefore, we have chosen to use the word perspectival instead of subjective. Perspectival has the added advantage of being inclusive of differing perspectives, including but not limited to the researcher's perspective.
>
> (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, pp19-20)

2. The Human-as-Instrument:

Lincoln and Guba (1985) hold that the workings of human situations and human beings are too intricate to be captured by a static one-dimensional instrument, suggesting that the 'human-as-instrument' offers a multifaceted and thus more comprehensive means of accessing the complexity of social action and interaction. For these theorists, the 'human-as-instrument' (participant observer) has the advantage of responsiveness "by virtue of which he or she can interact with the situation to sense its dimensions and make them explicit", and of adaptability as "the multipurpose human can collect information about multiple factors, and at multiple levels, simultaneously" (p193). Other advantages include the human instrument's capacity to view the context holistically, and to function simultaneously in the domains of propositional and tacit knowledge (the concept of tacit knowledge is addressed in the following paragraph). In addition, participant observation provides opportunities for on-the-spot clarification and summary, and for exploration of atypical or idiosyncratic responses that may yield a broader understanding of the phenomenon than might otherwise be possible. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) concur with this view, suggesting: "meaning is both joint (arises from relationships) and multiple (understood from discrete points of view within relationships); and the human-as-instrument is the most appropriate way to access and capture the joint and multiple meanings of human experience" (p39).

3. Utilisation of Tacit Knowledge

Drawing on the work of Polanyi who sees the beginning of all knowledge in tacit knowledge, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue for "legitimation of tacit (intuitive, felt) knowledge in addition to propositional knowledge (knowledge expressible in language form) because often the nuances of the multiple realities can be appreciated only in this way; because much of the interaction between investigator and respondent occurs at this level; and because tacit knowledge mirrors more fairly and accurately the value patterns of the investigator" (p40). If tacit knowledge may be described as that taken for granted 'know-how' that informs and guides one in everyday encounters with the world, then this project supports the view that tacit knowledge necessarily plays a role in the researcher's encounters with the world under study. This project thus supports Lincoln and Guba's (1985) view that "tacit knowledge becomes the base on which the human instrument builds many of the insights and

hypotheses that will eventually develop" but "that tacit knowledge must be converted to propositional knowledge so that the inquirer can both think about it explicitly and communicate it to others" (p198).

4. Use of Qualitative Methodologies:

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue for the use of qualitative methodologies within the phenomenological paradigm "not because the paradigm is anti-quantitative but because qualitative methods come more easily to the human-as-instrument ... and are more adaptable to dealing with multiple (and less aggregatable) realities" (pp 40 & 198). Leading advocates of qualitative research such as Glaser and Strauss (1967), Taylor and Bogdan (1984) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that because qualitative research is conducted in a diversity of settings by researchers from diverse fields of study, it is not feasible to impose a standardised methodological framework to be adhered to on all occasions. This is not to suggest that qualitative researchers progress their work in an ad hoc, haphazard fashion, rather they adopt a rigorous and systematic approach within a framework of procedural *guidelines*, as opposed to procedural *rules*. As Taylor and Bogdan (1984) point out: "there are guidelines to be followed, but never rules; the methods serve the researcher, never is the researcher a slave to procedure and technique" (p8). While the principles and guidelines informing this project are explained in Lincoln and Guba's fourteen-point framework, its actual research design and procedures are explained in part two of this chapter.

5. Use of Purposive Sampling:

While representative sampling is suited to research operating within the positivist paradigm, naturalistic inquiry's quest for understanding social process operative in specific contexts render 'purposive' or 'theoretical' sampling more suitable to research operating within the phenomenological paradigm (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Purposive or theoretical sampling involves selecting groups or categories for study on the basis of their relevance to one's research question or focus-of-inquiry; and, as Taylor and Bogdan (1984) explain: "in theoretical sampling the actual number of 'cases' studied is relatively unimportant; what is important is the potential of each 'case' to aid the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the area of social life being studied" (p83). However, Mason (1996) warns: "given that purposive or theoretical sampling is not based on a notion

of empirical representativeness, the issue of how one substantiates the relationship between the sample and the wider universe is not so clear cut; it is therefore important for researchers to specify exactly what they see this relationship to be" (p95). Thus, this project's purposive or theoretical sampling process, and the relationship between the study samples and wider universe are explained in part two of this chapter.

6. An Inductive Approach to Data Analysis:

When taking an inductive approach, data collection is related to the focus-of-inquiry rather than to an *a priori* hypothesis, thus variables are not pre-determined and data are not grouped according to pre-specified categories, rather, salient categories and their relatedness are derived from the data itself through inductive reasoning processes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that: "inductive data analysis bears remarkable similarities to content analysis, a process aimed at uncovering embedded information and making it explicit" (p203). Thus, an inductive approach to data analysis could be explained as a rigorous and systematic culling and distilling for meaning from the words (and actions) of the study participants in order to identify, analyse and explain social processes operative in the world under study. Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer the 'constant comparative method' as a means of identifying and analysing categories and their relatedness, a process that facilitates the researcher to develop 'grounded theory' or theoretical perspectives that are grounded in the data. While this project's application of the constant comparative method of data analysis is explained in part two of this chapter, the seventh point in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework briefly describes the processes involved in this method and explains the concept of 'grounded theory'.

7. Grounded Theory

Drawing on the work of Max Elden, Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain 'grounded theory' as 'local theory', that is: "an aggregate of local understandings that, without the intervention of the researcher, would remain isolated and, we may presume, tacit, or at least remain at the level of folklore or conventional wisdom" (p205). The constant comparative method offers the means whereby by the researcher may access and analyse these local understandings so that they may be integrated in a model that seeks to explain the social processes under study.

The constant comparative method involves breaking down the data into discrete 'incidents' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) or 'units' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and coding them to categories. Categories arising from this method generally take two forms: those that are derived from the participants' customs and language, and those that the researcher identifies as significant to the project's focus-of-inquiry; the goal of the former "is to reconstruct the categories used by subjects to conceptualise their own experiences and world view", the goal of the latter is to assist the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the social processes operative in the site under study; thus: "the process of constant comparison stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp 334-341). Categories undergo content and definition changes as units and incidents are compared and categorised, and as understandings of the properties of categories and the relationships between categories are developed and refined over the course of the analytical process. As Taylor and Bogdan (1984) summarise: "in the constant comparative method the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts; by continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent theory" (p126). This project's application of the constant comparative method of data analysis is detailed in part two of this chapter.

8. Emergent Design

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that while a preordained research design is suitable for studies when "the investigator *knows* what he or she doesn't know and therefore can project means of finding it out", a more open-ended approach 'emergent design' is required for studies when "the investigator *does not know* what he or she doesn't know" (p209). This project supports the view that emergent design best facilitates research that commences with a very broad focus-of-inquiry which will be refined as salient categories emerge during the ongoing twinned process of data collection and analysis and this refining process is likely to lead the research in unexpected directions that could not have been foreseen at the outset. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) point out, however, "it is possible to employ a non-emergent research design, where the researcher's focus-of-inquiry is pursued using qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis, but the data is collected, *then* analysed" (p44). As this

project commenced with a clearly defined focus-of-inquiry, and as its timeframe was limited to three years, it adopted a pre-defined or non-emergent research design, which is explained in part two of this chapter.

9. Negotiated Outcomes

By the term 'negotiated outcomes' Lincoln and Guba (1985) mean "that both facts and interpretations that will ultimately find their way into the research report must be subjected to scrutiny by respondents who earlier acted as sources for that information, or by other persons who are like them" (p211). The concept of negotiating outcomes, these theorists argue, is in keeping with the principles of emic inquiry, and is related to the issue of establishing the trustworthiness of research findings; and the extent to which outcomes were negotiated with this study's participants is discussed in part two of this chapter.

10. Case Study Reporting Mode

While definitions of a case study vary widely, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that, 'as a portrayal of a situation', the case report offers the most appropriate means of conveying the multiple realities encountered in a given context, and of describing and explaining the intricacies of complex social processes operative in the world under study. Thus, the findings from the two men's groups who participated in this research project are presented as case studies offering descriptions and explanations of the social processes operative in the respective environments. However, as the project's involvement with practitioners in the field of men's community education comprised a series of focus groups rather than a case study, it was deemed more appropriate that the findings arising from this dimension of the study should be integrated into the final chapter which offers insights towards a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work.

11. Idiographic Interpretation

Naturalistic inquiry "is inclined to interpret data and draw conclusions idiographically (in terms of the particular of the case) rather than nomothetically (in terms of law like generalisations) because interpretations depend so heavily for their validity on local particulars, including the particular investigator-respondent interaction, the contextual factors involved, the local mutually shaping factors influencing one another, and the

local (as well as investigator) values" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p42). The findings chapters in this project offer idiographic analyses and interpretations, 'local theory', setting them in dialogue with theoretical perspectives drawn from relevant academic disciplines.

12. Tentative Application of Research Findings

Lincoln and Guba (1985) hold that naturalistic inquiry "is tentative (hesitant) about making broad application of the findings because realities are multiple and different; because the extent to which the findings may be applicable elsewhere depends on the *empirical* similarity of sending and receiving contexts; because the particular 'mix' of mutually shaping influences may vary markedly from setting to setting; and because value systems, especially contextual values, may be sharply at variance from site to site" (p42). In these theorists' view, because contextual findings are not generalisable in the usual sense of the term: "the naturalistic inquirer can make *no* statements about transferability for his or her findings based solely on data from the studied context alone" (p217). At best, they argue, through offering 'thick description' in case reports, naturalistic inquirers can only supply information about the studied site that may make possible a judgement of *transferability*, and this judgement rests ultimately with the person seeking to make the transfer, who must be in possession of similar data for the receiving context (p217).

This project does not fully support Lincoln and Guba's view that *only* the person seeking to transfer the findings is in a position to judge their transferability, rather, it suggests, it may be possible for a researcher to abstract from the studied context some core transferable principles or philosophies that he or she deems ought to obtain for the phenomenon under study irrespective of contextual variations. Indeed, it is the aim of this thesis to draw on observations and analyses of social processes operative in two men's groups and, in so doing, offer a theoretical perspective as a contribution to the task of developing a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work at community level.

13. Focus Determined Boundaries

Since naturalistic inquiry does not begin with an *a priori* hypothesis but seeks to understand a situation as it is constructed by the participants, the research question is

framed in the form of a 'focus-of-inquiry' statement. The focus-of-inquiry statement, which provides initial direction on entering the field, may be refined by the researcher as data collection progresses and salient themes in the participants' world begin to emerge. The focus-of-inquiry statement for this project did not change, however, over the course of the study as it was deemed most useful in keeping the project centred during the data collection and data analysis phases; it also provided an organising framework for writing up the findings and presenting the case studies. While, the focus-of-inquiry has already been outlined in the Introduction, it is repeated in the opening paragraph of part two of this chapter, and is reiterated in the case study findings chapters.

14. Special Criteria for Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the positivist trustworthiness criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity are incompatible with the axioms and methods of inquiry operating within the phenomenological paradigm by posing the following series of questions:

- Positivist inquirers assert a claim for internal validity for a study if its results are isomorphic with the reality they purport to describe – but if reality is assumed to be multiple and intangible, what can such a criterion mean?
- Positivist researchers assert a claim for external validity if the study is carried out under conditions of probability sampling – but if sampling is done purposively and, as phenomenological ontology denies the possibility of generalisation in the usual sense of the term, what can that criteria mean?
- Positivist inquirers assert a claim for reliability for a study in which the results are stable and replicable - but if designs can be emergent and different investigators may elect to carry out a study along different lines, even when bounded by the same problem, what can that criteria mean?
- Positivist inquirers assert a claim for objectivity for a study if there is a layer of 'objective' instrumentation interposed between the inquirer and the object(s) of inquiry – but if the chief instrument is the researcher and, as phenomenological epistemology assumes the knower and the known to be inseparable – does not objectivity dissolve?

(pp 218-219)

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Having posed these questions, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that these positivist formulations be replaced with four new terms "that have a better fit with naturalistic epistemology": 'credibility' (to replace internal validity); 'transferability' (to replace external validity); 'dependability' (to replace reliability); and 'confirmability' (to replace objectivity). Lincoln and Guba propose certain operational procedures that the naturalistic inquirer can use to establish credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Chief among these procedures are: prolonged engagement, persistent observation and member checking – to establish credibility; thick description – to facilitate transferability; and auditing – to establish dependability and confirmability (p219); and application of these procedures to this project are detailed in part two of this chapter.

Having considered philosophical underpinnings of the phenomenological paradigm and their implications for research practice, part two now explains the methodological model designed by this project, detailing the processes and procedures involved in its implementation.

Part Two: The Methodological Model Designed and Implemented by this Project
As already mentioned, the focus-of-inquiry for this study did not change over the lifetime of the project and was stated as follows:

This project wishes to contribute insights towards the development of a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work. It is thus seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the *men's experiences of themselves* and *their perceptions* of:

- what it means to be a man in today's world
- the role of men's groups in men's lives
- the potential of community education as a means for men's development

and seeks to explain how these perceptions influence their engagement with the world.

The Purposive Sampling Process:

Purposive or theoretical sampling involves selecting groups or categories for study on the basis of their relevance to the researcher's focus-of-inquiry but the key challenge in using this sampling strategy lies in gaining access to target samples, as access may be refused on any number of grounds. The proposal and research design for this project was drawn up between 1st December 2000 and 31st January 2001 for submission to St Patrick's College by February, and to the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Science by 26th April 2001. At that stage, framed by a clearly defined focus-of-inquiry, this project envisaged one well-established men's group as its first sample and one newly-formed men's group as its second sample, so that insights and learnings from the former could be tested with latter; the third sample was envisaged as the Dublin Men's Coalition as a means of accessing the perspectives of practitioners working with men's groups.

Approaching Prospective Samples

In the purposive sampling process I approached four well-established men's groups, two of whom had participated in my previous research endeavour and two of whom I had heard about subsequently, in the anticipation that at least one of these potential sites would grant access for the first strand of the research process envisaged for the period January - June 2002. In pursuit of a sample for the second strand, I approached a community worker whom I knew to be involved with a newly-formed men's group in inner-city Dublin seeking an introduction to the group, I concomitantly approached community-based agencies as a source for identifying potential samples for this strand of the research process envisaged for the period January – June 2003. I approached the members of the Dublin Men's Coalition seeking their participation in the third strand of the research process envisaged for the period September – Christmas 2003.

Gaining Access to the First Sample

Of the four well-established men's groups identified as potential samples for the first strand of the project, only one, the Ballymun Men's Group, was willing to consider granting access. A spokesman for the group requested that I make an oral presentation to the membership and, on the basis of that presentation, the membership would vote on the issue of participation, which would only be granted if the voting outcome were to be unanimous. I delivered an oral presentation explaining my focus-of-inquiry,

overall study aims and intended methodology on 4th September 2001 and access was approved on 11th September 2001. It was agreed that this first strand of the project would commence on 2nd January 2002; and fieldwork activities and procedures are detailed below.

Gaining Access to the Second Sample

The community worker from whom I had sought an introduction to a newly-formed men's group in inner-city Dublin deemed the group to be too recently formed to be comfortable with an approach from a researcher in September 2001, but indicated that the group may favourably consider granting access by the forthcoming spring and undertook to contact me in January 2002 to ascertain whether I should still be seeking access. Inquiries with community-based agencies had not yielded potential samples by autumn 2001, and thus, as the project commenced in October 2001, I was still actively pursuing a range of potential samples from which one might grant access for the second strand of the process, to be conducted in the period January – June 2003.

This pursuit bore fruit in June 2002 when, at a national conference on the issue of combating educational disadvantage hosted by St Patrick's College, I entered into conversation with Elizabeth Waters, Chief Executive Officer of An Cosán, a well-established community education centre in West Tallaght, a conversation that revealed our commonality of interest in the phenomenon of men's groups and its potential for combating male isolation, social exclusion and educational disadvantage. While An Cosán is reaching, attracting and retaining many women on its educational programmes, it has experienced great difficulty in attracting and retaining men. As our interests overlapped, Elizabeth Waters offered this project the opportunity to test learnings and insights from Ballymun through establishing a men's group at An Cosán. It was agreed that An Cosán would support the second strand of the research process by providing the project with a list of men to target, by providing a 'men's space' on its premises, with access to information technology if required, by providing hospitality in the form of light refreshments, and by providing funding to cover the project's expenses and practitioner's fees. It was agreed that strand two would commence in November 2002 and the processes involved in establishing the men's group and ongoing fieldwork activities are detailed below.

Gaining Access to the Third Sample

Gaining access to the third research sample proved less difficult, most likely because the members of the Dublin Men's Coalition were aware of the *Men on the Move* project (one of them had participated in it) and deemed the publication, especially in its portrayal of 'Taboo Zone' oppression, to be an accurate representation of some men's experiences. In addition, these practitioners were extremely eager to contribute to the much-needed task of documenting and analysing processes operative in men's groups. It was agreed that I could observe proceedings at the monthly meetings of the Dublin Men's Coalition held on the campus of Dublin City University during the period 1st September – 19th December 2003, and that the membership would participate in two two-hour focus group sessions to be conducted in January 2004. My rationale for gathering data through conducting focus group sessions rather than one-to-one interviews for this strand of the study is explained below.

Relationship Between Study Sample and the Wider Universe

As the opening chapter of this thesis explains, men's groups constitute a relatively new social phenomenon in Irish society that is, as yet, under-investigated by the academic and wider research community. While this small-scale qualitative project seeks to understand and explain social processes operative in two particular cases, it cannot adequately describe or define the wider context of men's groups as a whole within Irish society because no nationwide survey has been conducted that would yield an overview of this social phenomenon. Such a survey is needed to catalogue the number of men's groups in existence, their geographical locations, their sources of funding, and the purposes they aim to serve; and until such information is collated, this project cannot determine the relationship between its study samples and the wider universe, it can only offer a depiction and interpretation of two instances of an emergent and, as yet, under-investigated social phenomenon.

Fieldwork Activities in the First Research Site, the Ballymun Men's Centre:

In 1999 the government initiated a major regeneration process in Ballymun, but, as the regeneration programme will not be completed until at least 2009, the area still remains characterised by social exclusion and marginalisation. A brief sociological profile of the area is outlined in the Ballymun case study chapter.

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Ballymun Men's Centre was established under the auspice of the Community and Family Training Agency in 1991 to address some of the issues facing men in the area. Such issues were identified as: unemployment, family breakdown, isolation, depression and substance abuse, as well as men's sense of "feeling lost, redundant and isolated within the community" (Ballymun Men's Centre Brochure). Initially the organisation's membership met once weekly until 1997 when, in recognition of its value to the community, it was granted its own premises and became operational on a fulltime basis. In 2002 the men's centre became an autonomous organisation and to date overall responsibility for the facility lies with a management committee. Up to 2000, the centre's chief source of funding had been the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs; however, since it has been in receipt of funding under the Education Equality Initiative (2000), and more recently, the Back To Education Initiative (2003), the Department of Education and Science has become a major contributor to the centre's growth and development.

Ballymun Men's Centre offers an informal drop-in dimension as well as a structured programme of activities. Since its inception, the centre's overall activities have included: periodic workshops and seminars on issues of concern to men, especially focusing on men's changing roles; connecting men to other groups and services in the community; literacy and computer tuition; arts and crafts; outings to places of cultural or historical interest; and linking with other men's groups. Since 2000 the centre has been gradually developing a core community education component within its overall programme of activities. A profile of the group membership outlining age-bands, age leaving school, qualifications leaving school, post-school education / training, career paths, employment status, marital status and the frequency with which they attend at the centre, is presented in the Ballymun case study chapter, and tabulated in Appendix 2.

Between 2nd January and 5th March 2002 I attended as participant observer at the centre for two full and one half day of each week. While this was the maximum time that could be afforded within my study's overall timeframe, it proved adequate for the purpose of familiarising myself with the overall context of the world under study, reiterating detailed explanation of the project's focus-of-inquiry and building relationships of trust with the men; I had the advantage that two of the men had

participated in the *Men on the Move* (2000) project and these men vouched for my trustworthiness to the wider membership.

During this period I participated in all daily activities and observed the everyday processes and interactions; and I was permitted to observe, but not participate in, the management committee's fortnightly meetings. Between 5th March and 28th May 2002, I attended as non-participant observer on the first of two educational programmes implemented under the Education Equality Initiative (2000). This programme, entitled *Men on the Go*, was delivered on one morning per week for twelve weeks, details of which are presented in the Ballymun case study chapter.

During the summer of 2002 I collaborated with a newly recruited practitioner in designing a programme to be implemented in the, then forthcoming, autumn under the Education Equality Initiative (2000), details of which are presented in the Ballymun case study chapter[11]. Between 1st October and 10th December 2002, I attended as non-participant observer as this programme, which ran on one morning per week over ten weeks, was implemented.

On completion of my fieldwork, I conducted in-depth one-to-one interviews with the eighteen men who avail of the centre. The interview schedule was designed to explore issues of concern to the men, in particular, issues relating to change and challenge in their everyday lives, and to explore their perceptions of the role of men's groups as a form of personal support and as a site for education (Appendix 5: Ballymun Interview Schedule).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend these processes of 'prolonged engagement' and 'persistent observation' as measures to reduce the risk of distortions. As the researcher's arrival inevitably disturbs the context under study, 'prolonged engagement' is necessary to create sufficient time for perturbations to settle as the researcher engages in the developmental processes of gaining familiarity with the environment and its culture and building relationships of trust with the participants; for, arguably, whether one embarks on a positivist or phenomenological mode of

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[11] This programme, initially designed for Ballymun Men's Group, was tested and further developed with Tallaght Men's Group. Appendix 9 summarises the local context and rationale for programme design at each stage in this developmental process.

inquiry, "meaningful human research is impossible without the full understanding and cooperation of the respondents" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p105). While 'prolonged engagement' facilitates the researcher to blend into the context and witness the multiple forces and factors at play in this environment, 'persistent observation' is the means by which the researcher can identify those forces and factors that are most relevant to the focus-of-inquiry and systematically study them for their relatedness. Thus: "if prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p304).

Fieldwork Activities in the Second Research Site, An Cosán in West Tallaght:
Tallaght was developed as part of the 1972 Development Plan and since then has witnessed huge population increase. As this growth in the population has not been supported with adequate levels of economic and infrastructural development, parts of Tallaght, particularly West Tallaght, remain characterised by social exclusion and marginalisation. A brief sociological profile of West Tallaght is outlined in the Tallaght case study chapter.

In 1986, The Shanty Education Project Ltd. was established as a registered charity based in Brittas offering second chance community-based education to the people of West Tallaght. A decade later, the organisation had raised enough funds to allow it build a multi-purpose community facility at Jobstown, the heart of its catchment area. This new building was named An Cosán, Irish for 'the path', to symbolise its purpose of offering the community a pathway to learning, and to reflect its philosophy that "education is the key to eradicating poverty and social injustice" (An Cosán brochure). On completion of the building process in 1999, the Shanty Educational Project relocated to An Cosán.

While An Cosán is funded by a number of government departments and government sponsored agencies, the comprehensive range of services it provides to the community necessitates ongoing vigorous fund-raising campaigns that yield further support from private enterprise. The organisation also relies on the generosity of private donators. An Cosán secured funding from the Katherine Howard Foundation and the Millennium Fund to enable it support the development of a men's group.

An Cosán offers a wide range of non-accredited and accredited community-based programmes. These programmes include: Personal Development; Spirituality; Estate Management; Adult and Teen Drama; Intercultural Awareness; Parenting; Health Awareness; Basic English; Communications; Childcare; Computers; Community Leadership; Community Drugs Work. And, ranging from Foundation and Certificate to Diploma levels, awarding bodies include: Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), National University of Ireland (NUI) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

In November 2002, An Cosán provided a target list of eleven men whom I invited to attend at a discussion on 12th December 2002 to explore the possibility of starting a men's group and organising a ten-week community education programme with the group. Three members of the Ballymun Men's Group volunteered to attend the discussion and share their experiences and perspectives with the Tallaght men, and the practitioner, with whom I had co-designed, and who had facilitated, the second educational programme in Ballymun agreed to lend his expertise to the proceedings.

The task of securing (ultimately, only some of) the targeted men's commitment to the proposed men's group was not completed until February 2003. In this endeavour, three discussion group meetings were held between 12th December 2002 and 13th February 2003, and an account of the proceedings at these meetings, as well as dialogue between this project and some of the targeted men (outside of discussion group meetings), is detailed in Appendix 8.

Whilst this series of discussions was underway, the practitioner from Ballymun was recruited as facilitator of the soon-to-be-formed men's group in Tallaght. Taking account of the men's suggestions and stated expectations, the practitioner and I agreed that the programme we had co-designed and implemented in Ballymun could be tested in Tallaght (see stage two of the programme development process in Appendix 9). Ultimately, five men enrolled on the programme, which ran on one evening per week from 27th February to 8th May 2003 with a one hundred per cent retention rate and at which I attended as non-participant observer.

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On conclusion of the ten-week programme, the men requested that a follow-on programme be provided and meeting this request allowed for further exploration of ideas that might inform practice in the emergent field of men's community education (see stage three of the programme development process in Appendix 9).

On completion of my fieldwork, I conducted in-depth one-to-one interviews with four of the five men's group members (Appendix 6: Tallaght Interview Schedule). For, while five men joined the Tallaght Men's Group only four could be said to have participated in the study, as the fifth member, stricken by profound nervousness and shyness, remained silent throughout most of the group proceedings, and experienced great difficulty in articulating coherent and relevant responses to the interview topics; as a result of his discomfort, the interview process had to be brought to an early close. Consequently this man's voice did not emerge as dominant categories of meaning in the cohort's world were identified during data analysis; and thus, regrettably, his contribution could not be included within the project's particular focus of inquiry.

A profile of participating members of the Tallaght Men's Group outlining age-bands, age leaving school, qualifications leaving school, post-school education / training, career paths, employment status and marital status is presented in the Tallaght case study chapter, and tabulated in Appendix 3.

Fieldwork Activities in the Third Research Site, the Dublin Men's Coalition:
On 3rd March 2000, ten men's community education practitioners attended the inaugural meeting of the Dublin Men's Coalition; however, by autumn 2003, the coalition's membership had diminished to four. Between 1st September and 19th December 2003, I attended as non-participant observer at the coalition's monthly meetings held on the campus of Dublin City University (members sometimes bring a guest or visitor from the field of community education to these meetings); and in January 2004 I conducted two two-hour focus group sessions with the membership.

Of these four members, at the time of the study, two were working fulltime and two were working part-time (one voluntary and one paid) with men's groups. One of the fulltime practitioners holds a BA in the social sciences awarded by Trinity College Dublin, and was working with the Blanchardstown Men's Outreach Project, a group

in receipt of funding under the Education Equality Initiative (2000); however, as the group had failed to secure funding under the second round of this initiative, his employment was due to cease in February 2004. The second fulltime practitioner, who did not hold a third-level qualification, had progressed from his role as a participant in the Blanchardstown Men's Group to that of coordinator with the Ballymun Men's Group. Of the part-time practitioners, one holds a fulltime post with Blanchardstown Local Employment Services and was working with a men's group in the area on a voluntary basis on two evenings per week; this practitioner was undertaking a postgraduate course in the field of adult community education at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. The second part-time practitioner holds a BA in the social sciences awarded by Dublin City University and was undertaking an MA in Theatre Studies at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra; this practitioner works on a part-time paid basis with the Ballymun Men's Group and the Tallaght Men's Group, the latter, initially as part of this project and subsequently independent of it as the Tallaght Men's Group is extant. A profile of these practitioners is summarised in Appendix 4.

The monthly meetings of the Dublin Men's Coalition could best be described as a forum for discussing challenges related to policy development in the field of community education; as well as a site for discussing issues arising from their everyday work with men's groups. During my observational period, the challenge of securing funding emerged as the most frequently cited policy concern; while most frequently cited issues and themes included: 'anger and frustration'; 'political apathy'; 'homophobia'; 'a sense of failure as men'; and 'mental health problems'. At the meetings I observed then, the practitioners tended to focus on policy concerns and issues arising from their everyday encounters with marginalised men, rather than on their methodologies. Topics and themes included in the focus group schedule were selected as a means of further exploring issues of concern to the practitioners, of accessing their ideas and perspectives on methodologies for men's development work, and of exploring the networking experience (Appendix 7: Focus Group Schedule for Practitioners).

Two two-hour focus group sessions were conducted with membership of the Dublin Men's Coalition in January 2004. I chose the focus group approach to data collection

in this site for two inter-related reasons. Firstly, as Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) point out: "focus groups provide data that are closer to the emic side of the etic-emic continuum because they allow individuals to respond in their own words, using their own categorizations and perceived associations" (p13). Further, as Maykut and Morehouse (1994) and Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) suggest, the focus group provides a setting that allows participants to interact, a process that may spark new insights, or help individuals to develop their ideas more clearly; and thus: "the synergistic effect of the group setting may result in the production of data or ideas that might not have been uncovered in individual interviews" (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990, p16). Secondly, as the coalition members did not tend to discuss methodologies at their monthly meetings, the focus group would offer a site for these practitioners to articulate and exchange perspectives, not just on methodological issues but also on the networking experience, and this dynamic process might assist them in crystallising nascent ideas and identifying pitfalls.

A Note on Interviewing

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest that: "the vocabulary used in a setting usually provides important clues to how people define situations and classify their world and thus suggests lines of inquiry and questioning" (p51). In my roles as observer and participant-observer I paid keen attention to the men's language as a means of gaining insight into themes and issues of importance to them, and selected those themes and issues of most relevance to my focus-of-inquiry for further exploration through the process of semi-structured open-ended in-depth interviewing. The "in-depth interview is modelled after a conversation between equals, rather than a formal question-and-answer exchange" and could best be described as a series of "face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984, p77).

Transcripts of the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were analysed using the constant comparative method devised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Maykut and Morehouse (1994). Over the course of the data analysis procedure I employed manual and electronic operations in tandem; and the section to follow describes and explains these operations.

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Data Analysis Procedure

In adopting the constant comparative method of data analysis, the researcher aims to access and analyse local understandings and integrate them into a theoretical model that seeks to explain social processes operative in the world under study. It must be emphasised that, whether a researcher performs procedural operations manually or electronically, the analytic practice and its underlying principles remain the same. Given that prerequisite, this project supports the view that computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) can benefit the researcher by enhancing efficiency of operations, and can benefit the research community by facilitating transparency of these operations. The first part of the section explains the analytic procedure as it was conducted manually; the second part explains the parallel electronic procedure and identifies the benefits of using the software.

The Manual Procedure of Data Analysis

In the opening stage of the analytical process, I segmented the body of data into discrete 'incidents' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) or 'units' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) in readiness for coding to categories. A data unit may be defined as the "smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself, that is, it must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p345). In segmenting the data, I developed an indexing system so that, at all stages of the analytical process, incidents or units could be readily traced back to their original context in the master-copy of transcripts.

I then generated a set of first-round provisional categories to which the segmented data would be coded. These categories took two forms that might best be described as participant-driven categories and researcher-driven categories; the former derived from my familiarity with the participants' customs and language, the latter derived from my theoretical interest in the phenomenon under study. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) explain the analytic importance of participant-driven categories: "the actual words people use can be of considerable analytic importance as the 'situated vocabularies' employed provide valuable information about the way in which members of a particular culture organize their perceptions of the world, and so engage in the social construction of reality" (p153). Although first-round categories are but

broad descriptions of themes and concepts, and categories will be subject to ongoing content and definition change over the course of the analytic process, generating these two forms of category provides the researcher with a framework for moving back and forth between 'natural' and 'theoretical' discourses. As Araujo (1995) explains: "codes should be viewed in two ways: as part of the analyst's wider theoretical framework and as grounded in the data; the process of coding data should be regarded as an important intermediary step in translating social actors' frames of meaning into the frame of theoretical discourse; coding frames therefore mediate between the 'natural' everyday discourses of the actors and theoretical discourses in social science" (p68).

Having segmented and indexed the body of data and generated a set of first-round provisional categories, one third of the incidents or units were examined and, either placed into one or more of these categories or, analysis of their content gave rise to the formation of additional provisional categories.

When one-third of the data had been randomly selected and coded to provisional categories (both positive and negative incidents that related to a category were coded), the categories were analysed for their characteristics and properties, a preparatory process for the next stage of the analytic procedure – the task of drafting up a 'propositional statement' for each category.

Drafting propositional statements shifts the procedure beyond identification and description of broad themes and concepts to that of analysing and cohering meanings embedded in the data coded under each category, and then drawing up a theoretical statement that attempts to convey the collective meaning of the data segments coded to each category. A propositional statement, then, may be defined as "a statement of fact the researcher tentatively proposes, based on the data" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p140).

Propositional statements were tested by their being used as a 'rule for inclusion' in the respective categories as the remaining two thirds of the data segments were analysed, compared and coded. As the constant comparative procedure progresses, data units that fit with a 'rule for inclusion' substantiate that category and emerging theoretical

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insights; while analysis of data units that fail to fit with categories already generated leads to the formation of additional categories. Over the course of the analytical process, then, some categories are substantiated quickly while others collapse or need to be re-defined, new categories emerge, sub-categories may need to be developed, overlap may lead to merging of categories, and some categories may be eliminated as irrelevant to the focus-of-inquiry. Throughout this reiterative process, propositional statements of categories undergo changes as the researcher develops and refines theoretical insights into the phenomenon under study. As the process draws to a conclusion substantiated propositional statements constitute the roughly formed outcomes of the study; some of these propositions stand alone, sufficiently describing or explaining aspects of the phenomenon under study, while other propositions are inter-related. Ultimately, the stand-alone propositions, along with propositions that are formed by connecting two or more other propositions constitute the study's 'outcome propositions' or findings (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, pp 138–144).

The Electronic Procedure and Benefits of Using the Software:
When I commenced this study in autumn 2001 I had heard about, but was unlearned in the workings of, computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), and was eager to explore the possibility of using such software over the course of the project. In spring 2002, St Patrick's College purchased, on my behalf, NVivo, a software package developed by Australian academics Lyn and Tom Richards (2000; 2002), and paid my tuition and technical support fees. In winter 2002 I commenced analysis of data gathered in the first strand of the project and, given that I had only recently learned how to use NVivo and had not applied it to 'real' data, I was not without trepidation concerning the merit to my work of shifting from familiar manual to less-familiar electronic operational methods, and thus decided to activate the two methods in tandem. I deemed this to be a failsafe approach, as it allowed me to experiment with and test a new form of data management without abandoning my well-tried-and-trusted model.

It is not my intention to offer instructions on how to use NVivo, but rather to explain some of its key capabilities and consequent benefits for the individual researcher and the wider research community. It must be stressed that in using qualitative data analysis software, the researcher does not capitulate the hermeneutic task to the logic

of the computer; rather the computer is used as a tool for efficiency and not as a tool which in and of itself conducts analysis and draws conclusions. As Fielding and Lee (1998) explain, qualitative researchers "want tools which support analysis, but leave the analyst firmly in charge" (p167).

In using both manual and electronic methods, I came to the conclusion that making use of the software can enhance efficiency of operations so that the analytic procedure can be conducted within a shorter timeframe than the manual method allows; and the software's automatic recording of these operations brings greater transparency to the process. For instance, within the manual method much time is spent cutting up the data (segmenting) and photocopying (when incidents or units are deemed relevant to more than one category); and mechanisation of these physical tasks results in the analyst being able to devote more time to the mental task of 'thinking and linking' within the overall timeframe of the study; thereby lessening the likelihood of the project running over time. In addition, computerisation of the procedure obviates the need to develop an index-system, as the analyst can immediately 'jump to context' at any point in the analytic process, a facility that further frees up the analyst's valuable time.

Within manual methodology I rely heavily on visual display, for instance mapping and charting categories and their propositional statements as I work to identify relationships between categories; and I was relieved to learn that the software facilitates this process. In NVivo, categories (nodes) can be visually displayed and the analyst can arrange and re-arrange them in forms that reflect changing lines-of-thought (horizontally, hierarchically, layered), producing diagrams to demonstrate that thought-progression; and, as the analyst electronically generates, expands, merges, and collapses categories, the movement of each data segment is logged. These features, the automatic logging of data movement and mapping of thought-progression, render the various stages of the process transparent and traceable, and thus the researcher can produce a more detailed and comprehensive audit trail than manual mapping of this complicated process can allow, while also demonstrating the systematic character of qualitative data analysis.

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NVivo allows the researcher to interrogate data as an aid to identifying patterns and trends across the data and testing propositions about relationships between data-sets or categories, a feature its authors call 'theory building and testing' facility. To use technical language, NVivo could best be described as a relational database that facilitates cross-tabular queries, but what is unique about this software is that it can do so with unstructured data as opposed to traditional quantitative or structured data-tables. The principle benefit offered by NVivo is that it facilitates electronic interrogation of data using five powerful separate yet interrelated search operations; and each search operation encompasses three dimensions:

- **Search-type:** what I am searching for
- **Search-scope:** where I am searching [which data-sets I include or exclude from the query]
- **Search-result:** what I do with the search find [each search yields a new data-set housed in a node (category) to which the researcher gives a title; this new category may or may not be further interrogated and further incorporated into the analytical process]

A brief description of each search operation, and an example of its usage in this study is now offered.

Textual Searching: whereby simple or complex questions may be asked of the data to assist, not just in identifying recurring words, phrases, themes and topics, but also in ascertaining their sources, frequency and spread across the data. For example, within this project, a textual search (*search-type*) for 'sissy', 'gay', 'wimp', 'fairy' narrowed to interview transcripts (*search-scope*), generated a data-set or category (*search-result*) that was then entitled 'homophobia' and kept in readiness for further analysis.

Node (category) Searching: whereby a new data-set or category that has been generated out of a previous search (*search-type*), as in the example of the category homophobia above, can be further interrogated (*search-scope*) and given a structure by 'coding on' its text segments to sub-categories (*search-results*) thereby facilitating the researcher in the task of cohering and distilling meanings embedded in the data

coded under a category. It is of equal importance to the analytical process that the researcher can forge electronic links between, for instance, new data-sets, existing data-sets, interview transcripts, and external documents such as literature reviews.

Quantitative Data Searching: whereby quantitative data such as participants' biographical data (attributes) can be used to generate new data-sets, or, whereby an existing data-set can be queried to generate a profile of people whose interview text segments have already been coded to a category. In applying the first of these methods, which uses the attribute values to drive the query (*search-type*), a search was conducted of Ballymun interview transcripts (*search-scope*) for the attribute 'attendance frequency per week' and its five values: '4-5 days', '3-4 days' '2-3 days', '1 day' and '< 1 day'. This search generated a new data-set or category (*search-result*) housing the men's patterns of attendance at the centre, and this new category was entitled 'attendance levels'. The category 'attendance levels' was then divided into four sub-categories according to the attribute values '4-5 days', '2-3 days', '1 day' and '< 1day' (no man had an attendance level of '3-4 days'). In applying the second method, the category 'attendance levels' was queried in order to generate a profile (*search-type*) of the men whose voices [text segments] were represented in each of the sub-categories (*search-scope*), and a table was generated to show the attribute [attendance frequency] for men in each sub-category (*search-results*). The overall result of this two-fold query revealed a correlation between the attribute 'attendance frequency per week' and interview data coding patterns: the most highly represented voices across all categories in the study proved to be the six men with the highest attendance levels at the men's centre (Appendix 10).

Boolean Searching: whereby multi-criteria searches using 'operators' such as 'and', 'or', 'not' 'less than', 'greater than', facilitates complex querying of data, allowing the analyst to develop 'rules for inclusion' as the process of developing theoretical insights enters its more advanced stages. For instance, in applying this search (*search-type*), the categories 'wives', 'marriage', 'fathers' and 'transitions', which had emerged from the Tallaght interviews (*search-scope*) were searched using Boolean operators 'and' and 'or' to generate a new category (*search-result*) entitled 'change'. This search operation proved crucial in the analytical process, as 'coding on' of data

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emanating from the new category 'change' led to the pinpointing of key aspects of change that are of concern in the Tallaght men's lives (Appendix 11).

Proximity Searching: whereby text segments already coded to many categories may be retrieved by using 'operators' to validate or invalidate propositional statements as the analyst builds and tests 'local' theory; and this search operation can utilise data arising from interviews, categories, attributes, or any combination of these data-types in order to narrow the query. Such 'operators' include: 'co-occurrence' (near), 'sequence' (preceding), 'inclusion' (surrounding), 'matrix' (co-occurrence), 'matrix' (sequence), and 'matrix' (inclusion). In applying this search (*search-type*), a 'matrix co-occurrence' operator was used on the categories that had emerged during the first stage of coding Tallaght interview scripts (*search-scope*). The node generated by this query (*search result*) was entitled 'voice representation across the categories', and analysis of meanings embedded in data at this new node revealed a trend across the text segments that was identified as indicative of either a 'proactive' or 'reactive' engagement with the world. A customised NVivo report, generated to profile the number of times individual speakers had been coded to the categories 'proactive engagement' and 'reactive engagement' yielded a stark result: of the four speakers in this site, two had been coded to 'proactive engagement' *only*, and the remaining two had been coded to 'reactive engagement' *only*. This search operation played a pivotal role in identifying a split in worldview among the membership of Tallaght Men's Group (Appendix 12).

Thus, as Araujo (1995) concludes: "the continuous interplay between conceptual models, categories and data allows a growing web of codes, textual segments and relationships between codes to evolve into a reasonably coherent story line that constitutes both a good 'local' theory to account for this data and a link to more general and substantive theories" (p97). This is not to suggest that sole use of manual methods cannot produce an equally coherent explanation of the data, rather it is to suggest that making use of qualitative software can benefit the analyst by enhancing efficiency of operations, and can benefit the wider research community by facilitating full transparency of these operations.

Measures Taken to Establish Trustworthiness

1. Audit Trail

Production of an audit trail is the key and most important criterion upon which the dependability and confirmability of a study can be established. Arguably, such key software features as logging of data movement and coding patterns, and mapping of conceptual categories and thought-progression, render all stages of the analytical process traceable and transparent, and facilitate the researcher in producing a more detailed and comprehensive audit trail than manual mapping of this complicated process can allow.

The audit trail for this project may be accessed in: Appendix A1 (chart form) and Appendix A2 (report form) for the Ballymun Case Study, and in Appendix B1 (chart form) and Appendix B2 (report form) for the Tallaght Case Study. The chart format offers a visual display of the developmental process of defining, eliminating, re-defining, sub-dividing and merging categories that occurred over the course of the data analysis process. While the chart format facilitates the reader to witness this developmental process at a glance, the corresponding report documents this development at four key stages in the data analysis process. Stage One records the emergence of broad participant-driven and researcher-driven categories generated as the researcher codes one third of the data segments. Stage Two documents the development of 'propositional statements' to serve as 'rules for inclusion' as the researcher further codes and re-codes text segments and begins to cohere meanings embedded in the data coded to each category. Stage Three shows the process of category refinement as the researcher further distils and crystallises meanings and identifies relationships between clusters of meanings. Stage Four documents the refined categories, their relatedness, and the analyst's 'outcome propositions' or findings statements.

2. Gaining the *Informed* Consent of Study Participants

It is the ethical duty of the researcher to ensure that study participants, in consenting to participate, fully understand the aim and purpose of the study, how the researcher intends to gather data, and what the researcher intends to do with that data. While this project took two key steps (outlined below) to inform the participants on all aspects of the research endeavour, given the diversity of educational attainment amongst the

men who consented to participate, it is likely that some participants did not *fully* understand the entire process, but did indeed understand the *gist* of it. Across the two men's groups, many of the participants held no educational qualifications, some held certification from primary or secondary school, some held vocational qualifications, and only one held a third level academic qualification. Based on experience, this project concurs with Mason's (1996) suggestion that "many participants may not be interested in the detail, and may not be familiar with the disciplinary and academic skills and conventions which are needed to understand issues such as what principles of analysis will be used and so on" (p58).

Informing Participants Step One

The oral presentation I delivered to the Ballymun Men's Group on 4th September 2001 explained the project's focus-of-inquiry, overall study aims and intended methodology. While the men's unanimous consent was based on this presentation, I continuously reiterated its content throughout the course of my fieldwork in this site. Similarly, the Tallaght men were informed from the outset that the founding of the men's group at An Cosán was part of this research project; and at the initial meeting, and later in my role as observer, I continuously reminded the men of the project's purpose and methods.

Informing Participants Step Two

On commencement of each in-depth interview I reminded each participant that his contribution would form part of my doctoral study, explaining that the interview was the means by which I was 'gathering data' that would later be analysed. Subsequently I returned to each participant for verification of his interview transcript, giving him the opportunity to make changes, additions, deletions, or withdraw his contribution, if he so wished. I explained that, in analysing the data I would be working within the context of theories from the social sciences, and consequently the language I would use in presenting my interpretation of the data would be that of the social sciences. All of the men verified their transcripts and agreed to their inclusion in the data analysis process.

As three of the four practitioners who participated in the focus group discussions are experienced in the field of men's community education and hold degrees in the social

sciences, this project can confidently state that these men fully understood and supported the study's aims, purpose and methodology; and whilst I cannot vouch for the level of understanding of the fourth practitioner, it is likely he may not have fully understood the *process* of qualitative research but understood and concurred with its *principles.*

3. Member Checking

The interchangeable procedural terms 'negotiated outcomes', 'member checking' and 'respondent validation' are often cited as mechanisms for establishing credibility for qualitative study findings (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Maykut and Morehouse 1994; Mason 1996; Denscombe 1998; Silverman 2000). Respondent validation procedures aim to establish a correspondence between the researcher's and participants' views of the participants' world by exploring the extent to which participants deem the analyst's portrayal of their world to be a 'recognisable reality', and the extent to which participants concur with the researcher's analysis and explanation of this world.

This project concurs with Hammersley and Atkinson's (1983) view that "while there is merit in this procedure, it is far from being problem-free ... and it is important to recognise the limitations of respondent validation" (p196). These theorists hold that "while actors are well-placed informants on their own actions, they are no more than that, and their accounts must be analysed in the same way as any other data with due care being given to possible threats to validity ... this is reinforced once we recognise that it may be in a person's interest to counter the interpretations of the researcher" (p196). Mason (1996) also suggests "the idea that it [respondent validation] can be used to support validity is based on the notion that research subjects are in a position to judge and confirm (or otherwise) the validity of the researcher's interpretations, and this is problematic" (p151). Mason holds that "just as a single researcher cannot unequivocally claim epistemological privilege simply because he or she belongs to a specifically defined social group, so too we cannot assume that a single research subject (or even a group of research subjects) unequivocally possesses such privilege; indeed, given that qualitative researchers are likely to be trading in social science interpretations, based on social science conventions, there is no reason to suppose that

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research subjects who are unfamiliar with these will have either interest in them, or knowledge about how they operate" (p152).

This project supports the view that seeking a correspondence between respondents' everyday understandings of the world and the researcher's analytical explanation of those understandings through the process of respondent validation is problematic; and for this reason, only engaged in the respondent validation procedure up to a certain point with the membership of the men's groups. I sought respondent validation of all interview transcripts, and on completion of the data analysis process, returned to each research site where I met with the men as a group and related to them the key themes and issues I had identified as being of particular concern in their lives. As a collective, the men in each research site affirmed that the identified themes and issues were of concern in their lives. Having received validation of these themes, I wrote the findings chapters, placing my idiographic interpretations of the men's engagement with these themes in dialogue with theoretical perspectives drawn from relevant academic discourses. Given the gap between everyday language and the language of theoretical discourse, I did not return to the field for respondent validation of my analytical explanations of social processes operative in the world under study.

Thus, while the members of the men's groups have verified their interview transcripts and the study's themes, they have not been given copies of the case study chapters because these men's unfamiliarity with theoretical discourse renders them unqualified to affirm or dispute the analyses submitted here for academic assessment. Thus, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) suggestion that: "both facts and interpretations that will ultimately find their way into the case report must be subjected to scrutiny by respondents who earlier acted as sources for that information, or by other persons who are like them", proved problematic for this project (p211). However, the three practitioners who are accustomed to academic language were given access to relevant extracts from the overall thesis and have validated these extracts as in keeping with their, heretofore tacit, understandings of the workings of men's groups. In addition, the practitioner with whom I collaborated in developing and testing programmes for the men's groups draws on themes from the study findings as material for his ongoing work with these groups. As he foregrounds the themes for discussion and analysis, this practitioner draws the men's attention to the ways in which they respond to these

themes, and in this way, is acting as 'translator' of the findings to the study participants (see stage three of the programme development process in Appendix 9).

4. Provision of a Reference System

Study participants' quotations presented and analysed in the case study chapters are numerically linked to profiles of the membership of the men's groups. These profiles, tabulating individual participant's age-band, age leaving school, qualifications leaving school, post-school education / training, career path, employment status, and marital status are presented in Appendix 2 for the Ballymun Men's Group and Appendix 3 for the Tallaght Men's Group. This numerical reference system allows the reader access to the participants' biographical data without placing them at risk of being identified.

A Note on the Use of Participants' Quotations

Denscombe (1998) cautions: "there is a very real danger for the researcher that in coding and categorizing of the data the meaning of the data is lost or transformed by wrenching it from its location (a) within a sequence of data (e.g. interview talk), or (b) within surrounding circumstances which have a bearing on the meaning of the unit as it was originally conceived at the time of data collection" (p222). All of the data presented and analysed in the findings chapters of this project originated in interview transcripts, which are available to the reader upon request. The process of semi-structured open-ended in-depth interviewing allows the study participant to respond at length to a given question. Within this format then, a participant's initial response to a question may (and frequently does) spark a train-of-thought that takes his narrative in a direction that renders parts of his response irrelevant to the actual question posed but of relevance to the study's focus-of-inquiry as a stand-alone unit-of-meaning or incident. Quotations analysed in the findings chapters are predominantly presented as stand-alone units (because they either stand alone or the question is self-evident), but are accompanied by the researcher's question where knowledge of the question is prerequisite to the reader making sense of the quotation.

Before presenting the findings chapters, this project wishes to make a brief point concerning its funding. Byrne and Lentin (2000) point to "positivism's favoured position in the allocation of funding resources for research" suggesting that "state funding agencies have little confidence in qualitative research methodologies" and

thus "the positivist tradition has received state funding, while the interpretative tradition has not" and "in the current bid for control of research funding, this pattern is about to repeat itself" (pp 14-15). It is within this context, then, that this project expresses its gratitude to the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences for its confidence in, and support of, this small-scale qualitative study.

Finally, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) remind that: "in generating grounded theory, researchers do not seek to prove their theories, but merely to demonstrate plausible support for them" (p126); and it is by focusing in particular on analysis of the men's language that this project aims to "demonstrate plausible support" for its theoretical perspectives presented in the chapters to follow.

Chapter Four: Findings from the Ballymun Case Study

This chapter presents the findings from the Ballymun case study, placing its idiographic analyses and interpretations in dialogue with theoretical perspectives drawn from relevant academic discourses.

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When I go to the pub a lot of men throw it back at me that I go to classes and I go to the men's centre. They wouldn't be interested in any of that so they don't reveal some of the things that I would reveal. But in not revealing, I get a feeling – why is he drinking so much? – why is he in here night after night? So I feel it has to be part and parcel of it that there's nothing outside of there – that's why he's in this place every night, or every day. And while I go there too, I can escape from it in the pursuits that I do, I even make notes, so I feel in some way that I'm on a quest. But those men are not on a quest. They wouldn't say it in so many words, they cling to that flimsy thing called pride, but I sometimes think they're almost talking about a loss – and it's not a death – it's a loss of something from within. There's a lack of expression but I sense their sorrow; I sense that they're talking about something that has gone from them.

(Participant No.8)[12]

This speaker's juxtaposition of passive aphasic plight of alienated men with his own active questing draws attention to two key dimensions of the human condition: the need for purpose and meaning in one's life; and the potential within human beings to create and recreate such meaning, especially through language, and through entering into communion with each other. The importance of language in the construction of meaning is emphasised by the speaker's references to the 'sorrow' and 'loss of something from within' that these men are experiencing but are unable or unwilling to communicate; their 'lack of expression' inhibits their creative capacity and dooms them to taking refuge 'in this place every night' because 'there's nothing outside of there'. By contrast, the speaker's communicative powers set him apart from his peers; he makes sense of himself and the world through the oral act of 'revealing' and the written act of 'making notes'. In other words, he gives meaning and purpose to his life through dialogue with self and others.

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[12] Participants' quotations in this chapter are numerically linked to a biographical profile of the Ballymun Men's Group membership tabulated in Appendix 2.

In drawing attention to his peers' sense of loss and alienation, the speaker's vignette captures a moment of tension within the established order, a moment containing potential for resistance as these men experience contradictions between the dominant version of man as master of his own destiny and the reality of powerlessness and alienation in their everyday lives. In pointing, inter alia, to the plight of gay men, men of minority ethnic groupings, and working class men economically dispossessed by structural unemployment, Connell (2000) reminds us that "though men in general gain the patriarchal dividend, specific groups of men gain very little of it" (p, 203). Thus, he concludes:

> Rather than a grand 'men's movement', we should be thinking of a variety of struggles in diverse sites, linked through networking. Men are likely to be detached from the defence of patriarchy in small numbers at a time, in a great variety of circumstances. So the likely political pattern is one of unevenness between situations, with differently configured issues and possibilities of action (p210).

This chapter offers an analysis of one such struggle in one such site, the Ballymun Men's Centre, where the majority of its membership comprises men who are economically and socially marginalised and whose 'detachment from defence of patriarchy' manifests as disillusionment with the established socio-economic and political order:

> *The leadership is bad in the world today. How can I put it? I think the economists or the big players in the world today dictate to leaders for their own benefits, for their own gain. I think that's a terrible lack in the world today. I mean, all living things on this earth are important and I think the world can feed and shelter every human being and there should be no human being without food or shelter; but basic needs are being taken from people and you can't be comfortable when you don't have them. Maybe I'm going political but that's just the way I see it.*

> (Participant No.4)

I think men have changed – but not dramatically, and it didn't necessarily come from their own will – there are still lots of things to be achieved, like in politics, the minute women try to go slightly higher up in decision making they're just not let, because men still want to rule the world.

(Participant No.2)

This is something I feel passionate about. President Bush is leader of the biggest world power and it really upsets me the way he is carrying on. I know September 11th was a terrible thing but he goes around the world bombing everybody and interfering with their way of life and their economies, it's disgraceful. And Blair is just as bad. You end up feeling ashamed of the carry on of men in power.

(Participant No.1)

On a more personalised level, the following speaker outlines the dominant version of masculinity and contrasts the experience of masculinity for men on the periphery with that of men at the centre of the established order:

Men think they have to be the breadwinner, the strong one, the one out there doing the thing. This is the way it's looked at in society. So when men can't do this, when a crisis occurs, their whole world collapses. That's it – they're worthless, they're useless, their whole self is gone. I think, when men's groups began, the men who were doing fine, who were on the top of the ladder, the idea of a men's group didn't appeal to them, it still doesn't, because they don't need it. I think men come to men's groups through job loss and other losses. It's more the men who are ... who are broken ... I can't get a word for it ... I'm saying broken but I don't know if broken is the right word ... certainly looking for answers ... or something ... So I think men who have ... who have fallen by the wayside ... are forgotten about by society and that's why the men's centre has found a niche and is dealing with a problem that should have been dealt with years ago.

(Participant No.2)

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The depth and intensity of the speaker's struggle to reconcile conflicting versions of man as 'strong' and man as 'broken' is reflected in his faltering speech and search for 'the right word'; the despair of men who have failed to live up to the ideal, who have 'fallen by the wayside', is mirrored and amplified in his stark, desolate words 'their whole self is gone'; while confusion resulting from loss of self and being lost for words finds outlet in a desperate search 'for answers … or something …'

Ballymun Men's Centre offers a response to marginalised men's need to reclaim the self and to re-create meaning and purpose in their lives. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest: "words are the way that most people come to understand their situations; we create our world with words; we explain ourselves with words" (p18). Thus, in seeking to understand the processes involved in reclaiming self and re-creating meaning, and in seeking to explain these processes from the men's perspective, this chapter focuses on their language on two levels: their language per se, and the particular way they use language. The men's language per se contains recurring words, phrases and themes that provide insight into salient categories of meaning in their world; while the men's use of language offers clues to the cognitive methods they employ to conceptualise and interpret the world; and making such cognitive styles explicit is a key task in the process of developing a conceptual framework for practitioners working with marginalised men.

Exploration of the men's internal world, the psychological and philosophical domains of reclaiming the self and creating meaning and purpose, is here briefly preceded by a sociological reflection on their external world, the material conditions within which they act out their lives.

Sociological Reflection:
In 1999 the government initiated a major regeneration process in Ballymun. However, as the regeneration programme will not be completed until at least 2009, the area still remains characterised by social exclusion and marginalisation. Ballymun comprises a two square mile radius of public housing development (50% high-rise flat complexes and 50% low level housing units). According to the 1996 Census, Ballymun is populated by 16,566, of whom 4,263 are men aged between twenty and seventy. With

early school leaving patterns consistently at least double the national average, less than 25% of Ballymun's school-going children complete the senior cycle (Nexus Research Cooperative, 1996). "The unemployment rate in Ballymun is over four times that for the Dublin region. There is evidence that the higher rate of unemployment in Ballymun is primarily due to the higher unemployment rate found among men in Ballymun [19.6%] than nationally [5.1%]" (Ballymun Partnership). Drug abuse is also a serious problem in Ballymun where a recent study documented six hundred and eighty-one opiate abusers, a particularly high proportion of whom were young men (Ballymun Partnership). And population profiles over the years have shown a swing from 'traditional' families to one-parent households, co-habitant couples and single men living alone (Ballymun Partnership).

Of the eighteen men who participated in the Ballymun study only one was in fulltime and two were in part-time employment; two had been unemployed for over one year and seven were long-term unemployed (over three years); two, although claiming unemployment status, were working in the black economy; and four were retired. The vast majority of the men had left school early with minimal (Primary Certificate) or no qualifications, and their career paths had been predominantly unskilled or semi-skilled, with only one skilled (watchmaker) and one professional (French language teacher) among their number. Only two of the men had attained the Leaving Certificate qualification, one in the secondary school system and one through Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme. Only one of the men had a third level qualification (MA in Language and Culture Studies), although ten had participated in either job-related or vocational training and two had participated in community-based education related to their voluntary work in the community (Appendix 5).

Thus, in the sociological realm, the lives of the majority of men in the Ballymun study are characterised by poverty, hardship, and struggle to access even the minimum requirements for survival – food, clothing, shelter and warmth; and the following speaker offers insight into the debilitating impact of such struggle on the psyche of marginalised men:

> *I think when you get so low on the scale a certain voice gets into your*
> *head regarding doing anything about your life. The voice can give you*

all sorts of demeaning messages like: 'it's not worth it', 'you're not worth it', 'they don't care', 'you'll never get work', 'what's the point?'. The only thing I have found to interrupt that voice ... some say it's a rude awakening, or a spiritual awakening ... some men need to be confronted and some men need to be comforted ... some men are different to others ... To get them back ... what happens in the men's centre is that the other members try to interrupt the voice.

(Participant No.16)

This speaker offers a vivid depiction of Taboo Zone oppression – the struggle to reconcile the dominant version of masculinity as 'strong' and 'breadwinner' with the reality of powerlessness and unemployment whilst loss of belief in the self diminishes the capacity to envision and negotiate alternative ways of being (see page 2). It is noteworthy that, in emphasising 'some men are different to others', the speaker draws attention to the uniqueness and individuality of the men's experiences of themselves and responses to the world. His use of the word demeaning in this context could also be interpreted as indicating 'de-meaning' or loss of meaning and purpose – that 'loss of something from within' referred to by the opening speaker. Just as the opening speaker quests for meaning and purpose through dialogue with self and others, the current speaker refers to 'spiritual awakening' through a communion of men trying to 'interrupt the (monological) voice'; thus, in order 'to get them back' (facilitate reclaiming of self) the men collectively re-create meaning and purpose through engaging in dialogue.

Dominant Themes:

The interconnected themes of change and loss emerged as the dominant categories of meaning in the men's world. Coping with change encompasses four sub themes: change in family forms and norms; changed skills-base of the labour market; changing technologies; and changing landscape through ten-year urban regeneration programme. The impact of such change is correlated to many of the men's acute sense of loss: loss of the provider role; loss of family life through separation and divorce; loss of access to, and status in, the workplace; and loss of bearing and direction in an ever-changing physical and symbolic landscape.

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The men's engagement with these inter-related and multi-layered categories of meaning are analysed under three headings, corresponding with the three dimensions of the project's focus-of-inquiry. Thus the remainder of this chapter interweaves dominant issues and concerns in the men's lives into its exploration of *their perceptions* of:

- what it means to be a man in today's world
- the role of men's groups in men's lives
- the potential of community education as a means for men's development

and seeks to explain how these men conceptualise, interpret, and negotiate the world.

The Men's Perceptions of What it Means to be a Man in Today's World:

Rather than talk about 'man' in an abstract or theoretical sense, the men tended to talk in very concrete terms of man as social actor playing specific roles – breadwinner, provider, husband or partner, and father; and these portrayals were very much rooted in the men's personal experiences. That is, in grappling with changing meanings of masculinity, the men tended to reach for the model of masculinity they had witnessed, internalised and aspired to in their formative years as their starting point or frame of reference. Due to the age profile of this cohort (ranging from forty to seventy), the models of masculinity and gender they had internalised in their youth could best be described as traditional – man as breadwinner and provider, woman as homemaker and nurturer; and the success with which they are reconciling contradictions between traditional and contemporary models of gender, between expectation and reality, varied greatly among the men. At one end of the spectrum, some of the men identified change in the gender order as a contributing factor to their marital and relationship breakdown; while, at the opposite end of the spectrum, others celebrated and welcomed such change.

Of the eighteen men, eight had remained married; five had separated from their wives and were living alone; two had separated from their wives and also from a subsequent partner and were living alone; one was cohabiting in a second relationship; one was widowed; and one had remained single (Appendix 2). Thus, at the time the research was conducted, nine of the men were living alone and nine were living with a wife or

partner. The high rate of relationship breakdown among this cohort of men suggests that many of them are experiencing difficulty in adjusting to change in the gender order that thwarts deeply internalised traditional understandings and expectations of masculinity. The following speaker provides insight into this difficulty:

Q. With more and more women working now, and with increased unemployment for men, gender roles in the family and workplace have changed a lot. What has this meant for you personally - in your private life of family and close relationships, and in your public or social life?

Well I really believe that it led, in part, and I'm emphasising in part, to the break-up of my marriage. You see, when I was growing up, my mother was totally dependent on my father. He was working in England and she was living here in Ireland with her six children. Her needs and our needs were totally dependent on him. And even his great efforts, which were tremendous, fell a little bit short, through no fault of his own, so my mother had to take on a part-time job doing a bit of cleaning. But that still didn't give her, what would be considered by today's standards, any kind of real independence – our dependency was totally on my father.

Now in marrying my wife, as the years went on and the children were starting to grow, no matter how much I was working or providing in the same way as my father did, she took on a job. Suddenly that gave her total independence of me; so whatever differences there were between us, her independence would make them grow. I see that reflected, not just in my own life, but in many other lives too. You see, I like a drink and I like to mix, not just here in Ballymun, but in the city centre and in upmarket situations like hotels, and other sides of the city, so I've a good broad view about this. So it's not just based on Ballymun alone that I think work has given women more independence and with that independence there has been a huge crack in the marriage criteria – if that's the right word.

(Participant No.8)

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Before analysing this speaker's understanding of gender, it is worth noting that his contribution typifies a pattern in the men's use of language and thus offers clues to the thought processes and cognitive methods they employ to interpret and negotiate the world. In informal discussion and at interview, the men tended to articulate their perspectives through rich narrative, rooted in personal experience, and characterised by vivid depictions of scenes and scenarios; and, although concepts were not always made explicit or thematised, they were invariably embedded within the narrative. This linguistic pattern suggests that, in making sense of the world, these men tend to work from the concrete world of experience and observation to the abstract world of ideas and concepts – but while the concrete world is always made explicit, the associated ideational world is rarely elaborated.

The conceptual framework that underpins and informs the above speaker's understanding of masculinity and gender relations may be identified in his vivid comparative depiction of his parents' and his own marriage. Overall, the narrative explicitly forges conceptual links between masculinity and the provider role and between femininity and the caring role as the ideal 'criteria' for a long lasting marital relationship. Bestowing a nostalgic quality on the opening sequence, the speaker glosses over flaws in the reality of his parents' marriage. Although 'falling a bit short' in his realisation of the ideal, the speaker's father is exonerated for his 'great and tremendous efforts' and absolved from a shortcoming that was 'through no fault of his own'. Although the speaker's mother broke with tradition by entering the workforce, he explains her aberration as born of economic necessity and emphasises the menial nature of her work, which did not give her 'any kind of real independence' and thus the ideal resolution is reached – 'our dependency was totally on my father'.

The tone of the narrative shifts from nostalgia to exasperation and disappointment in the second sequence as, despite the speaker's emulation of his father, his wife enters the workforce gaining the 'total independence' that would 'make their differences grow'. The implicit concept of male economic power as a form of control and domination within marriage remains unquestioned; and the concept of woman's right to self-actualisation and fulfilment from sources beyond the home is absent from the narrative.

While this speaker provides insight into the difficulty some men are experiencing in adjusting to change in the gender order that thwarts traditional understandings and expectations of masculinity, the following speaker offers the perspective of men coming to terms with such change:

> *I remember objecting, in the initial stages to my wife going to work. I remember saying "that's not on, the man does the work, that's nonsense kind of talk". It was just an old-fashioned idea that the woman shouldn't have to go to work. But I accepted the fact that if we wanted to do what we wanted to do, it would require two wages. To me now it's quite normal – women go to work and that's all there is to it.*

> (Participant No.3)

While this speaker has come to terms with the idea of his wife working, the narrative is imbued with a tone of reluctant acceptance, with economic necessity offered as justification for her participation in the workforce; and the concept of woman's right to work is difficult to detect within the narrative. The following speaker, however, makes unequal gender power relations and women's rights explicit:

> *Men are used to being the mainstay in the family, the dominant one, the one who runs the show in the home. It's gradually changing now that women are going back to work; they're getting more money and more independence. The married ones don't have to go and ask their husbands for a few bob at the end of the week and an awful lot of men can't cope with that. You hear a lot of men giving out about their wives working. But fifty years ago women didn't have any rights; they couldn't work when they got married; they couldn't take out loans; they couldn't even buy anything on hire-purchase. It's definitely changing for the better because we're all the same, whether we're men or women, we all have the same needs basically. And I think things should change; we should treat each other as equals; not say - 'I'm a man, you're a woman, I'm going to look down on you' – that's a ridiculous attitude.*

> (Participant No.12)

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While this speaker envisions an egalitarian gender order, it is only fair to point out that this vision is offered by a man who remained single all his life. Arguably, it is profoundly more difficult to welcome change for men, such as the preceding speakers, who have had to renegotiate relationships with wives or partners upon the shattering foundation on which their identity, their understandings of themselves and their relation to the world has been built. Data analysis suggests that, with the breadwinner role forming the cornerstone of male identity, changing gender roles in the family and workplace can, for some men, represent threat on two levels. Firstly, the above speaker suggests that 'an awful lot of men can't cope' with sharing the breadwinner role because it renders them no longer 'the mainstay', 'the dominant one', 'the one who runs the show in the home'. In highlighting his peers' perceived sense of threat, the speaker makes explicit their taken for granted assumption of male economic power as a form of control within relationships. Secondly, however, the next speaker poignantly evokes the profound threat to a positive sense of self that is posed by loss of the breadwinner role:

> *I once remember telling a story. I'd been on the dole for a long time and I'd seen the different men coming into the dole office. In the first couple of weeks they're still wearing their best clothes ... in this hope of getting more work. And as the weeks go by, as Christmas and Easter and times like that come on them, you can see the worry creeping in ... that worry 'Oh God, I'm not going to get a job' and this is where all the problems start coming in. After a period of time their clothes become more shabby, they don't shave, they neglect themselves that much more, they can't cope with the everyday things that they did when they were working. So, they seem to lose a bit of control over themselves in the aspect that they don't care anymore.*

> (Participant No.9)

This powerful contribution bears all the hallmarks of the men's linguistic style – rich narrative, rooted in personal experience, with a multiplicity of concepts embedded in a highly descriptive and vivid depiction of a scenario. It clearly demonstrates the men's tendency to offer colourful descriptions of what social actors do and don't do in the concrete visible world; and the task of the listener-interpreter lies in identifying

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the unarticulated chain of concepts threading the story together in order to reach an understanding of the speaker's intended meaning. It could be suggested that this speaker uses the outward appearances and stances of the men in the dole queue to represent their inner world, taking his listener with them on their sad journey from optimism to apathy, ultimately connoting the slow demise of a sense of self. As the scene opens, the speaker conceptually links the men's 'best clothes' with their optimism, an optimism that gradually dims to despair, represented by their now 'shabby clothes' and 'unshaven faces'. In shifting his attention from their deteriorating garb to their actual bodies, it is as if the onlooker–storyteller is trying to bring the listener nearer and nearer to their inner world. Lest his listener be unable to penetrate the layers that shield and conceal this inner world, the narrator, who himself has experienced their plight, voices their despairing realisation "Oh God, I'm not going to get a job". These words, coupled with the narrator's observation 'they seem to lose a bit of control over themselves', call to mind the earlier speaker's reference to an invading, controlling 'voice in the head' that tells you 'it's not worth it, you're not worth it, you'll never get work'. As their sense of self-worth disintegrates, the men's final descent into apathy is reflected in the narrator's final words 'they don't care anymore'.

The next speaker starkly depicts manifestations of poverty and of disintegration of the self in the everyday lives of unemployed men and their families:

> *I think when men become unemployed it's the start of all their troubles. With their income down to a minimum they can't do the kind of things they were doing before. If they have a family, they have to cut back on birthdays and treats and things like that, and if they don't get work soon, they have to cut back on food and other things they need. After a time the bills start mounting and things they can't afford to finish paying for are repossessed. Everybody in the family gets affected. As time goes on they say 'what the hell, I'll go and have a few pints', then they get into further trouble with money. The thing is that people are living longer nowadays and that's a bit of a frightener as well. Years ago people died in their fifties but now they know they're*

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going to live longer and the fact is that they haven't got the money to carry on.

And if they're living in a flat on their own, it depends on their temperament, but after a while a lot of them realise that there's no real reason to get out of bed in the morning. A lot of them stay in bed all day and once that starts that's the road down it's only going to get worse. If you don't get up in the morning and make some kind of effort you lose all reason for living. Once you stop getting up in the morning - that's it, you're finished then, you're only lying there waiting to die.

(Participant No.12)

Again, the speaker works from the concrete observable world to the abstract world of ideas and concepts; from the visible daily struggle to access and hold onto provisions in the material world, to the struggle to hold onto a sense of self-worth in the inner world. The bleak reality of struggle for survival in the material world is imparted through the speaker's detailed description of the practicalities of everyday life for unemployed men and their families. The attritive effect of impoverishment is imparted through the speaker's outlining of a continuum of stages in the struggle – from 'cutting back on treats' to 'cutting back on necessities' to 'repossession' of household items. In the downward spiral through these stages, marginalised men and their families are rendered increasingly compromised in the level of choice and control they can assume in their lives. In his stark suggestion that longevity is 'a bit of a frightener' for economically dispossessed people, the speaker takes his listener right to the heart of 'desolation row'.

In shifting the scene to the flats of men who 'live alone', who 'stay in bed all day', who 'realise that there's no real reason to get out of bed in morning', the speaker amplifies the sense of desolation and isolation he is imparting on behalf of marginalised men. The imagery and wording in this scene connote journey's end, the lonely terminus of the downward spiral where gradual loss of choice and control culminate in complete loss of autonomy, loss of self – 'that's it, you're finished, you're only lying there waiting to die'. While not made explicit, the concept of suicide as a possible perceived option pervades this scene of male isolation and

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alienation. Indeed, many of the men made the risk of male suicide in the community explicit, pointing to the role of men's groups in combating this risk:

Men's groups are a safety net for men when relationships, or life, or things have failed – if that wasn't there, it's like taking away the safety net, and then it's either total alcoholism or suicide.

(Participant No.6)

We have a lot of suicide in the area and I think it's because there are so many men trapped in their flats all day looking at the four walls. Even if they only come in and have a cup of tea it gets them out to meet someone else in the same position; and if you meet enough people you can begin to do something about your life.

(Participant No.12)

Sadly, this project cannot but acknowledge that during the research endeavour, a brother of one of the participants committed suicide. The project, therefore, wishes to foreground combating male isolation as the first and foremost task of men's groups operating in areas characterised by economic and social deprivation.

In suggesting that 'if you meet enough people you can begin to do something about your life', the second speaker points to the act of entering into communion and dialogue as a means of recreating meaning and purpose in one's life – a process central to the everyday life of the men's centre, which operates both an informal 'drop-in' dimension and a structured programme of activities. Between 1991 and 1999, with the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs as its chief source of funding, the centre's activities included: workshops and seminars on issues of concern to men; literacy tuition; arts and crafts; and outings to places of interest. However, since it granted funding under the Education Equality Initiative (2000) and Back to Education Initiative (2003), the Department of Education and Science has been a major contributor to the centre's growth and development, allowing it to implement a core community education component within its overall programme of activities and thereby considerably widen its platform for men's development. While the final section of this chapter discusses this model of practice, the next section

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focuses on the men's experiences of themselves as they engage in the processes of recreating meaning and purpose in their lives through entering into communion and dialogue.

The Men's Perceptions of the Role of Men's Groups in Men's Lives:

The emergence of the themes of coping with change and loss as dominant concerns in the men's lives fits with Young's (1999) theory of 'the material and ontological precariousness' of contemporary living. Drawing extensively from the work of Anthony Giddens, Young argues that contemporary lives are characterised by increasing levels of choice and, as a corollary, high levels of risk and uncertainty in both the sociological and psychological domains of life. Pointing to changing configurations of practice at global, workplace, and family levels, Young holds that:

> We live now in a much more difficult world: we face a greater range
> in life choices than ever before; our lives are less firmly embedded in
> work and relationships; our everyday existence is experienced as a
> series of encounters with risk either in actuality or in the shape of
> fears and apprehensions. We feel both materially insecure and
> ontologically precarious (pvi).

> Individualism, with its emphasis on existential choice and self-
> creation, contributes significantly to ontological insecurity, while the
> pressing nature of a plurality of alternative social worlds, some the
> result of such incipient individuality, manifestly undermines any
> easy acceptance of unquestioned values (p14).

> The transition into late modernity manifestly exacerbates ontological
> insecurity. For the disjointed world of work and family no longer
> provides the embeddedness in society which makes for an easy
> acceptance of the taken-for-granted, whilst the diversity of lifestyle
> and culture experienced within urban society, and presented through
> the mass media, constantly undermines any notion that one's world
> is obvious and certain (p97).

If existential choice and self-creation translate into a world where individuals can create (rather than inherit) meaning and understandings of themselves and their relation to the world, and thus diversity can flourish, Young points to ontological tensions within this order:

> Ontological fulfilment and ontological security are at loggerheads, not merely because of the values of others (although this is a great part), but because the individual's own choices and search for meaning challenges a secure taken for granted world. There is not merely social contradiction but also a psychological split where ontological certainty is stretched between the comfort of stability and the need for change (p99).

In this view, individual lives are characterised by an ongoing process of reconciling the dilemma between remaining within the security of the familiar and leaping into the insecurity of the unknown in constructing the self – a process that demands constant questioning and evaluating of one's assumptions and values. Through engaging in this internal dialogue, one undertakes what Gidden's refers to as the 'reflexive project' of constructing identity. Arguably then, the task of constructing and reconstructing identity demands that one makes one's internal world explicit to oneself; and it is this endeavour that is central to the processes operative in the Ballymun Men's Group through their endeavour to 'interrupt the (monological) voice in the head' and thus facilitate a dialectical process in reconstructing the self.

Dominance of the themes of coping with change and loss is indicative of material and ontological strife in the lives of the Ballymun men. However, while loss of security in the material world is described with great clarity in many of their narratives, the less tangible nature of loss of ontological security is reflected in the vagueness of such plaintive phrases as 'loss of something from within', and 'broken men looking for answers ... or something ...'

It could be suggested that the men's tendency to articulate their perceptions of the world through scenarios that offer detailed descriptions of what social actors do and don't do in the material world while the ontological world remains unarticulated, is

indicative of the impact on their psyche of what Kimmel theorises as the 'evaluative eyes' dynamic within male culture, and Real theorises as the 'passive trauma' that accompanies acquisition of the traditional version of male identity (chapter two pp 66-67 refers to Kimmel's theory; p74 refers to Real's theory). Kimmel holds that, as a lived practice, servitude to the 'evaluative eyes' of others as a source of self-affirmation prioritises attending to the outer world of appearances and performances over attuning to the inner world. Similarly, Real holds that, in the practice of measuring and valuing themselves by their success in the public domain, males learn to deny and negate their inner world – 'to replace inherent self-worth with performance-based esteem'. The men's linguistic pattern, the detailed clarity with which they refer to the seen world and vagueness with which they refer to the unseen world, could be deemed indicative of the outcome of psychological processes as theorised by Kimmel and Real – disconnection from the inner world. Indeed, when consciously attempting to articulate aspects of this inner world, the men's rich illustrative narrative style sometimes failed them:

> *It's funny ... I think men's issues is a very difficult thing to communicate ... because of the confusion ... because of the emotional stigma ... if that's the right word ... it's difficult to communicate the difficulties because they come from the difficulties ... so it's like an inside job ...*

(Participant No.16)

The incoherence of this response, the sense of inner turmoil that is being conveyed but cannot be articulated, is suggestive of profound difficulty in accessing the inner world. Despite his incoherence, the speaker's word association – 'confusion', and 'emotional stigma' - suggests both unfamiliarity with his inner world and a sense of shame in trying to access it. It is difficult to decipher the speaker's conclusion 'so it's like an inside job', a phrase that carries connotations not just of criminality and wrongdoing but also of betrayal. Is he merely trying to find a phrase to describe his dilemma, or is he seeking the cause of it? If he is seeking the cause, does he feel he has betrayed himself through habitual negation of his core, or humanity has betrayed him through a socialisation process that has diminished rather than nurtured his capacity to relate to himself?

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Through language and communion, the men in the Ballymun study are striving to make their inner worlds explicit to themselves and thereby enable each other to engage in the reflexive project of constructing identity. However, if the inherited (traditional) meaning of masculinity has failed some of these men, so too, at times, has inherited language:

> *This is what I find very delicate around speaking, especially around speaking to women, ... is that men are oppressed. Because if you speak to a woman who has been oppressed and is coming out of it and you say 'men are oppressed', it's like waving a red rag to a bull ... you just don't get any further ... you just don't get a chance to explain it ... and it's difficult enough to explain it ... but if you don't even get a chance ... you just get totally shut down and it's like ... it's like what's the point? ... It always happens with my wife ... there's not much endurance in a conversation ... and it's like ... as I keep saying to her ... 'you just won't let me out of the traps' ...*

(Participant No.16)

It could be suggested that when socio-political groupings (whether dominant or oppositional) incorporate particular words and phrases into the vocabulary of their campaigns, interpretation of such words and phrases may eventually become context-bound in individual minds; and thus strongly locked into contextual association, words and phrases may be deprived of their flexibility and transferability, the very essence of their value as currency in the negotiation of meaning. This speaker's depiction of the 'red rag' effect of his words 'men are oppressed' sparking his wife to 'totally shut down' his communicative effort – exemplifies this threat to the value of words in the negotiation of meaning and the endeavour to reach shared understandings. Arguably, in this exchange, whether wittingly or unwittingly, the speaker's wife has locked the meaning of the word 'oppression' into the context of woman's struggle against patriarchy and rendered it non-transferable to man's struggle within patriarchy. Thus, with the word he chose from the inherited lexicon hijacked and denied his intended meaning, the speaker creates metaphor to convey his frustration: 'you just won't let me out of the traps'.

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It could be suggested that the metaphor this speaker creates, his symbolic portrayal of himself as a caged animal, conveys his twofold predicament: his sense of entrapment both at interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. At interpersonal level, the imagery of ensnarement mirrors his phrase 'you get totally shut down', symbolising defeat in his endeavour to co-construct meaning and understanding with his wife, manifest as lack of 'endurance' or sustainability in conversation with her. At intrapersonal level, imagery of a dog in a racetrack trap, energised and anticipating the release that will allow him to spring forth, mirrors the speaker's sense of pent up emotion and his anticipation of its release through engaging in dialogue, if he could 'just get the chance to explain it'.

This speaker's exclamation 'and it's difficult enough to explain it' is echoed in many of the men's narratives which are replete with such phrases as: 'if that's the right word'; 'I can't get a word for it'; and 'I'm not sure how to put this into words'; and, like him, many of the men tend to create metaphor in the process of articulating their perceptions and experiences of themselves and the world:

> *I've been kicking a word around in my head for quite a long time and I'm going to share it with the group – that word is 'apathy'. I didn't know what apathy was until I looked it up – it's that whole attitude of 'couldn't care less', everything is all so hopeless, what's the point? For some people, life's disappointments have been such a burden that no matter what you offer them now, that hopelessness and disappointment has clouded their thinking.*
>
> *So apathy is like a very deep core of tarmac on a road, and underneath that tarmac is a huge load of cracks and decayed pipes and things like that. All you see is a nice tarmac road. So why apply more tarmac? I think the attitude of hopelessness and despondency, all those big words being bandied about – it's almost as if it's a living death for them.*

<div align="right">(Participant No.8)</div>

In keeping with the men's linguistic pattern of working from the concrete world to the world of ideas and concepts, this speaker creates metaphor that is rooted in the material world in order to access and try to explain the ontological world. For this speaker, discrete words from the inherited lexicon, such as 'apathy', ' hopelessness' and 'despondency', are inadequate as conveyors of the stark state of being he is trying to impart; instead, he offers a hard-hitting oxymoronic description of the plight of those for whom 'life's disappointments have been such a burden' - a state of 'living death'; and, in incorporating this oxymoron into his created metaphor, the speaker succeeds in conveying the harrowing outcome of the experience of marginalisation.

Arguably, in creating this metaphor, the speaker is offering a symbolic representation of a state of being he has either experienced himself or perceived in his peers, or both, wherein the tarmac coating of the road symbolises the external world and the underlying pipes represent the inner world. His juxtaposition of the smooth veneer that is pleasing to the eye with the underlying cracks and decay is suggestive of an inherent dichotomy in this state of being – the paradox of 'living death'. In asking 'so why apply more tarmac?' the speaker suggests that constant struggle to attend to outward appearances smothers awareness of, and access to, the inner world. In symbolising the inner world as one of decay and neglect, the speaker unknowingly endorses Real's theory of the 'passive trauma' that accompanies acquisition of the traditional version of male identity, culminating in disconnection from the inner world.

In creating this metaphor, the speaker moves from physical description to articulation of emotional pain, taking his listener-interpreter via the physical world into the ontological world. In rejecting inherited words in favour of authoring his own metaphorical expression, this speaker, like many of the men in the study, seems to enter and be at one with language, to inhabit language – to engage in Ricoeur's concept of *living* language as a means of creating and conveying meaning. Further, in his dismissal of inherited words too much 'bandied about', the speaker warns against complacency in the negotiation of meaning. Indeed, it could be argued, the men's careful choice of words, their constant search for 'the right word', for 'the right way to put this', is indicative of their pursuit of honesty and integrity in the communicative

process, of their aspiration to reach mutual understandings, and so to arrive at what Habermas theorises as an 'ideal speech situation'.

Arguably, attainment of self-knowledge, self-understanding, is prerequisite to attainment of mutual understanding and human fellowship; and facilitating this pursuit of self-insight, through dialogue and communion, is of primary importance, in principle and practice at the Ballymun Men's Centre. However, given that many of these men seem to have undergone 'passive trauma' in their socialisation and are thus unaccustomed to attuning to their inner world, pursuit of self-insight poses a twofold challenge: challenge as a process, because one has to learn how to engage in it; and challenge as an activity, because of an internalised belief that it is an 'unmanly' activity:

> *We're so bad at communicating we're dreadful. If we are to change ourselves, we have to learn to express ourselves – but it's not easy.*
>
> (Participant No.2)

> *I'm changing myself. In the last few years, due to the men's centre, I'm learning to open up. I'm still finding it difficult, but I know I'll get there; it's early stages yet.*
>
> (Participant No.14)

> *Men's groups are about helping men to develop within themselves. This is a place where men actually go to learn to express themselves emotionally; but they need an awful lot of support to be able to do this because they feel it's not the manly thing to do.*
>
> (Participant No.9)

'It's not the manly thing *to do*' – the men's detailed attention to the world of appearances and performances, to what social actors do and don't do, is indicative of a deeply internalised rubric for the enactment of masculinity:

> *It's not acceptable for a man to be weak – you have to go out there and do the thing. You have to have something to show for yourself. I*

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> *know this comes up a lot but I think you're judged by what you do,*
> *you're judged by your career, or what you do, or what you achieve.*
>
> (Participant No.4)

> *Being a man is all about keeping up your image and hiding weakness.*
>
> (Participant No.15)

The internalised rubric contains, not just guidelines for the performance but also for the script:

> *Women seem to be able to maybe hit a nerve point in the other person*
> *and all of a sudden you'd think they'd been friends for years, they're*
> *yapping away. Men yap too, but the way men talk, everything is right*
> *and nothing is wrong, whereas women seem to speak more home*
> *truths, you know?*
>
> (Participant No.5)

> *Men talk about football, snooker, pictures, women, conquests and all*
> *that. They don't talk about any of their defeats.*
>
> (Participant No.1)

Arguably, adherence to this rubric for the enactment of masculinity demands giving primacy to the world of doing over the world of being; giving primacy to one's image over one's essence. Thus, as a lived practice, this rubric carries potential to cause split between the dimension of self that may be 'shown' to the world and the dimension of self that must be 'hidden' from the world. It is, perhaps, this psychological split that an earlier speaker symbolised as a 'nice tarmac road' overlaying 'decayed pipes'. Indeed, the men seem to be saying that, in hiding aspects of self from the world, one comes to hide aspects of self even from self, until they cannot be retrieved or found, but can only be dimly perceived as 'a loss of something from within'.

It is arguable that, in internalising this rubric, knowing how to present oneself to the world becomes equated with knowing how to be a man. Within this framework then, the material world obscures the ontological world as knowing how to *do* masculinity

overtakes knowing how to *be* a man. And it is the endeavour to reunite these two worlds, the worlds of doing and of being, that may be identified in the Ballymun men's engagement with each other. In this endeavour, the men could, perhaps, be described as dwellers on the threshold between the seen world and the unseen world. That is, in their hitherto tendency to focus on the seen world, the men seem to have internalised a bank of images for the doing of masculinity which, in their engagement with each other, are now being recalled and placed under scrutiny. In examining and questioning inherited models, the men seem to be journeying beyond the world of performance and image into the ontological world of essence and being, and thereby negotiating new meanings and arriving at deeper understandings of themselves:

> *There is this macho image of men – it's crazy - because when you think about it there's no such thing as Mr Macho. People think when they look at men that men don't hurt – men do hurt - but we're not allowed to show it. Men are not supposed to talk about how they feel so they're very scared of coming out emotionally. That's why the centre here is of great value to the men, because what you say is kept confidential, so after a while they start opening up and saying how they really feel.*

(Participant No.9)

> *Men assume they have to be on top all the time; they have to be in control, they can't be seen as weak - that's ridiculous really – because we all have weaknesses, we all have imperfections. So men think they have to be on top all the time - but nobody is on top all the time – women seem to know that and they've no problem with it – we're only beginning to admit it.*

(Participant No.2)

In recalling the 'macho image' for appraisal, a discrepancy is discerned between an outer display of invulnerability and inner 'hurt' that 'men are not allowed to show'. Identification of this discrepancy leads to the verdict that 'the macho image is crazy', 'ridiculous', and to present to the world in this way is to live fictitiously because 'there's no such thing as Mr Macho'. Thus, to live authentically is to pursue

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synchronicity between one's inner and outer worlds; a challenge that involves 'admitting hurt, weaknesses and imperfections' to self and others. For the men, the difficulty in meeting this challenge lies in defying the internalised rubric for doing masculinity that says 'men are not supposed to talk about how they feel'; a defiance the men term as 'coming out emotionally'. It could be suggested that resonance between the terms 'coming out emotionally' and 'coming out of the closet' reflects the men's acute sense of themselves as deviants whose defiance of internalised norms puts them at risk of ridicule and ostracism by their peers. Thus, as they enter into dialogue and communion, the guarantee that 'what you say is kept confidential' provides a safeguard against such risk and creates a mutually supportive environment. However, the next speaker imparts the profound sense of fear that accompanies engagement in the process of 'coming out emotionally':

> *I'm doing a project with one of the other men; it's about men's liberation. The title we decided is 'why there should be a men's centre?'. To communicate it is the tricky bit ... because this is where the fear comes in. The fear is attached to communicating exactly how it is, you know? I'm doing the journey of coming out emotionally, so actually doing the project will be another stepping-stone. We're going to introduce each other and tell our stories. The tricky bit is getting through the emotional part of explaining it. You see, I can talk about anything and everything ... but when it comes to talking about ... coming out emotionally ... that's where men are afraid to go ... dare not go ... you get fearful ... you get fearful because you're actually showing yourself.*

<div align="right">(Participant No.16)</div>

Arguably, the act of 'showing yourself' represents a moment of synchronicity between one's inner and outer world, a 'liberating' moment that brings a sense of coherence to relationship with self and others. If the price to be paid for achieving this coherence involves overcoming fear of ridicule, even enduring actual ridicule, the same speaker articulates the benefit to self and others of paying this price:

I'm going into my personal stuff now ... I knew I had a problem for a long time before I decided to join the men's group. My problem extended from drink to drugs, to gambling ... to abusive behaviour, violence and things like that. But now, looking back on it, I realise that all I was trying to do ... was trying to connect ... or communicate.

(Participant No.16)

If, for this speaker, overcoming fear of ridicule to 'do the journey of coming out emotionally' has facilitated attainment of self-insight and an alternative way of responding to the world, the immensity of his achievement may be evidenced in the next speaker's depiction of the powerful role fear plays in maintaining conformity to a rubric for doing masculinity that says 'men are not supposed to show emotion'.

Q. In my last research project the men said that being slagged as 'sissy', 'gay', or 'mad' was the biggest barrier to joining men's groups. Did you find that?
I think fear is the basic ... and fear can tell you all sorts of messages ... and when they call you sissy the message you get is that you're not supposed to ask for support, you're not supposed to show your emotions. It's fear of what society would say, fear of what people would say, fear of what they would think of you ...
Q. That's a serious barrier then?
Some men can't get past the fear. Because the fear, it's like ... it's the fear of the unknown ... or the fear of lack of the unknown ... because you don't actually know what you're fearful for. You know that you're going to be called those names ... that's a sort of an explanation of the fear. But the fear itself ... you don't know it ... Like, you'll notice if you ask a man very directly about that, he'll say NO!! ... Especially when he's fearful, he'll say NO!! ... or he'll react some way with violence.

(Participant No.4)

This speaker's vivid depiction of being animated by a fear that is at once inexplicable and yet traceable to the experience of 'being called those names' gives weight to

Kimmel's view of homophobia as "more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay":

> Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear. Fear makes us ashamed, because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend, that we are, like the young man in a poem by Yeats, "one that ruffles in a manly pose for all his timid heart". Our fear is the fear of humiliation. We are ashamed to be afraid.
>
> (Kimmel, 1994, p131)

Given the strength and depth of the fear that must be overcome in breaking the internalised rules of manly behaviour, it is hardly surprising that one participant should suggest a need for some men to receive professional psychological support:

> *There is this big gay thing, you know, the stigma about men talking together, there's something wrong with it. Maybe if we had some sort of counselling it would make it easier for some of the men to do the journey of coming out emotionally. Although I have to say I think we have managed to break down a lot of barriers over the years, so maybe the stigma is not that big now. I even think that over time it will actually be eliminated.*
>
> (Participant No.16)

If the men are appraising and rejecting the rubric for living up to the 'macho image', they are also recalling for scrutiny the traditional image of man as sole provider and ultimate source of authority in the home:

Q. In one of your discussions at class, it was suggested that the image of man needed to change. I would love to hear your views on this. What do you think is the image of man? Does it need to change?

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In my father's time the man was the bread earner, the head of the household, the one who ruled the roost, and what he said was law. I suppose that wasn't really fair. It's probably a lot better for everyone now that men and women are getting more equal.

<div align="right">(Participant No.1)</div>

What is the image of man today? Well, I think he's down, down. He's lost. He has lost an awful lot. But then I think a lot of his past is responsible for that because he was very dictatorial. He knows now that he might be a dictator but he hasn't got the same empire, or the same domain that he used to have. So he has fallen from grace in that sense. And I think man is finding it very hard to come to terms with that. ... But it's certainly not about going back to the past. That would be wrong. There has to be a happy medium.

<div align="right">(Participant No.8)</div>

If, through their engagement with each other, the men are recalling inherited, internalised images of masculinity and taking tentative steps toward analysis of gender roles and relationships, the process of negotiating meanings also involves observing and appraising new images of masculinity. The men's style of working from the concrete observable world to the abstract world of ideas and concepts may be evidenced, for instance, in their engagement with the image of 'modernised man pushing pram':

I'd say the image of men is changing, I'd say men are becoming more modernised in a sense, you know? I mean you'd see a man nowadays and he might be a stay-at-home husband. There's a couple like that living near me and they seem to have worked it out well together. Like, you'd see them out walking and he'd be pushing the pram - this is something you wouldn't have seen twenty years ago.

<div align="right">(Participant No.5)</div>

There's something which I see a lot now. And I like to see it. I see a couple walking together and the young man is wheeling the buggy.

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Now I think that's excellent. It means that young men are wanting to get closer to their children, they are wanting to be better parents, there's no doubt about it, and I think they should be encouraged in this.

<div align="right">(Participant No.4)</div>

As this speaker (No.4) works from his observation of the 'young man wheeling the buggy' to the concept of fatherhood, accessing and engaging with this concept generates further contemplation on men's roles, beyond the home and into the community. He continues:

So there's a need to look at the father role – fathers and sons, fathers and daughters – because it is actually a changing role. I think we're distant from our children and we need to change that. I also think we should be looking at how we are role models for younger men in general. We really need to look at that ... the messages we send to younger men coming along ... by our behaviour, you know?

<div align="right">(Participant No.4)</div>

The men's personal experiences and their observation of rapidly multiplying images of men living alone, homeless men, and 'McDonald's dads' amplifies their contemplation on men's role as fathers and fuels concern with the implications for some men of an institutional framework that prioritises the status of motherhood over that of fatherhood:

An awful lot of separated men end up on the streets because no one recognises them as parents. They are recognised as men, that's all they are, and as men they are on their own, you know?

<div align="right">(Participant No.9)</div>

When you're separated, the kids normally stay with the mother so you lose out on the little joys like bringing them to school or putting them to bed, they grow apart from you because you're not under the same roof anymore. But the corporation don't think of men as fathers who

<div align="center">154</div>

need a place where they can have their children stay, so you end up just being a 'McDonald's dad'.

(Participant No.1)

A lot of fathers are behind the eight ball all the time. Like, if it comes to competition, legal or financial, they don't seem to have a step-up. If it's relating to children or finances it's not fair ... although I know it was all the other way for a long time ... but instead of going fifty-fifty, it seems to have gone a little bit over.

(Participant No.15)

I think the court always says that children are better off with their mother. In some cases, yes, I totally agree – but in other cases, no, I think it should be a shared opportunity for both parents.

(Participant No.9)

Thus, it is fair to say that in their collective endeavour to make sense of themselves and their relation to the world, the Ballymun men are appraising a range of images of masculinity and, through their engagement with each other, are negotiating meanings of these images and their implications for gender roles and relationships in today's society.

Arguably, in defying an internalised norm of masculine behaviour, in 'getting past the fear' and placing themselves at risk of ridicule by 'coming out emotionally', these men are, indeed, negotiating new meanings and understandings of themselves, and celebrating flexibility and diversity in the enactment of masculinity. As one participant put it:

All this about 'we're not supposed to show weakness', 'we're supposed to be strong' and that kind of thing, well, that's like putting men into a bracket – you should be a certain way. I don't think there should be any 'shoulds' – if you know what I mean. I think what would be best for men would be more education; I mean education around being human; and more explanation ...

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And indeed, 'education around being human' forms the linchpin of the developing model of practice at the Ballymun Men's Centre aided by funding from the Education Equality Initiative (2000). The third and final section of this chapter outlines this model of practice and offers the men's perceptions of the potential of community education as a means for men's development.

The Men's Perceptions of the Potential of Community Education as a Means for Men's Development:

Two ten-week programmes were designed and implemented under the Education Equality Initiative (2000) at the Ballymun Men's Centre. The first programme, entitled *Men on the Go,* was designed and facilitated by the Education Coordinator and its implementation was observed by this project. *Men on the Go* could best be described as a pre-development programme focusing on social rather than academic learning. Delivered on one morning per week over a three-month period, the programme included: guest speakers on topics of interest to participants; facilitated group discussions; social and communication skills workshops; and outings to places of historical and cultural interest. Overall, the programme incorporated three central elements:

- **Personal Growth: Valuing Who You Are**

Aim: To engender a sense of self-worth through highlighting participants' individual strengths, talents and skills; pairing and sharing the group's skills base.

- **Social Skills: Becoming a Better Communicator**

Aim: To facilitate the enhancement of communication skills through participation in practical workshops. This element included: listening skills; face-to-face communication and body language; public speaking and presentation skills.

- **Male Identity: What it Means to be a Man**

Aim: To foreground men's changing roles through providing a forum for discussion of men's issues and concerns in a changing world. Issues include: gender roles and relationships in the family, community and workplace; training and educational opportunities; employment options.

The second programme was designed by this project in collaboration with a newly recruited practitioner who also facilitated the programme while this project observed its implementation[13]. As this programme was offered as a follow-on measure it was given the title *Men on the Go Part Two*. Run on one morning per week for ten weeks, the programme was based on the work of Edward de Bono and incorporated one 'fixed' and one 'fluid' element:

- **Fixed Element: De Bono's *Critical Thinking Skills* programme**

Aim: To foster breadth of thought and the development of thinking strategies in approaching ideas, topics, concepts and problems through introducing participants to de Bono's seven 'thinking tools'.

- **Fluid Element: Using the 'thinking tools' to analyse ideas, topics, concepts and problems identified by the programme participants.**

Aim: To equip participants to identify possibilities, alternatives and choices in their everyday circumstances and in mapping their future lives. Topics generated by the men included: unemployment, poverty, separation / divorce, fatherhood; rebuilding a home; community regeneration; life options.

Philosophical and Pedagogical Issues:

Although pitched at different levels, the *Men on the Go* programmes shared key philosophical underpinnings drawn from the work of Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire, whose pedagogical model has been borrowed and built upon in a wide variety of educational contexts across the globe. The Freirean approach rejects the 'banking' method of traditional education whereby the teacher is the depositor of

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[13] The programme description offered here as part of the case study report is accompanied by only a brief outline of the pedagogical theory and philosophy from which it is derived. The local context and rationale for its design is explained in Appendix 9 (stage one of the programme development process) and a fuller discussion of pedagogical theory and philosophy is offered in the final chapter.

externally defined knowledge and student is the depository, arguing that the more students work at storing these deposits, the less they develop critical consciousness necessary to explore and question their world. Thus, Freirean educators design their curricula around topics that are rooted in the everyday experience and culture of their students; and in implementing the curriculum teacher and students share in the pursuit and co-construction of culturally relevant knowledge. This cooperative process facilitates students to critically reflect on their lives and develop strategies for transforming them. The Freirean approach may be identified in three key hallmarks of the *Men on the Go* programmes:

- **Establishing a Social Contract**

Whereby tutor-learner and learner-learner relationships are built on egalitarian principles and on a foundation of mutual respect and trust.

- **Designing a Culturally Relevant Curriculum**

Through drawing on topics of relevance to the everyday lives of programme participants.

- **Generating Co-operative Engagement in the Learning Process**

Through establishing a Forum for analysis of topics and themes identified by programme participants and in which the tutor / facilitator is an equal participant. Through pooling individual strengths, talents and skills for the benefit of the collective.

Venues:

Men on the Go was held on the campus of the local university, Dublin City University; and *Men on the Go Part Two* was held in the recently built community resource centre AXIS. The decision to avail of these premises proved beneficial on three levels: it forged new, and reinforced existing, links between the university and local community[14]; it gave the men access to a wide range of educational resources, such as library, stage, and telecommunications equipment; and, most importantly, it

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[14] It must be noted that, due to government cutbacks in 2004, the community office at DCU has been closed and thus, regrettably, this valuable link between the university and local community has been severed.

helped to demystify the idea of third-level, adult and continuing education by making the men feel welcome, accepted and respected:

> *I enjoyed DCU a lot because I would have often passed it and never thought I would ever walk up the college way. It was very interesting to see the inside, to see the activity of the students and read the posters about things that are going on and the opportunities that are there for people.*
>
> (Participant No.7)

> *It's just the fact that you are entering the college, seeing the library, seeing the students, that's it, you've been invited, you're one of them, you know?*
>
> (Participant No.2)

> *They're very good people in DCU. They don't make any difference between us from the Ballymun Men's Centre as opposed to students going there fulltime. We all get treated the same way. They made us very welcome. They gave us all kinds of information.*
>
> (Participant No.6)

Attendance Fee:

As part of its recruitment strategy, the centre's management committee decided to pay an attendance fee of fifteen Euro per session to participants who completed the programmes with a higher than seventy-five percent attendance rate. Payment of this fee had twofold benefit. While it offered incentive for enrolment, it also provided the men with an income supplement that allowed them access provisions and goods that they could not otherwise have afforded. The men spoke appreciatively of the 'luxury of being able to buy', for instance, extra foodstuff, items of clothing and furniture, and gifts for family members. It is noteworthy that, on graduation day, almost all the men commented that while the attendance fee had indeed been a factor in their decision to enrol, having experienced personal fulfilment through engaging with the programmes, they would participate again even if the attendance fee were withdrawn.

While either of the *Men on the Go* programmes could be offered as a stand-alone module in community education, there was general consensus among the men that participating sequentially was most beneficial:

> *The first programme was basically a preparation for the second one. It was about breaking down a situation where men felt comfortable about different things. And the second one really made us take off our blinkers and have a broader outlook on life rather than just thinking down the one narrow street.*

<div align="right">(Participant No.9)</div>

Programmes funded under the Education Equality Initiative acted as a catalyst for increasing the centre's membership number, endorsing Connell's (2000) suggestion:

> Masculinities are always changing. Though many people deny this in principle, everyone is aware in practice that gender relations change, and the lives of men change too. This creates motives for learning, since boys and men have a need to understand what is happening to them (p219).

Indeed, the men's appeal for 'more education around being human', and their continuing participation, as evidenced in their progression rates, bears testimony to this 'need to understand what is happening to them'.

Participant Numbers and Progression Rates:
Fourteen men, aged between forty and seventy, the majority of whom were long-term unemployed participated in *Men on the Go*. From this cohort, two men progressed to mainstream education: one to a Bachelor of Arts degree in Maynooth University, the other to a fulltime Access (pre-university) course. Nine of the men went forward to *Men on the Go Part Two*; and the remaining three men have subsequently joined courses currently running in the men's centre under the Back To Education Initiative (2003).

Sixteen men, ranging in age from mid-thirties to late sixties, participated in *Men on the Go Part Two*; men who had participated in *Men on the Go* recruited the seven newcomers. The majority of this cohort has progressed to courses currently running under the Back To Education Initiative (2003-2004), two of whom are also participating in another Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) accredited programme in the community entitled *Mapping the Changes*.

While such high progression rates clearly testify to the huge success of these community education programmes in combating educational disadvantage and social isolation for those who partook, this is not to romanticise their impact on the locality in general. It is important to remember that the number of men who availed of the programmes, and the centre's membership number, represent but a tiny fraction of the population of marginalised men in Ballymun; and the cohort of men aged between eighteen and forty is conspicuous by its absence. It is thus vital that a body of research be developed, research that seeks to understand how marginalised men conceptualise, interpret and negotiate the world, so that this nascent form of education for men can be developed so as to reach, attract and retain increasing numbers; and the conceptual framework for men's development work offered in the final chapter aims to contribute to this task. Arguably, key insights can be gained through paying keen attention to the men's communicative styles so that practitioners may be equipped to relate in a meaningful way to prospective and participating men. The vital importance of attuning to the men's language cannot be overstated, and may be evidenced in the following typical responses[15]:

> **Q. When you enrolled for the second programme it was called *Men on the Go Part Two*. But because the programme introduced you to de Bono's 'thinking tools', it could have been named *Critical Thinking Skills*. It may be difficult for you to answer this now that you have done the course, but had the title *Critical Thinking Skills* been flagged up at enrolment, would it have made a difference in your decision to enrol?**

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[15] The vital importance of attuning to the language of participants in men's groups is discussed in depth in the final chapter of this thesis.

No - it's something to catch your eye and make you ask 'what do you mean critical?' Although, for most people, 'critical' means being critically ill – it's terminal, you know?

<div align="right">(Participant No.9)</div>

It wouldn't have stopped me because I was on the first programme and I loved it, but I think it would stop other people because it sounds negative. Like, if I said to you 'look, I want you to do this course, it's on critical thinking' – you would say to yourself 'what's wrong with my thinking?'

<div align="right">(Participant No.16)</div>

I would have been fearful of it. I would have thought that I was going to be totally out of my depth. It just goes to show, doesn't it?

<div align="right">(Participant No.13)</div>

Q. Is the title of a programme important when you are deciding whether or not to enrol?
True. Definitely, it's important because you could be frightened off by its name. It's like with computers ... the words people use to confuse you ... they've all these names on things... But, the funny thing is, when you go and do them, you see that you actually can do them – and enjoy it.

<div align="right">(Participant No.13)</div>

Yes ... especially for men because men are only learning ... they're only starting to develop now and it's important for them to get the title because it gives them guidelines as to what they're doing. And, if the name is catchy enough, it gives them incentive, it makes them think about it, it makes them more interested, they say to themselves 'I want to know more about this'.

<div align="right">(Participant No.9)</div>

Q. Do the words 'programme', 'course' or 'module' make a difference when deciding whether or not to enrol?

I think they're kind of old-fashioned words, you know? They're so used and abused by FÁS and different organisations that I'm sure it's better to come up with something a bit fresher and lighter – it doesn't have to be just one word, it could be several words to describe what you're doing, you know?

(Participant No.2)

I'd leave all those words out; they're bandied about like nobody's business.

(Participant No.14)

Well I'm used to using those words myself over the years. When men get used to those words they become part and parcel of their lives, they've no problem with them. Maybe, in the beginning, they would say 'programme – what's this, is it a television programme?' – so people have to learn to distinguish what a programme is. 'Module' is a great word, it seems to be just up in the air, it's unusual, it makes them say 'what's a module?', they wonder about it, and that's very good.

(Participant No.9)

These typical responses are indicative of the men's quest for honesty and integrity in communication; their abhorrence of words being 'bandied about', being 'used to confuse you', being 'used and abused' by education providers, and their search for words that are 'fresher' and 'lighter' warn against complacency in language use. Thus, the men's rejection of clichéd language and their penchant for creating metaphor provide a key insight for practitioners – the need for creativity and originality in naming; as one participant put it: "it's the wording of everything that's important, the wording around everything that we do" (Participant No.9). It is indeed interesting to note that these marginalised men with poor education credentials, who may be considered by mainstream society to have a paucity of words, take the greatest care in choosing and using them.

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Although we had not yet met, the tutor in Ballymun ascribed the inspiration for his programme title *Men on the Go* to the publication *Men on the Move* (2000); and the findings from this research site suggest that in so doing he unwittingly tapped into the men's proclivity for metaphor:

Q. What did the title *Men on the Go* suggest to you?

Hope. I mean it's a very positive title – there's a goal, they're on the go – that means they're probably going to achieve something, so why not join them?

(Participant No.2)

It suggested men moving on in their lives, trying to do something about their lives, trying to improve the quality of their lives.

(Participant No.16)

In their tendency to use concrete rather than abstract language, to depict scenarios wherein underlying concepts are rarely made explicit, the men's frequently recurring depiction of some men as " trapped inside the four walls of their flats, sitting around doing nothing", could undoubtedly be interpreted as an allusion to the concepts of alienation, loneliness and boredom. Within this interpretation, then, the image of a static or sedentary man symbolises one who is in isolation and despair, while the image of a man moving becomes a metaphor for pursuit of meaning and purpose in one's life:

The name Men on the Go is good because you see men trapped inside the four walls of their flats, sitting around doing nothing. At the official opening of the centre, I said 'all you men sitting around in your flats, come down here and see what we have to offer'. So I like the name Men on the Go because it means not sitting around.

(Participant No.18)

To me now, it's men moving. Sometimes men can get a bit slack in their movements into learning and they might resort to a chair. Then

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they hear of this and it's a bit of movement for them – they're moving, they're on the go, they're doing something, you know?

(Participant No.7)

It's a very good idea to call it that. People might ask "why wasn't it called 'men going to education'?" – it's about that alright – but more so it's about men getting up and doing something for themselves.

(Participant No.13)

There can be no doubt that the men's participation on programmes implemented under Education Equality Initiative (2000), and, importantly, their interaction with each other, contributed greatly to their interpersonal and intellectual development and, most significantly, to their intra-personal development. This chapter leaves its closing words to the men as they explain the impact of the educational experience on their inner worlds:

Doing a course like that over a period of time genuinely changes you. It's a bit like a tap: if it's not being used very much it gets stiff and squeaky; but if it's used constantly, there's no noise from it and the water just flows out freely.

(Participant No.7)

I don't think I'm fooling myself when I say I'm changing a lot. I'm becoming more assertive – I don't mean assertive like you would usually mean it – I mean I'm becoming more assertive with knowledge.

(Participant No.14)

The tutor once said that education comes from within; and I'm just getting the gist of that now.

(Participant No.9)

Education is actually a kind of therapy, isn't it?

(Participant No.15)

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Well, I have to say, about myself, I feel very elated and pleased ... and more comfortable with myself.

<div align="right">(Participant No.16)</div>

It has certainly broadened me ... perhaps it has broadened me in many ways that I don't even know how to put into words.

<div align="right">(Participant No.8)</div>

Chapter Five: Findings from the Tallaght Case Study

This Chapter presents the findings from the Tallaght case study, placing its idiographic analyses and interpretations in dialogue with theoretical perspectives drawn from relevant academic discourses.

Q. The idea of 'men's issues' is beginning to take hold. Do you think men have issues?

I had a brother-in-law that committed suicide ... I had a friend ... he was the only real friend I had ... and when I was away on holidays he committed suicide as well ... I just find with men, with a lot of men, they hold things in, they're very deep ... the loneliness ... I saw it with these two men ... so I think suicide is a big issue for men ... we need to find ways to prevent it.

(Participant No.4)[16]

Men have huge issues. One, for instance, is about communication, being able to speak openly and honestly without feeling embarrassed, or without feeling ... he's better than me ... that sort of thing. Because certainly there is an egotistical type of communication that goes on among men – 'I have this' and 'I'm doing that' – but that's not what I would call real open and honest communication.

(Participant No.2)

Well, in a general sense, because of the women's movement, and the success the women's movement has had, they have forced the agenda. Take the one area that is contentious, the one where children are involved; when there is marriage breakdown there is definitely a complete bias there in favour of women. So there is an issue with the courts, although it doesn't affect me personally.

(Participant No.3)

I think men have been taking it on the chin since the feminist movement took root and successfully made their case. Now it's a matter of the pendulum swinging too far in the opposite direction. Now whatever the case is, men get the blame. They're blamed for the violence in the streets, they're blamed for the violence in the home, even though statistically more of it is supposed to be initiated by

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[16] Participants' quotations in this chapter are numerically linked to a biographical profile of the Tallaght Men's Group membership tabulated in Appendix 3.

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women than by men – and that never gets covered in the press. Now all men carry the burden of suspicion, but that's like everybody in America accepting the blame for slavery, which was a product of its time, and yet I think men are afraid to say 'enough is enough'. So this basic unfairness and negativity is an issue; it seems that men are now in a position of constantly having to defend.

(Participant No.1)

Four men participated in the Tallaght study and their ideas of what constitutes 'men's issues' are illustrative of two differing approaches to understanding and interpreting gender at play within the Tallaght Men's Group: the first two speakers take the domain of communication, the importance of dialogue with self and with other men, as their starting point or frame of reference; while the latter two speakers take the feminist movement and contention between the sexes as their starting point or frame of reference. It may be said that, in identifying suicide prevention and pursuit of 'real open and honest communication' between men, the first two speakers adopt a proactive approach in their interpretation of challenges men face today; while, in identifying 'the success of the women's movement' in 'forcing the agenda' and the need for men to say 'enough is enough', the second two speakers adopt a more reactive approach to their interpretation of challenges men face today. Indeed, tension between, on the one hand, questing for new ways of understanding and enacting masculinity, and on the other hand, reiterating the traditional or stereotypical definition, emerged as a key dynamic operative within the Tallaght Men's Group.

Dominant Themes:

As in the Ballymun case study, the concept of change emerged as a dominant theme in the Tallaght men's lives, although with a much narrower focus. It is noteworthy that all of the Tallaght men are participating in the workforce, working either in the self-employed sector or, with one exception, in sectors with little or no female participation, and none of these men are separated or divorced (see sociological profile below and Appendix 3). It is, perhaps, these personal circumstances, markedly different from those of the Ballymun men, which accounts for differences between the two cohorts in their focus on, and responses to, change. For, while the Ballymun men are confronted with change (and loss) in many domains of their lives, the Tallaght

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men are predominantly concerned with the impact of societal change on gender roles in the home, focusing on such issues as working wives, the spousal relationship, and the meaning of fatherhood. Thus, most likely arising from their personal experiences, the Tallaght men prioritise concern with change in the private over the public sphere (the changing gender composition of the workforce emerged as a theme in only one participant's testimony).

The Tallaght men's responses to change may be correlated to the two approaches to understanding and interpreting gender identified above: within the proactive approach, responses to change may be related to these men's sense of new opportunities and possibilities, not just for negotiating alternative ways of enacting masculinity, but also for negotiating new ways of relating to other men and to women; within the more reactive approach, responses to change may be related to these men's sense of apprehension and caution as their deeply internalised understandings and expectations of gender are called into question amid the flux of contemporary life.

This chapter offers the same organising framework for presenting its analysis of the Tallaght Men's Group as that of the preceding chapter dealing with Ballymun. Thus, focussing in particular on the men's language and language use, their responses to the dominant themes and concerns in their lives are analysed under three headings corresponding to the three dimensions of the project's focus of inquiry, which explores *the men's perceptions* of:

- what it means to be a man in today's world
- the role of men's groups in men's lives
- the potential of community education as a means for men's development

and seeks to explain how these men conceptualise, interpret and negotiate the world.

A note on the men's language:
Most likely because these four men do not have a shared history and have not yet established a shared culture as a men's group, no common linguistic pattern may be identified across the collective testimonies; however, as this chapter demonstrates, patterns may be identified both within individual narratives and within each of the

two approaches or conceptual frameworks for understanding and interpreting gender identifiable in the Tallaght Men's Group.

Sociological Reflection:

Tallaght was developed as part of the 1972 Development Plan and since then has witnessed huge population increase. As this growth in the population has not been supported with adequate levels of economic and infrastructural development, parts of Tallaght, particularly West Tallaght, remain characterised by social exclusion and marginalisation. Located within the South Dublin County area, West Tallaght comprises four districts: Jobstown, Fettercairn, Killinarden and Kiltipper, with an approximate population total of 20,000. Although the locality encompasses some private residential areas, the majority of this population live in rented accommodation in large public housing estates. At 15%, the male unemployment rate is particularly high; the corresponding rate for women is 13.5%. These rates compare to 5.33% and 3.5% respectively at county level. The level of education attainment is generally low, with over 37% of the West Tallaght population leaving school before the age of fifteen (South Dublin County Statistics Office[17]).

Of the four men who participated in the Tallaght study, one was aged thirty-nine, one was aged forty-five, and two were aged fifty. One of the men had left school at the age of thirteen having attained his Primary Certificate; two had left school at age sixteen, one of whom had attained his Intermediate Certificate, the other held no second level qualification; the fourth man had fully completed the senior cycle, attaining his Leaving Certificate. Subsequent to leaving school, all of the men had participated in either vocational apprenticeship, job-related training or community-based education. At the time of the study, one of them was participating as a first-year student on a Bachelor of Science degree programme with the Open University and another was participating on a community-based counselling course. All of the men have been consistent participants in the workforce from leaving school to date. At the time of the study, one of the men was self-employed as a craftsman in the interior decoration and maintenance sector and one was self-employed as a free-lance consultant in the information technology sector; one was employed in the electrical

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[17] www.southdublin.ie/documents/CensusstatisticsforSouthDublin

engineering sector; and one was employed as a driver for a world-renowned brewery (Appendix 3).

Thus, although the Tallaght men grew up in working-class families, the sociological profile of this group stands in stark contrast to that of the Ballymun Men's Group. Unlike the dispossessed and displaced men of Ballymun, the Tallaght men hold rank and status in the socio-economic order. Early educational disadvantage for three of these men has been reversed through post-school education and training and all four have attained the skills and competences necessary for their continued participation in the workforce and for maintaining their status as breadwinners; none of these men have experienced marital breakdown, exclusion from the family home and / or homelessness. While these stark differences between the Tallaght and Ballymun men's life-chances, material circumstances and biographies must be held in mind when considering their responses to the world, the diversity of experiences across the entirety of the study sample yields a rich array of insights into contemporary men's perceptions of themselves and their relation to the world, that is, into the various versions of masculinity being constructed, negotiated and contested in differing social milieus of the everyday world.

Having reflected on the material conditions within which the Tallaght men act out their lives, the remainder of this chapter focuses on their interior world, the psychological and philosophical dimensions of their engagement with the world.

The Men's Perceptions of What it Means to be a Man in Today's World:
In naming the two approaches to understanding and interpreting gender identifiable within the Tallaght Men's Group as 'proactive' and 'reactive', this project does not mean to suggest that these men adopt rigid one-dimensional approaches to life, rather, the terms are chosen as a means of describing and explaining dominant *tendencies* in their responses to change and for examining the conceptualisations of gender that give rise to these responses. While all four men had been socialised into the traditional model of gender (man belongs in the public world of work; woman belongs in the private domain as nurturer), the difference between their responses to change may be accounted for by the variance in the stage of their life cycles at which they encountered challenge to their inherited assumptions: the 'proactive' men had been

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negotiating change since the early days of their marriages, whilst the 'reactive' men had been confronted with change at a much later stage in their married lives; and it is arguable that, the longer the perceived workability of a model for relating to the world has endured, the more trepidation, even defensiveness, will accompany challenges to that model.

In their responses to change - the issue of 'working wives' and its impact on the notion of husband as sole breadwinner, on the balance of power in the spousal relationship, and on the role of fathers – emerged as central to the Tallaght men's lives. Thus the dominant and interrelated themes identified by these men: 'working wives', 'the spousal relationship', and 'the meaning for fatherhood' provide useful headings for the remainder of this section exploring the men's perceptions of what it means to be a man in today's world.

Working Wives:

The men's language use in discussing the concept of 'working wives' provides clues to the conceptual frameworks for understanding and interpreting gender underpinning their responses.

> *Initially it just wasn't feasible for my wife to work because we had five kids under the age of seven. Later, when she started to work it seemed as though there was some sort of challenge to my area of responsibility ... but common sense would prevail because these are things that are changing ... there are economic advantages ... and these burdens are best borne when they're shared.*

(Participant No.1)

> *My wife is working. It's not an issue because our family are reared and she's doing it by choice, not because she has to ... men don't have choice, they have this sense of duty to work to provide ... Society needs this kind of order, society developed because of this order.*

(Participant No.3)

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Although their wives are working, traditional assumptions about gender roles are evident in the language of these two speakers, and their testimonies suggest a dimension of tension between expectation and reality in their experiences of gender.

In commenting that it wasn't feasible for his wife to work in the early stages of their marriage *'because'* they had five children under the age of seven, the first speaker assumes the primacy of his wife's role as nurturer over that of workforce participant, and by extension, the primacy of his own role as breadwinner over that of nurturer. Although the speaker does not specify it, it is worth speculating that this household 'configuration of practice' may well have been mutually agreed, having been perceived by both spouses as the most self-fulfilling and most economically advantageous arrangement in serving the family's needs during the early years of their married life. However, when at a later stage, his wife entered the workforce, the speaker recounts - 'it seemed as though there was some sort of challenge to my area of responsibility' – a response that is worthy of consideration on two interrelated levels, at conceptual and linguistic level.

At the conceptual level, while the speaker omits exposition on the period between when 'it wasn't feasible for her to work' and 'when she started to work', his perception of his wife's entry into the workforce as posing a 'challenge to my area of responsibility' suggests that the event may have been a source of tension, not least in its disturbance of the family's established pattern of gender enactment with clearly delineated 'areas of responsibility', generating a gap between the speaker's internalised expectations and a suddenly changing reality. At the linguistic level, it could be argued, the speaker's sense of threat of losing control over external reality, and the impact of this threat on his sense of self, is starkly reflected in his omission of the first-person pronoun: in this relinquished self-view, absence of the word 'I' coupled with the speaker's use of such phrases as 'it seemed as though there was some sort of challenge' and 'these are things that are changing', imbue his commentary with a sense of bewilderment and disempowerment as an alien world and its agents-of-change conspire to act upon him. In offering the resolution that 'common sense would prevail' because of 'economic advantages', concluding that 'these burdens are best borne when they're shared', the speaker's hesitancy and continued omission of first person pronouns (singular or plural) suggests reluctant capitulation

to ineluctable forces of change rather than proactive negotiation of changing meanings of gender: an interpretation of the world that could well give way to resentment as a time-honoured model for the enactment of gender is called into question – but not by him, by agents-of-change. Within this psychology, it is hardly surprising that women's pursuit of change and equality in the gender order should be perceived as an attack on men, placing them 'in a position of constantly having to defend' (articulated by this speaker on the opening page of this chapter). While a reactive response to change may be unhelpful in the pursuit of gender equality, gaining an understanding of the conceptualisation of gender that gives rise to this response is vital to the process of deconstructing and re-negotiating gender meanings.

The traditional model for the enactment of gender also informs the second speaker's (No.3) response to his wife's participation in the workforce. In his comment 'it's not an issue *because* our family are reared' this speaker asserts his wife's primary role as nurturer and, like the preceding speaker (No.1), the notion of woman's *right* to self-fulfilment outside the home, either during the childrearing years or subsequently, is not articulated. In stressing 'she's doing it by choice, not because she has to ... men don't have choice, they have this sense of duty to work to provide' the speaker's distinction between choice and duty conceptually affirm man as primary earner / provider and woman as secondary earner, if she so chooses after her 'family are reared'. Further, the speaker's claim that 'men don't have choice, they have this sense of duty to work to provide' suggests an understanding of masculinity as driven by an essential, pre-ordained imperative to fulfil the breadwinner / provider role; an understanding that cannot accommodate the concepts of agency, choice and creativity in defining oneself as a man. Indeed, the speaker's addendum 'society needs this kind of order, society developed because of this order' amplifies the notion of an *a priori* script for masculinity, deviance from which puts society at risk of collapse and descent into chaos.

The strength and depth of the notion of an *a priori* script for masculinity has profound implications for some men. As demonstrated by the Ballymun men, internalisation of this monologic directive for masculinity renders some men bereft of the capacity to envision alternative ways of being, and thus, with loss of the breadwinner role, may fall victim to that invading controlling 'voice in the head that tells you it's not worth

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it, you're not worth it, you'll never get work' – a psychological imprisonment that dooms some men to isolation and despair and robs them of the capacity to creatively engage with the world. The need for a creative shift from monologic to dialogic engagement with self and others is encapsulated in Gidden's suggestion "no longer can someone say in effect, 'I am a man, and this is how men are, I refuse to discuss things further'" (cited in Ferguson, 2001b, p45).

By contrast with the foregoing speakers, traditional assumptions about gender roles are not reflected in the remaining two men's responses to their wives' participation in the workforce:

> *I've no difficulty with my wife working; she's been working for fifteen years. The only difficulty is that she works on Sundays, so if we want to go away for the weekend, or take the kids for an outing, it's a hassle for her to get a Sunday off. So that's a practical drawback, but in principle no, I've no difficulty with my wife working.*

(Participant No.4)

This speaker takes the practicalities of organising family life, in particular, of organising time for family members to spend time in each other's company, as the starting point for his response to his wife's participation in the workforce. His spontaneous focus on the practical, albeit highlighting a 'drawback', suggests a sense of psychological comfort and ease with his situation. This sense of ease, or to put it another way, lack of a sense of threat to his self-concept as a man, may be inferred from his complete omission of references to gender roles or scripts. Unlike the circumstances of the preceding speakers, this speaker's wife is participating in the workforce during the childrearing years and yet he makes no reference to whom he perceives *ought* to be the nurturer, or *ought* to be the breadwinner, suggesting that the 'configuration of practice' in this family is based on the notion of gender role inter-changeability. Having no difficulty 'in principle' with his wife's participation in the workforce, it is arguable that this speaker is not bound or restricted by an *a priori* gender script, but rather, is autonomously and proactively negotiating and enacting his own version of masculinity. It is further arguable that, in authoring his own script for

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the enactment of masculinity, the speaker hosts the capacity to tolerate and promote diversity and fluidity in the gender order.

The next speaker's wife is also participating in the workforce during the childrearing years, and his commentary also reflects an autonomous approach to the enactment of gender, as well as demonstrating a contemplative engagement with the world:

> *My wife is working and I have no problem with that, it was never an issue between us. I think attitudes are changing from generation to generation; and I think social education in school regarding men's roles and women's roles is very important in helping this change ... I don't like using the word class ... but I think there is an element of equality in the middle class, less so in the working class ... You see, I mix with both classes and I can see a difference in the men's attitudes to their wives taking up work ... but maybe that's about education ... or lack of education ... or maybe it depends on whether the husband is employed or not ... I don't know ... so many things can affect how you perceive the world ... ... so it's not black and white.*

<div align="right">(Participant No.2)</div>

Rather than taking the model of masculinity he witnessed in his socialisation, or indeed any particular model, as his starting point, this speaker takes the idea of continuous change in the construction of gender as his frame of reference, reflecting a fluid and flexible interpretation of the world. His suggestion that 'attitudes are changing from generation to generation', most likely arises, not just from observation of other males but also from personal experience, that is, from differences between his way of enacting masculinity and that of his father and men of his father's generation. It could be suggested that the importance this speaker places on the role of the school 'in helping this change' stems from some intuitive, informal understanding of the school as a site of struggle between reproduction of, and resistance to, the status quo (as formally theorised, for example, by Bourdieu, Freire, and Lynch among others; and as exemplified in the *Exploring Masculinities* controversy discussed in Chapter Two). This interpretation of the speaker is based on his linguistic pattern of 'thinking aloud' - of continuously raising questions based on his observations of the social

world and frequently, although not always, offering speculative answers to these questions, and sometimes re-questioning the arrived at answer – unwittingly inviting his listener to witness the cognitive process by which he arrives at, and continuously revises, his understanding of the world.

Thus, this contribution exemplifies the speaker's epistemological style of journeying through a chain of concepts and attempting to identify their relatedness in order to arrive at an explanation of an observed social phenomenon – in this instance, 'differences in men's attitudes to their wives taking up work'. In speculating upon an array of factors that might account for these differing attitudes, the speaker comes to the recognition that 'so many things can affect how you perceive the world'; and thus acknowledging the complexity of individual men's lives, the role of contextual and structural factors in influencing perceptions and responses to the world, the speaker arrives at the nuanced conclusion 'so it's not black and white'.

It is worth noting that this inclination toward observing, speculating and questioning meanings and motives underpinning gender interaction emerged as a common pattern across the 'proactive' men's contributions, most likely indicative of their questing for new ways of understanding and expressing gender. By contrast, the 'reactive' men's contributions tend to be informed by inherited, unquestioned, static, perceivably incontrovertible assumptions about gender.

It is of further and related note that the men's varying uses of the concept of 'difference' emerged as a key distinguishing feature between the two approaches. Within their individual and collective testimonies, the 'reactive' men tend to invoke the concept of difference in two senses: in the sense of 'natural' differences between men and women, casting gender as a 'fixed' binary oppositional construct; and / or in the sense of 'irreconcilable differences', casting the sexes as warring factions in the wake of feminism's challenge to the gender order. By contrast, the 'proactive' men tend to invoke the concept of difference in the broader sense of generational and individual differences in enactments of gender, casting gender as a 'fluid' negotiable construct.

The Spousal Relationship:

Three of the four men made specific references to their spousal relationship, focusing in particular on the theme of communication between husband and wife. While two of the three extracts to follow are lengthy (particularly the first), their length, detail, and the speakers' own conclusions, demonstrate the importance and centrality of the theme in these men's lives. These extracts are therefore worthy of detailed analysis as a means of identifying assumptions and expectations of gender informing the men's engagement with, and understanding of, their spouses.

Common features may be identified across the first two of these extracts conveying the men's perspectives on spousal communication (Participant Nos.3 & 1). They both evoke the concept of 'difference' and they both depict a scenario that may be entitled 'husband and wife get ready to go out':

> *When it comes to men and women communicating with each other, it's like two different species, it's like in the book* Men Are from Mars: Women Are from Venus. *I think. When I read that book all I could do was laugh because I recognised everything in it ... all the misunderstandings ... there's no doubt about it. In fact, talking about how men and women react differently to different things, say myself and my wife are getting ready to go out, this is what would happen:*

> *This is years ago. We're upstairs in the bedroom. I'd go to the wardrobe and pick out, say, a black suit, white shirt and red tie. Then it would be:*
> > *You're not wearing that again?*
> > *Why, what's wrong with it?*
> > *You had it on last week*
> > *Yes but with a different tie; anyway I like these clothes*
> *Then she'd go to the wardrobe and pick out another jacket and shirt:*
> > *Put those on you*
> > *But I want to wear these, I feel more comfortable in these*
> > *No, you look better in those*

Then we'd have an argument, not an argument as such, but you know?
And suddenly I'd be on the back-foot peddling:

I'm not going out. I'm staying in (like a spoilt child!)
Next thing she'd go to the wardrobe, pick out something, put it on, and
ask me:

What do you think of this?

It's great

Then she'd whip it off and put something else on:

How does this look?

That looks great as well

You're only saying that

No I'm not; it really does look great

Then she'd put something else on and I might think it looks nothing as
nice as the other two:

What about this?

That looks okay

Yes, I think this is great

So what happens now is I just go to the wardrobe, pick out the first
thing I see, put it on the bed, and she goes to the wardrobe, picks out
something else, and I put it on. There is no row, no discussion, and she
is as happy as Larry because she has dressed me. Now I know she's
doing that because she wants me to look as well as she thinks I can
look because I'm out with her and she wants me to look well. That's it.
I've no problem with that. She's not doing it from a negative point of
view. She's not trying to control me. She just feels I'd be better tonight
looking like this. And she's a better judge of these things than I am.

(Participant No.3)

This speaker's prologue reveals the idea of 'natural' gender traits as his frame of
reference and, evoking the concept of 'difference' in this sense, calls on Gray's
(1992) *Men Are from Mars; Women Are from Venus* as an authoritative source of
affirmation of the evidence to be offered in the forthcoming scenario, demonstrating
the depth of his belief in what Kimmel critiques as the "'interplanetary' theory of

complete and universal gender *difference*" on the basis that this particular portrayal of gender "is also typically the way we explain another universal phenomenon: gender *inequality*" (Kimmel, 2000, p1).

A four-tiered use of: the poststructuralist approach adopted by Davies (1989), the ethnomethodological concerns of Gerson and Peiss (1985), the social-psychological model offered by Deaux and Major (1990), and the psychoanalytical approach of Horrocks (1994), offers a useful interdisciplinary theoretical framework for an in-depth exploration of possible inter- and intra-psychic processes at play in the scenario offered by this speaker.

This project concurs with the above theorists' approaches in the emphasis they place on the complexity and multi-determinism of social interactions. The complexity lies, not least, in the two-way relationship between social interaction and social structure, in that social interaction may be informed by social structure and, in turn, may inform social structure in either a reproductive or transformative capacity - a dynamic that raises questions about the concepts of choice and limitation in the construction of realities. This complexity, particularly in relation to the gender order, is best articulated by Davies (1989) who is therefore worth quoting at length:

> ... sex and gender are at one and the same time elements of social structure, and something created by individuals and within individuals as they learn the discursive practices through which that social structure is created and maintained. Social structure is not separate from the individuals who make it up. It is not a 'thing' that can be imposed on individuals. It nevertheless has material force. Individuals cannot float free from social structure. They can choose to act on and transform structures, but structures must always be recognised as constraining individual and social action. Structures provide the conceptual framework, the psychic patterns, the emotions through which individuals position themselves as male or female and through which they privately experience themselves in relation to the world. As well, they provide the vehicle through which others will recognise that positioning as legitimate, as

meaningful, as providing the right claim to personhood. The development and practice of new forms of discourse, then, is not a simple matter of choice, but involves grappling with both subjective and social / structural constraints (pp 282-283).

By citing Davies this project wishes to acknowledge and foreground the complex cognitive psychological forces at play as the speaker and his wife enact their roles in the scenario. It also wishes to note and endorse Gerson and Peiss' (1985) appreciation of women as "active creators of their own destines with certain constraints, rather than as passive victims or objects"; their concomitant caution against "analysing men as one-dimensional omnipotent oppressors"; and their accompanying suggestion that "male behaviour and consciousness emerge from a complex interaction with women as they at times initiate and control, while at other times, cooperate or resist the action of women" (p129).

Having foregrounded the broad structural and cognitive psychological forces at play in social interaction, and acknowledged the agency of both men and women in contributing to reproduction and / or transformation of gender relations, Deaux and Major's (1990) social-psychological model provides a narrower analytical lens for exploring possible inter- and intra-psychic processes at play in the scenario.

Deaux and Major's (1990) model is most useful in this instance because "in contrast to developmental models of gender that deal with the acquisition of gender-linked behaviour", these theorists are "concerned with gender as experienced and enacted in a particular social context", and in this concern they focus in particular on the behaviour of men and women in dyadic interaction within specific contexts; thus, an overview of their model is prerequisite to its application to the speaker's dyadic scenario (p83).

While acknowledging the role of societal forces in influencing behaviour, Deaux and Major's analytical model foregrounds the concepts of agency and choice in making sense of oneself, and of oneself in relation to an other, within the immediacy of one-to-one interaction. Deaux and Major hold that participants bring specific experiences, expectations and beliefs to an inter-personal exchange and amid the flux of cues and

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responses mutually shape the form of that interaction, and its outcome. Within this dynamic, individuals may choose from a number of potential actions as they negotiate an outcome: 'self-verification' (choosing action consistent with self-concept); 'self-presentation' (choosing action intended to elicit positive reactions from the other); or self-verification and self-presentation strategies may be simultaneously brought into play as individuals gauge both internal and external implications of their responses within a given context. While Deaux and Major "do not assume that gender is always salient in these interactions" they stipulate, "one of the objectives of our formulation is to specify and to predict just when gender substantially shapes the course of an interaction and when its influence is more muted" (p84). The value of such micro-level studies lies in the insights they offer into the conditions and processes that contribute to reproduction of, or resistance to, stereotypical definitions of gender.

In applying Deaux and Major's social-psychological model to analysis of the dyadic scenario, four dimensions of the interaction must be taken into account: the specific context; the extent to which gender is salient; expectations conveyed; and actions / responses chosen.

The Specific Context and Extent to which Gender is Salient in the Scenario: It could be deemed a limitation that the listener / interpreter only has access to the inner world of the speaker and not that of his wife; thus an explanation of the scenario may be based on *both* the thoughts and actions of the speaker, but *only* on the actions of his wife as described by the speaker. However, this project's main concern - to explore the *men's experiences of themselves*, to explore *their perceptions of self and others* as they interpret and negotiate the world - justifies this approach.

In distinguishing between what used to happen 'years ago' and what 'happens now', the speaker suggests that an accommodation or resolution has been negotiated between himself and his wife in their respective endeavours to make sense of self and of self in relation to the other. There can be no doubt that gender is very salient in this context as recently wedded husband and wife carve out meaning and purpose whilst seeking to establish accord and harmony in their relationship. So, could their arrived at resolution be explained as a manifestation of convergent gender expectations or as a manifestation of what Deaux and Major identify as 'expectancy confirmation' on

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behalf of one party to the interaction? Deaux and Major identify 'expectancy confirmation' as an instance whereby the conveyed gender beliefs and expectations of one party influence the behaviour of the recipient shaping the interaction so as to constitute 'expectancy confirmation', more commonly understood as 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (p86).

Expectations Conveyed and Actions / Responses Chosen in the Scenario: Based on the actions of the speaker's wife, the resolution could be understood as 'expectancy confirmation' of her gender belief system; for it is she who initiates the tension with the question 'you're not wearing that again?' and it is she who forthrightly commands 'put those on you', strongly conveying an expectation of herself as decision-maker concerning her husband's attire, and stimulating a form of 'argument' that leads the speaker to experience himself 'on the back-foot peddling', culminating in his capitulation to her decree. In the second half of the scenario, the speaker's wife asks for his opinion three times, yet pays no heed to it, as she decides what garments to wear, simultaneously reasserting her role as decision maker in matters of dress and enacting the traditional definition of woman as 'illogical'. At face value then, based on the actions of the actors, the forthright actions of the speaker's wife could be deemed indicative of a 'self-verification' strategy, while the speaker's compliant actions could be deemed indicative of a 'self-presentation' strategy, and the resultant outcome could be explained as constituting 'expectancy confirmation' of the traditional gender belief system of the speaker's wife. However, the speaker offers the scenario as proof of the popular adage 'men are from Mars; women are from Venus', emphasising 'there's no doubt about it' and thereby presenting the concept of 'natural difference' as a self-evident truth; thus the resolution could more likely be explained as a manifestation of convergent expectations of gender; with each party bringing both 'self-verification' and 'self-presentation' strategies into play, thereby mutually reproducing traditional definitions of gender.

The speaker's comment that the resolution is habitually re-enacted with 'no row, no discussion' suggests that traditional definitions of gender most likely inform not just each actor's understanding of self in relation to the other, but, by extension, their respective understandings of self in relation to the wider world. Arguably, the sense of inevitability and demarcation that underpins traditional understanding of gender

diminishes both men's and women's capacity for spontaneity, creativity and fluidity in engaging with each other and with the world. As Connell (1987) suggests: "for many people the notion of natural sex difference forms a limit beyond which thought cannot go" (p66).

Horrocks' Psychoanalytical Framework for Analysis: Drawing on the work of Melanie Klein, Horrocks' (1994) psychoanalytical approach offers the means for further exploring possible psychosocial influences at play in the speaker's scenario. It is arguable that, had the speaker's prologue not specified the wedded status of the actors, the listener / interpreter could be forgiven for assuming the action to take place between a mother and her boy child. Indeed, as he petulantly responds 'I'm not going out; I'm staying in', the speaker draws the listener's attention to his experiencing of himself as 'a spoilt child'. The mother - boy child quality of this interaction could be deemed in accord with Horrocks' thesis: "that men need to have separated from their mother if they are to form satisfactory relations with other women; but those later relationships will to a degree re-enact that first relationship" (p74). It is not implausible to suggest that the speaker's engagement with his wife in this scenario could, in effect, represent a re-enactment of 'that first relationship'. Support for this suggestion may be witnessed in two parts of this speaker's testimony: in his epilogue to the scenario presently under analysis; and in his depiction of a scene, best entitled 'coming home from work' (see Appendix 13 for comparison).

The relatedness between these depictions lies firstly in the speaker's childlike petulance whether 'on the back-foot peddling' or with 'defences up' as he strives to meet the demands of the other with whom he is engaging yet simultaneously claim some sense of autonomy; and secondly, in his conflation of mother and wife figures. This conflation may be particularly witnessed in the 'coming home from work' scene (Appendix 13). In this scene, the speaker arrives home from work as a fourteen-year-old boy in the first part and as his contemporary self in the second, and, in narrating the ensuing interaction with the other, manages to almost seamlessly transmute his mother into his wife, whilst simultaneously oscillating between symbolic portrayal of himself as husband (even at age fourteen and while his father is still alive) and as petulant son (even today when he is 'just not in the humour, just not in the mood' for talking to his wife as she greets him home from work). To return to the epilogue of

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the scenario under analysis, it could be concluded that the speaker's protestation: 'she's [wife] not doing it from a negative point of view; she's not trying to control me' concur with Horrocks' view that "some of the intensity of that early relationship with mother survives in all relationships with women" (1994, p75).

Thus, this four-tiered theoretical framework for analysis of the speaker's depiction of himself in the process of negotiating and interpreting the world serves to demonstrate the complex layers of social and psychological processes at play in social interaction and the enactment of gender.

Similarly, the next speaker focuses on the theme of communication between spouses by depicting a scene wherein a couple get ready to go out and by evoking the concept of 'difference'. This speaker, however, uses the concept of 'difference' in another sense to that of the previous speaker:

> *I think men and women speak a different language sometimes. Curiously enough, if I'm in a situation where I hear an argument developing, I can see that either they're not saying what they want to say, or the other person isn't hearing, so they're leaping to defence before the attack has been made. Say, for instance:*
> > *What time is it?*
> > *I'm only getting dressed!*
> > *Right, I only asked you what time it was!*
> *It is as though there are three or four unspoken questions and the position that can be defended is established immediately and the conversation is going nowhere, it just doesn't lead to resolving any sort of conflict. I mean, if you can't sort small conflicts like what time you're going out at, well then you're never going to resolve the bigger ones, the major conflicts. Some of this is my own experience and because I learned how to deal with it when I was younger I think I can see it happening with other people, and it annoys me to see it happening in other fella's lives. It's not that I have it all sussed, I don't feel smug and I don't want to give that impression, but it seems as though there is a common thread that men lose arguments with women*

and so they don't argue anymore, and instead of there being an even,
mutual regard, there's a change in the balance. I'm talking about this
basic unfairness that has developed between men and women.

(Participant No.1)

Here the speaker expands the notion of difference beyond the sense of 'natural difference' symbolised in the 'different languages' that men and women sometimes speak, to encompass the idea of 'irreconcilable differences' between the sexes. Recurring words and ideas in this extract - 'argument', 'defence', 'attack', 'unfairness between men and women', 'impossibility of resolution', 'men as losers', and 'change in the balance' – are reiterated throughout this speaker's testimony, and it is arguable that an acute sense of defensiveness manifests, not just in his language per se, but in the particular way he uses language, as exemplified in this extract.

While the previous speaker (No.3) inserted himself as actor in the scenario, offering a prologue, asides, and epilogue to communicate his perceptions, thus inviting his listener to enter his inner world, the current speaker extends no such invitation. Rather, this speaker's communicative style is characterised by a sense of evasiveness and vagueness achieved through his use of a two-stranded artifice that amounts to what might best be described as an invitation to his listener to join in a game of linguistic 'hide-and-seek'. While one dimension of this artifice lies in the speaker's minimal use of personal pronouns, its mainstay lies in the mutable form the speaker's presence takes in a given scenario or narrative, presenting himself now as first-person narrator, now as third person omniscient narrator - a linguistic version of 'now you see me, now you don't'. In adopting this mutability, the speaker creates a mechanism for voicing, affirming and authorising multiple, sometimes contradictory, viewpoints; simultaneously, it could be argued, betraying a reticence to reveal himself as himself.

In this instance, the speaker opens his narrative in the first person: 'I think men and women speak a different language sometimes' introducing the notion of 'natural difference', but then, 'curiously enough', transmutes into third person omniscient narrator thereby adopting an 'authoritative' stance for forging a conceptual link between the notion of 'natural difference' and that of 'irreconcilable differences'. The effect of the speaker's omission of personal pronouns in the depicted scene, and of his

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mutable presence within the narrative, is threefold. In omitting personal pronouns, the speaker activates stereotypical gender schemata as his listener works to make sense of the three-line dialogue; then, as he transmutes into third-person omniscient narrator, the speaker affirms assumptions of gender inherent in these schemata by reproducing them as 'insights', which, in his omniscience, he, in turn, transposes into 'universals' as he moves from the particular to the general over the course of the narrative – a sequence that encapsulates a key pattern in the speaker's communicative style, best defined as continuous endeavour to set men and women in opposition to each other, to authenticate the notion of 'change in the balance' and thereby justify men's 'leaping to defence'.

Over the course of this typical response then, the speaker offers a scenario of vague origin ('some of this is my own experience'; 'I think I can see it happening with other people'), performed by disembodied actors whose oppositional thoughts and motives are explained in his omniscient voiceover, presenting the scene as 'evidence' of gender communication that is 'going nowhere', that 'just doesn't lead to resolving any sort of conflict'. The speaker withholds his personal identity from the narrative by failing to clarify whether his scenario be of autobiographical, observational or fictional status, and as he assumes the role of third person omniscient narrator, makes the contradictory claim 'it's not that I have it all sussed, I don't feel smug'; yet despite this contradictory stance, generalises his 'insights' to the wider populace: 'it seems as though there is a common thread that men lose arguments with women and so they don't argue anymore'. It could be argued that the speaker's intent lies in establishing justification for his claim that 'men are in a position of constantly having to defend'; and a key part of this endeavour lies in 'demonstrating' that, at both dyadic and general level, communication between the sexes is futile and fraught with danger for men. In abstracting and generalising his 'insights', the speaker, not only depicts men as 'losers' in the gender order and concomitantly justifies his sense of defensiveness, but also nullifies the concept of cooperative dialogue between men and women in negotiating meanings of gender.

By contrast, the third and final speaker to comment on the spousal relationship firmly places himself, as himself, at the centre of his narrative and from this unambiguous

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'me' standpoint relates his personal experience and contemplations on the role of communication within marriage:

> *To me, communication in marriage is very important. I mean it's the very basis of the whole thing ... even if it's not working out, if communication is there at least people can talk without rowing and shouting, they can talk and be understood. Like, I could sit down and talk with my wife all evening ... three hours later we might wonder what we were talking about ... it might be about nothing ... but at least we're open to communicating. Some marriages just don't have communication from day one ... it just happens ... and then certain strains are put on the marriage ... and instead of talking and pulling together, they grow further apart. I mean, if there's no communication then how can people understand each other at all?*

(Participant No.2)

The notable absence of *a priori* gender scripts and stereotypes in this contribution, and the importance the speaker attaches to the role of communication in marriage, suggests that this man hosts a *tabula rasa* understanding of gender and, from this autonomous viewpoint, recognises the power and value of language in creating meaning and purpose, in carving out mutual understandings. In suggesting communication to be 'the very basis' of marriage, and in describing how he and his wife can 'sit down and talk all evening', the speaker accords with Ferguson's view that "late-modern relationships based on trust, openness and negotiation cannot survive today without there being a 'discursive space' at their core" (Ferguson, 2001b, p45). In contrast to the previous speaker's depiction of communication between the sexes as futile, this speaker perceives communication as a vital tool for negotiating meanings and resolving conflict: 'even if it's not working out, if communication is there at least people can talk without rowing and shouting, they can talk and be understood'. Undoubtedly this speaker perceives language as a central mechanism for humans in making themselves intelligible to self and others; indeed, his question 'if there's no communication then how can people understand each other at all?', suggests that he perceives communication as 'the very basis' for forging a coherent and harmonious world.

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The Meaning of Fatherhood:

Exploring changes in fathers' roles over the course of history, psychologist Joseph Pleck (1987) identified three competing models of fatherhood at play in 1980s American society - 'the distant breadwinner model'; 'the moral overseer model'; and the 'new father model' - models that may also be identified in the Tallaght men's understandings and enactments of fatherhood.

The Distant Breadwinner Model

In this model, Pleck (1987) suggests, fathers perceive themselves "primarily as breadwinners whose wages make family consumption and security possible" (p88):

> *I was a little alarmed when I did not experience an immediate flood of affection at first sight of my first-born child; it was delayed for some days. I did feel an immediate and huge sense of responsibility. I think that the man's imperative, once the child is born, is to feed, shelter and protect. In this day and age, food and shelter is a function of economic circumstance, protection is physical power in some societies and education or influence in others. To be weak in any of these departments makes men either cover it up or compensate in another.*

> (Participant No.1)

There can be no doubt that this speaker's sense of self as a father is deeply rooted in fulfilling the 'provider and protector' role; and the extent to which he has internalised this role may be evidenced in his words 'I did *feel* an immediate and huge sense of responsibility'. It is most likely that loss of the breadwinner role would impact very negatively on this speaker's sense of self-worth leading him to perceive himself as 'weak' and therefore a failure as a man and as a father.

The Moral Overseer Model

Pleck (1987) defines this model as the father who "sets the official standard of morality and is the final arbiter of family discipline" (p89):

> *My kids are all over twenty now. I hear other men saying that they're friends with their kids and I wonder did I miss out on something? I*

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mean I could never be their friend; they need me to lead, instruct and discipline them. I'm the enforcer and my wife is the court of appeal. I did my duty. I'm still their father. I want their affection but I also want their respect. I mean if someone crosses the line, breaches their side of the deal, then all hell has to break loose, they have to be sanctioned, more for the benefit of the other kids watching. As they were getting older I trusted them more because they thought I could read their minds. Rule one was always 'shout and you're out'. It used to be that they couldn't win the argument, until they took up with smart-arse friends and with this shared wisdom they got the courage to challenge me. I copped too late that the others listening got to know the questions and answers pat and as soon as they had the right answers they could get away with anything. So I can't be both father and friend. Now I turn myself inside out trying to reverse ... as long as there isn't a principle at stake.

(Participant No.1)

It is beyond doubt that, as he 'leads, instructs and disciplines' from his office as 'enforcer', the speaker is indeed a father who "sets the official standard of morality and is the final arbiter of family discipline". However, despite the high moral standard the speaker sets for his family, it is arguable that his language betrays a duplicitous dimension to his incumbency: 'as they were getting older I trusted them more because they thought I could read their minds'. It is likely that in saying 'I trusted them more' the speaker means that he was *seen* to be giving more leeway to his children as they were getting older, but he can hardly mean that he *actually* 'trusted them more' when he qualifies this giving of trust with 'because they thought I could read their minds'. This qualification suggests that, by whatever means, the speaker succeeded (at least for a period) in portraying himself as omniscient to his children, and it follows that, far from trusting them, he must have supposed that this perceived omniscience would deter them from 'wrongdoing', not least out of fear of the consequences of discovery. If this be so, then arguably, this moral guardian, far from gradually granting his children autonomy of judgement, controlled their conduct through instilling fear in them. Indeed, this bid for control may be evidenced in the speaker's outrage at his children's acquisition of 'the courage to challenge' him, on which he blames the

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'shared wisdom' of their 'smart-arse friends'. In turning himself 'inside out trying to reverse', the speaker's unease, it could be suggested, arises less out of self-recrimination than out of regret at loss of control, regret for bygone days when 'they couldn't win the argument', regret that he 'copped too late' their outmanoeuvring of him as 'they got to know the questions and answers pat' until ultimately 'they could get away with anything'. In insisting 'I want their affection but I also want their respect' yet failing to mention reciprocity in this arrangement, it is likely that the speaker has not yet come to perceive his children who are 'all over twenty now' as deserving of respect as autonomous adults beyond his control; and it is therefore understandable that he 'can't be both father and friend', as yet anyway.

The New Father Model

Pleck (1987) suggests that "the new father differs from older images of involved fatherhood in several key respects: he is present at the birth; he is involved with his children as infants, not just when they are older; he participates in the actual day-to-day work of child care, and not just play; he is involved with his daughters as much as his sons" (p93):

> *I have to make sure I'm home between 4.30 and 5.30 pm to let my wife leave for work. Most of our children are grown up, so it's mostly for the little lad, he's three; but I like to be there when the older ones get in from school so that there's a parent there to make sure they're okay and they don't mess and they have food to eat. I think the way fathers are has changed a lot ... Like onetime myself and my father were visiting my mother in hospital, I was minding the kids so I brought them with me and was pushing the buggy walking along with my father ... and my father ... my father was just so ... well it was just that his generation would never have pushed buggies or anything like that. So I think men, lately, are taking more responsibility for their children, they're spending more time with them, they're there for their children a lot more than men of my father's generation were. I think things are far better now, and they're getting even better as men are making a bigger difference in their children's lives.*

During the Easter holidays I took one of my sons on a job with me. It was great because I don't see them as much as I'd like to during schooldays, and at weekends they're off with their friends, so I like bringing them on a job. We were discussing my course and I was teaching him de Bono's thinking tools and he was really interested, which I thought was great. But it works both ways, like I learned the Internet from my oldest daughter. Actually, I like to ask my kids to teach me things because it makes them feel this is something they can show their dad and it gives them a little boost, you know?

(Participant No.4)

While these depictions could be said to conform, in many respects, to Pleck's definition of the 'new father', the multiplicity of social and institutional forces impeding many men from understanding and experiencing themselves in this way (discussed in chapter two) must be borne in mind. As Ferguson (1998a) points out:

Virtually nothing is done in Ireland to enable fatherhood to be seen as an opportunity for personal growth ... or to actively promote men's involvement in parenting. On the contrary, what we see are a series of barriers and disincentives to men getting involved, including lack of paternity leave, generally better pay and working conditions for men, imbalanced socialisation and inadequate preparation of boys for intimacy, and an entire cultural context of negative imagery and lack of social supports for fathers that militates against men taking on an active fatherhood identity (p117).

In view of such psychological, symbolic and material constraints in the everyday lives of many men, it is hardly surprising that the 'new father' image should be critiqued as illusionary, as being: "more a matter of commercialism and post-modern style than of substance – of surface appearances rather than real changes in behaviour" (Ferguson, 1998a, p100). Yet, as Pleck (1987) argues:

The new father is not *all* hype. This image, like the dominant images of earlier periods, is ultimately rooted in structural forces and

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structural change. Wives *are* more often employed, and do less in the family when they are; men *are* spending more time in the family, both absolutely and relative to women. If the distant-breadwinner model has a social-structural base, so too does the new father (pp94-95).

However, despite this changing everyday reality, the challenge of gaining more widespread acceptance, if not hegemony, for this 'new father' model of masculinity is proving difficult, not least in the continued dominance of workplace practices that penalise family-related absences from the workforce, thereby reinforcing the ideological link between masculinity and the breadwinner role, and between femininity and the caring role (as demonstrated in chapter two). Pleck (1987) too suggests that "tensions between the breadwinner model and more involved conceptions of fatherhood" are heightened in workplace culture where, he argues, "policies to reduce work-family conflict for fathers evoke negative responses, not so much because of their actual cost, but because they so directly challenge the father-breadwinner model (p95).

The Men's Perceptions of the Role of Men's Groups in Men's Lives:
While the Ballymun men's marginalised peripheral status, their shared sense of loss and disorientation, and their consequent search for new meanings act as a unifying force, no such commonality of purpose could be said to underpin the Tallaght Men's Group. While the four men who participated in the Tallaght study share one thing in common, they are all integrated into mainstream society, they have no shared history as a group, and they hold divergent perceptions of the role, or potential role, of men's groups in men's lives.

In engaging with the idea of men's groups, the Tallaght men, rather than drawing comparisons with the Ballymun men's experiences (whom they had met at discussion meetings) tend to draw on their perceptions of women's groups as their dominant frame of reference. Three factors may account for this approach. Firstly, it is not improbable that the Tallaght cohort did not readily identify with the Ballymun cohort because of the latter's marginalised status. Secondly, all four men have knowledge of, and familiarity with, An Cosán through their wives', sisters', or daughters' participation there as tutors, voluntary and / or paid workers or course participants.

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Thirdly, as the men's group is located at An Cosán, these men are experiencing the atmosphere and approach of a community development organisation built up by, and predominantly peopled by, women. It is of note that while these men offer their perceptions of women's groups as their starting point for engaging with the idea of men's groups, they also incorporate their observed reactions of other men into their responses; and in contrast to the Ballymun men, the majority of whom are separated, the Tallaght men draw an intrinsic conceptual link between: women's groups - men's groups – the spousal relationship:

> *I was very open to the idea of the men's group and I have gained a lot from being part of it ... like using the thinking tools ... getting to know the men ... and talking about things that are important in our lives. But my wife is involved here so I already knew about the good work the women's groups do here ... and the ethos ... I use the word 'ethos' because it sums the whole thing up ... the ethos really appeals to me ... But there are some negative views out there. Like, I know a couple of blokes, their wives are doing courses here, and they wouldn't be too keen on it ... women's lib and so on. But you have to look beyond all that and wonder what's going on in their lives, why do they think like that? So to get the idea of the men's group to take hold it has to be put out in such a way as to break the negative image some blokes have, because they don't even know the good things that go on here, they just see An Cosán as a threat ... a threat to their marriages.*

> (Participant No.2)

There can be no doubt that the *a priori* positive perception this speaker held of women's groups and of An Cosán rendered him 'open to the idea' of the men's group from the outset, an openness that was rewarded with the experience of personal growth and development. However, his awareness of 'the negative image some blokes have' and concern with how 'the idea of a men's group has to be put out if it is to take hold' points to a key challenge the group faces in its endeavour to grow and expand – the challenge of proactively countering negative preconceptions that blind some men to 'the good things that go on here' and thus limits their vision of self and the world. Rather than blame women's groups per se for the sense of 'threat to their marriages'

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the speaker perceives in such men, he suggests 'you have to look beyond all that and wonder what's going on in their lives, why do they think like that?' – a comment that typifies the speaker's contemplative style and questing to understand contextual and psychological factors that influence individual men's perceptions of, and responses to, the world. And, indeed, the next speaker takes this foray into the psychological realm a step further:

> *I didn't know what to expect when I heard about the men's group, but I had spare time and I wanted to do something so I came along to find out what it was all about ... And I think it's great ... I'm finding it educational, interesting and enjoyable ... I'd hate to see it ending now ... And with all the male suicides ... loneliness and boredom ... and all the pressure coming from here, there and everywhere ... now is definitely the time for men's groups to come on stream ... but I'm not sure how ... because I find that a lot of men just get an automatic idea ... For instance, I asked a guy I know to come along but he said he wouldn't darken the door of An Cosán because his neighbours had a perfect marriage until the wife got involved there and they brainwashed her and now she has left him. Now, he was automatically blaming An Cosán for the break-up; but you see, I know the couple he was talking about very well, and yes they did separate, but I actually think it was because he just couldn't handle his partner being with other women and being educated, finding out things, and I think he felt very inferior about this and it caused a lot of hassle in the relationship and that was the main cause of them breaking up, you know?*

> (Participant No.4)

This speaker's words 'I didn't know what to expect ... so I came along to find out' are indicative of an absence of negative preconceptions and a consequent willingness to engage with the idea of a men's group; an open-mindedness that was, like the previous speaker, rewarded with a sense of personal growth and development, leading this speaker to identify men's groups as a potential societal mechanism for alleviating male 'loneliness and boredom', and perhaps playing a role in suicide prevention. While his observation that 'a lot of men just get an automatic idea' equates with the

previous speaker's observation of the 'negative image some blokes have', this speaker moves beyond observation to analysis of the psychological realm as he explores factors that might be attributable to the breakdown of the relationship of the couple he 'knows very well'. Rather than 'automatically' attributing culpability to external forces such as An Cosán or women's groups per se for 'brainwashing' the woman, the speaker embarks on a thoughtful exploration of the man's inner world, identifying fear 'of his partner being educated, finding things out' as the source of his sense of 'inferiority' which, in turn, 'caused a lot of hassle' and was ultimately 'the main cause of them breaking up'. The speaker's analysis suggests that the man's inability to 'handle' a changing balance of power arising from his partner's participation in community education at An Cosán spelt doom for this marriage - a suggestion that carries significant implications for potential community education participants of both sexes in the Tallaght community.

There can be no doubt that An Cosán is a major beacon on the Tallaght landscape extending its reach to men as well as women offering opportunities for both sexes to enhance their lives through personal growth and skills acquisition, and as such, this community development centre holds potential to have a positive impact at individual, family and community level. It is thus vital that members of the Tallaght community hold positive perceptions of An Cosán and while word of mouth can, and does, play a positive role in raising awareness of An Cosán and its work, the previous two speakers highlight the downside of this process – the perpetuation of 'negative images', most particularly among men in the community. Both speakers suggest that these 'negative images' arise from an unthinking or 'automatic' idea of An Cosán as a catalyst for relationship breakdown; and both speakers suggest a need to 'look beyond all that' by shifting the focus from An Cosán as a target for blame, refocusing instead on the contextual and psychological realm, as exemplified in the second speaker's analysis (No.4). The response of the second speaker's peer who 'wouldn't darken the door of An Cosán' because he 'automatically blamed An Cosán for the break-up' of his neighbours' marriage, and the speaker's analysis of this couple's break-up ('he felt very inferior … and that was the main cause of them breaking up'), demonstrate the powerful impact of 'negative images' of An Cosán on individual lives and the implications for potential community education participants of both sexes in the Tallaght community. For as long as unquestioned 'negative images' are perpetuated,

fuelling individual men's fear and resentment towards An Cosán, they carry a threefold negative potential: the potential to undermine women's opportunities to avail of community education; the potential to undermine the development and negotiation of power-sharing within spousal relationships; and the potential to undermine men's opportunities to engage in men's groups. For all these reasons, perhaps the biggest challenge the Tallaght Men's Group faces lies in the task of 'breaking the negative image some blokes have' of women's groups in general and of An Cosán in particular.

In engaging with the idea of men's groups, the next speaker also draws conceptual links between women's groups and the spousal relationship; however, in contrast to the previous speakers' concern with 'breaking the negative image some blokes have', this speaker reiterates the idea of women's groups as a catalyst for relationship breakdown, and this preconceived idea colours his response to the idea of men's groups:

> *I had a lot of doubts listening to the men talking at the first meeting about starting a men's group ... the second meeting was the turning point for me, when the tutor spoke about the course, it appealed to me, I could see he was on top of his subject and I had faith that he was going to give a good course, so I signed up. I don't really see this as a men's group, it's more a men's course ... My perception of men's groups would be the same as the perception my mother-in-law had of women's groups thirty years ago ... when three women called to see if she was interested in joining a women's group she ran them out of the house ... she called it a den of ... she said it was a talking-shop for wrecking marriages, talking down men, and wrecking lives. And I think that while women's groups did a lot of good over the years, they did an awful lot of damage as well ... you probably get women who join these groups who have no problem in their marriages and other women talk them into it ... which could happen with men too of course. Now, if a women's group has a focus, say a spirituality group or something like that, I've no problem with that, but some of them have no real purpose ... And the broad term 'men's group' -- what does it*

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mean? If you had a men's group doing philosophy, or a men's group

doing sociology, or a men's group doing theology - that would be a

different thing. I think the connotation of the words 'men's group' is a

bit negative - it conjures up sissy.

<div align="right">(Participant No.3)</div>

This speaker's trepidation and 'doubts' illustrate the restraining impact of 'negative images' of women's groups on individual men's responses to the idea of men's groups. Despite his (continued) membership of the Tallaght Men's Group, the speaker doesn't really 'see it as a men's group' suggesting instead 'it's more a men's course', demonstrating the powerful role language plays in shaping perceptions and indicating, it could be suggested, a psychological resistance to the idea of men's groups on the part of the speaker.

It is arguable that the speaker's trepidation in engaging with the concept of men's groups is directly related to his perception of women's groups as a site for destabilising or 'damaging' the social order – 'a talking-shop for wrecking marriages, talking down men, and wrecking lives'. It is, perhaps, likely that his perception of women's groups arises, less from personal experience or comprehensive thought, than from rumour, innuendo and fear, leading the speaker to speculate 'you *probably* get women who join these groups who have no problem in their marriages and other women talk them into it', a speculation which he then transfers to the idea of men's groups 'which could happen with men too of course'. This contribution suggests that the speaker perceives women's groups and, by extension, men's groups, as potentially subversive forces posing threat to mainstream social / gender order, a perception that yields personal conflict – a sense of belief in, and belonging to, the mainstream that is at odds with any sense of himself as a member of a men's group; a conflict he reconciles through language – through naming it 'a men's course' (acceptable as a microcosm of mainstream) rather than a 'men's group' (unacceptable as it connotes subversion for the speaker). This conflict, it could be suggested, is reflected in the tension between the speaker's sense of 'doubt' when 'listening to the men' expressing ideas about the proposed men's group and his sense of 'faith' when 'the tutor spoke about the course'; it is as though he is wary and uneasy at the uncertain prospect of the rank-and-file (subversives?) taking ownership of the process but is reassured as he

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anticipates (mistakenly) a pre-ordained script for the men's group with the practitioner in command (echoing mainstream top-down systems).

This speaker's wariness of processes that do not echo mainstream practice may be evidenced in his distrust of groups that have no stated aim, and thus, 'no real purpose' - 'the broad term men's group – what does it mean?' and in his definition of a purposeful men's group as one which states that it is 'doing philosophy or doing sociology or doing theology – that would be a different thing'. So, for this speaker, it is 'doing subjects' that are authorised and endorsed by the establishment that gives meaning and acceptability to a men's group; and thus, for him, the potential role of men's groups lies in providing an extension of, rather than alternative to, mainstream systems and structures.

It could be further suggested that, as he presents himself to the world, and especially to other men, the speaker's concern with conformity to mainstream culture renders him ever-vigilant for the policing 'evaluative eyes' - 'I think the connotation of the words 'men's group' is a bit negative, it conjures up sissy' – a vigilance that may further account for his trepidation in engaging with the idea of men's groups, and further explain why he justifies, to himself and to the world, his membership of the men's group by re-naming it a 'men's course' (see chapter two pp 66-67 for Kimmel's theory on the role of the 'evaluative eyes' in reproducing the hegemonic version of masculinity).

In engaging with the idea of men's groups, the next speaker is the only participant who does not take the idea of women's groups as his starting point or frame of reference. He does, however, demonstrate an even keener vigilance for the 'evaluative eyes', evidenced in the importance he places on finding the 'right name' to account for 'where you're going and what you're doing':

> *When I heard about the men's group starting I thought ... well I get on my high horse about how women treat men in this day and age, how they humiliate their husbands and so on ... so if I've any integrity at all I should follow this through and see if this is an avenue for ... not so much for making these complaints, I don't want to make complaints*

... but the facts should be stated ... and this was a chance to see if other men feel the same way. I liked the idea of learning the 'thinking tools' and applying them to discussion of issues, but the conversation was sometimes dominated by one or two people. I readily admit that I probably had too much to say, at the expense of someone else's input. And I suppose I found that while my views and opinions wouldn't enjoy universal agreement, aspects of them seem to strike a chord with other men ... in similar aware situations. But I think the name of the group should suggest the exercising of mind dimension that it has, rather than a 'men-need-to-band-together-to-stop-women-laughing-at-them-when-they-make-a-mess-of-something-in-the-kitchen' group – something like 'tae kwon do for the brain'. And maybe changing the venue from time to time might remove the suspicion that it's a therapy group; the occasional use of an IT room, for example, would send the message that the group provides intellectual stimulus. If it were called something like 'the brain gym' or 'man alive' it would send the message that it isn't a group of men agonising about what the world has done on them. The right name is important because it helps to summarise to someone else where you're going and what you're doing.

(Participant No.1)

The internal contradictions in this narrative suggest the speaker is experiencing a sense of confusion – a gap between his motive for joining the men's group and the 'message' he wants to send to the world. It could be argued that this confusion arises from conflict between the speaker's deeply felt, highly charged emotions and his internalised version of 'man as governed by reason alone'; for clearly, he is desperately seeking a site for emotional release, yet is at pains to present to the world as though he is seeking 'intellectual stimulus' from his participation in the men's group.

There can be no doubt that the emotion the speaker is experiencing is anger – anger at 'how women treat men in this day and age' – and he perceives men's groups as a potential site for releasing and expressing that anger. This project wholeheartedly

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supports the view that some men may need a site for expressing anger and men's groups could, indeed should, provide such a site, but it cautions against potential danger: for unless a comprehensive analysis of gender relations is facilitated by practitioners, men's groups could run the risk of perpetuating rather than diffusing anger, thereby becoming a site for escalating rather than resolving tensions in the gender order[18].

As observer, this project notes that, in his engagement with other members of the men's groups, the above speaker (No.1) tended to negatively foreground the topic of gender roles and relations, and, as he 'readily admits', he sometimes 'dominated the conversation' as he explored the potential of the group as 'an avenue, not so much for making complaints ... but for stating facts'. His comment that his 'views and opinions wouldn't enjoy universal agreement' but 'aspects of them seem to strike a chord with other men in similar aware situations' is indicative of two characteristics of the men's interactions – lively, sometimes heated, debate, and tension between 'proactive' and 'reactive' perspectives, indicated here as 'men in similar aware situations'. Arguably though, such debate between men, if fairly facilitated, can greatly assist in the task of negotiating understandings of self and others in the face of change.

The Men's Perceptions of the Potential of Community Education as a Means for Men's Development:

The programme for men's development work that this project had co-designed with a practitioner from Ballymun was replicated with the newly formed Tallaght Men's Group[19]. As in Ballymun, the practitioner facilitated the programme while this project observed its implementation. While the 'fixed element' of this programme remained the same in each research site, the 'fluid element', the issues and themes the men themselves generated for discussion and analysis, proved to be markedly different. For, while the theme of change emerged as a central concern for both cohorts, the Ballymun men focused on such issues as unemployment, separation / divorce, material and emotional isolation, and the Tallaght men focused predominantly on the impact of societal change on gender roles and relationships within the family unit.

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[18] The issue of men's 'anger and frustration' emerged as a recurring theme at the monthly meetings of the Dublin Men's Coalition and is addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

[19] See Ballymun case study chapter for description of this programme and Appendix 9 (stage two of the programme development process) for the context and rationale behind its replication in this site.

Arguably, these differing themes, issues and concerns reflect the starkly differing sociological profiles of the cohorts: the Ballymun cohort being characterised by marginalisation and social exclusion, the Tallaght cohort being characterised by integration into mainstream society. So, coming from their relatively more privileged position in society, do the Tallaght men perceive community education as holding potential for men's development? What do the Tallaght men understand 'men's development' to mean? Can commonalities be identified between the cohorts' understandings of the concept of men's development?

All of the Tallaght men placed high value on their acquisition of de Bono's 'thinking tools', commenting that they had developed the habit of using their newly acquired analytical skills in making decisions, judgements and plans in their everyday lives; and each expressed a sense of personal fulfilment on completion of the programme. And, undoubtedly, the group's request for a follow-on programme is indicative of these men's perception of community education as a means for men's development[20]. However, differing understandings of the concept of 'men's development' may be identified among the membership of the Tallaght Men's Group.

As the group reconvened in autumn 2003, one of the men identified as adopting a 'reactive' engagement with the world excused himself from the process, citing 'work commitments' as his reason for leaving (No.1). It is not implausible to suggest, however, that work commitments apart, a sense of thwarted expectations may underpin this man's decision to leave the group. This suggestion is based on the participant's sense of annoyance at 'how women treat men in this day and age'; on his portrayal of men as being 'in a position of constantly having to defend', on his call to men to say 'enough is enough', and on his stated motive for joining the group - 'to see if it was an avenue ... not so much for making these complaints ... but the facts should be stated ... and this was a chance to see if other men feel the same way'. It is arguable that, in perceiving women's gains as men's loss, this participant hosted an expectation of the men's group as a site for expressing anger and having that anger validated. Thus, this participant's understanding of 'men's development' could, perhaps, be described as men finding ways to 'get even' rather than 'get along' with

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[20] See Appendix 9 (stage three of the programme development process) for context, rationale and description of the follow-on programme implemented in Tallaght autumn 2003 - spring 2004

women – an understanding that failed to 'enjoy universal agreement' within the Tallaght Men's Group. It is regrettable, however, that this participant left the group for his presence had acted as a catalyst for setting competing interpretations of gender in dialogue with each other, a process that is vital to widening debate on meanings of masculinity in today's world.

Despite his 'doubts' about men's groups, the second participant identified as adopting a 'reactive' tendency in his engagement with the world, committed wholeheartedly to the group when it reconvened in autumn 2003 (No.3). This participant's distrust of groups that have no stated and thus 'no real purpose', and his definition of purposeful activity as 'doing subjects' that are endorsed by the establishment, suggest an understanding of 'men's development' as 'product' (top-down learning leading to certification) rather than 'process' (exploration of self and the world through entering into communion and dialogue) - reflected in his words: 'I don't really see this as a men's group, it's more a men's course'. It is likely that the title and named content of the follow-on programme rendered continued membership of the men's group acceptable to this participant[21] – a weekly two-hour programme entitled *Human Development* wherein the practitioner imparts concepts from the disciplines of sociology, psychology and philosophy in the first hour, and the men debate these concepts in the second hour – a title that could allow this participant to tell the world he was attending a 'men's course' (but a format that could allow the practitioner to facilitate discussion and simultaneously draw the men's attention to the 'process' in which they are engaged – that of interrogating and negotiating understandings of self and the world through dialogue). As a consequence it is likely that this participant's understanding of 'men's development' has, over time, shifted beyond the idea of 'product' to also encompass the notion of 'process'.

The two members of the Tallaght Men's group identified as adopting a 'proactive' relationship with the world remained with the group, offering similar definitions of the concept of 'men's development':

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[21] As explained in Appendix 9 (stage three of the programme development process), the title, form and content of the follow-on programme for Tallaght was informed by understandings of these men that had emerged from data analysis conducted in summer 2003

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A mix of discussion and education; I honestly think discussion is needed for men but I also think there has to be the educational bit where men get something for themselves, whether it be thinking skills, or how to use the computer, or whatever.

(Participant No.2)

Something that includes both social and educational issues; by social I mean looking at men improving our lives, looking at how men can share their different problems; and have an educational module as well; I don't know if the two would coincide but I think there is a need for the two.

(Participant No.4)

Voiced on completion of the first programme, these definitions suggest an understanding of 'men's development' that encompasses, but yet conceptually segregates, the notions of 'product' and 'process'; an understanding that, due to the practitioner's methodology, is likely to have shifted over the course of the second programme to a more integrated conceptualisation of the learning experience[22]. It is, however, in these participants' awareness of 'process', that is, in their suggestion that 'discussion is needed for men' as a means of 'improving our lives' through 'sharing different problems', that a commonality may be identified with the Ballymun men's approach to 'men's development' – recognition of the role of dialogue in making sense of self and of others. Indeed, their words:

I think Joe Soap feels bad but doesn't know why; he doesn't have the tools to figure it out (Participant No.2).

Your average man on the street is not even conscious of himself. It's like the ultimate enjoyment for him is to do his day's work and then go to the pub, he doesn't know anything else, he's not even aware of himself ... of his feelings (Participant No. 4).

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[22] Appendix 9 (stage three of the programme development process) explains the methodology and its underpinning rationale employed by the practitioner for the follow-on programme implemented in Tallaght autumn 2003 – spring 2004

suggest a nascent sense of accord with the Ballymun men's idea of 'coming out emotionally' as a key dimension of men's endeavour to carve out meaning and purpose in a rapidly changing world. Thus, although not clearly articulated or thematised, it is most likely that these 'proactive' men perceive the experience of entering into communion and dialogue with other men as a key means of 'improving our lives'; an experience that inspired one of them to compose the following poem, offered as a gift to the group:

The Group

It started off into a bit of the unknowing.

We all settled in and started growing.

As the weeks went on we started learning

About our lives, and others, it was a little

Unnerving.

But as we developed we all could see, that

There is a lot more to men than the eye can see.

And so I say with a little dismay, the group can

Only get better in every way and each of us

Learn in our own little way.

And to you all, may I say, Thanks once again,

And let this be an inspiration to every man.

(Participant No.2)

Chapter Six: Towards the Development of a Conceptual Framework to Underpin Men's Development Work

Based on its understanding of the study participants' experiences and perspectives and the project's overall observations, learnings and findings placed in dialogue with a critical analysis of the literature, this chapter offers insights towards the development of a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work through the medium of men's groups in Ireland.

Chapter Six: Towards the Development of a Conceptual Framework to underpin Men's Development Work through the Medium of Men's Groups in Ireland.

> *We don't know how men's groups will evolve ... can't even guarantee it will actually happen ... but if it does it will be completely different to the way women's groups evolved. We haven't worked out a philosophy yet ... so it's about trying to define a practice ... a philosophy or belief.*
>
> (Practitioner No. 2)[1]

On 3rd March 2000, Ballymun Men's Centre hosted a conference in Dublin City University with the aim of networking ten practitioners working with men's groups under the title Dublin Men's Coalition. The coalition was described as "a bottom-up, political response to issues of male unemployment, education, isolation, depression and suicide"; and was formed in response to "the need for practitioners to share information on policy and practice in men's development work and to lobby for support for this work" (opening speaker, conference transcript).

By autumn 2003, however, the coalition's membership had diminished to four practitioners who attribute lack of resources, lack of experience, and lack of planning, organisational and administrative skills, to the coalition's failure to grow and develop:

> *Men's development work is still at a very early stage. We moved too fast. The groundwork wasn't done. We hadn't a clear vision. The skills weren't there. The resources weren't there. It takes a lot of time and energy, and most community workers are already overstretched on that count. But those of us who stayed still believe we're serving a purpose. We are supporting each other. But it's all very ad hoc. We're still working out ways of working with the men. The reality is that this sector is uncharted waters.*
>
> (Practitioner No. 3)

It is, indeed, regrettable that, due to lack of experience, skills, resources and support, the Dublin Men's Coalition has been unable to reach its full potential as a site for

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[1] Practitioners' quotations in this chapter are numerically linked to a biographical profile of the membership of the Dublin Men's Coalition tabulated in Appendix 4

practitioners to explore and share ideas on evolving methodologies, and as a platform from which to launch their emergent insights and concerns into the policy arena. Given the pioneering nature of this work, it is vital that mechanisms be put in place to support the development of the field of men's community education in a more structured, yet flexible, way; and this chapter is offered as a contribution to this task.

Based on observation and analysis of the workings of two men's groups, on learnings arising from the collaborative process of programme development for these groups, on analysis of academic discourses, and on issues raised by practitioners[2], the overall study findings now inform a proposed framework of policy and practice to guide and enhance the development of the field of men's community education in Ireland.

Part one of this chapter discusses the relationship between government and the adult community education sector. It examines government policy statements and proposes measures that must be incorporated into government policy and practice if men's groups are to be supported to grow and develop within this sector. Part two discusses the role of the academy, proposing a strategy whereby the academic world might serve the needs of practitioners engaged in men's development work. Part three proposes a pedagogical strategy for men's development work through the medium of men's groups in Ireland; a strategy that builds on the work of Paulo Freire and Andrew Tolson.

The following diagram offers a mind-map of this study's proposals, illustrating inter-dependent and inter-active roles and relationships between the three key players – the government, the academy and practitioners - within an overall framework that might serve to advance the field of men's community education in Ireland[3]. The remainder of this chapter explains this proposed framework.

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[2] Issues of concern to practitioners can be divided into two categories – organisational and pedagogical. Organisational issues pertain to all resources necessary to the survival and daily running of a men's group. Pedagogical issues pertain to the practitioners' quest for appropriate responses to the key themes identified as central to their everyday work with men's groups: anger and frustration; political apathy; homophobia; a sense of failure as men; and mental health problems. Measures to support practitioners in the organisational domain, and in developing their models of practice are proposed in the parts of this chapter that discuss the role of government and the role of the academy; while a pedagogical strategy for working with men's groups is proposed in the third and final part of this chapter.

[3] This diagram is also reproduced in Appendix 14.

Proposed Framework for Advancing the Field of Men's Community Education in Ireland

Government

→ **Academy**

- Establish Men's Development Unit

- Establish Men's Studies Unit

Curriculum Development

| Core | Seminars | Electives |

| Monitor, Support and Cohere Development of Men's Groups Nationwide | Inform Policy and Practice |

Theoretical Perspectives on:
- Male Gender (Men's Studies)
- Pedagogical Strategies
- Language & Communication

- Themes & Issues Drawn From:
- Practitioners' Experiences
- Men's Lives
- Public Discourse

c o m m u n i c a

Practitioners

- Putting Pedagogical Theory into Practice

- Translating Academic Discourses into the Everyday Language of the Men

- Feedback Themes and Issues to Academy as Material for Electives

t o r s

Men's Groups

Analytical Skills Academic Theories (Fixed Element) ←→ Theorising Everyday Lives (Fluid Element)

Consciousness-Raising Process

Developing Strategies for Change

Part One

The Relationship between Government and the Community Education Sector and Implications for the Growth and Development of Men's Groups:

In counting "the community-based sector amongst the most creative and *relevant* components of adult education provision", and in proposing increased funding and comprehensive support structures for stakeholders in the field, *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education* (2000) marked a watershed in the relationship between government and the adult community education sector (p112, my italics). At last, it seemed, government had committed to supporting and promoting the ethos and values of the evolving community sector thereby enabling it to fulfil its potential as a key player in negotiating a more just and inclusive society. Regrettably, however, the intervening four years have demonstrated a profound gap between government policy and practice – only two of the *White Paper* proposals for the adult community education sector have been actualised[4].

Two key dimensions of government policy and practice are of concern to this thesis. Firstly, that its proposed support structures for the community education sector be implemented; secondly, as men's groups have only recently begun to participate in the sector, that specific measures to serve their needs be incorporated into the implementation process. It should be noted that specific measures to be proposed by this study are offered as a *starting point* in the endeavour to support the development of men's groups; for, without doubt, there is need for continued research and dialogue in the field so that ongoing and emergent needs can be identified and addressed. However, before proposing specific measures for the development of men's groups within the government-proposed structures and beyond, this chapter teases out assumptions about the role of education in society underpinning government policy and practice.

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[4] Community Education Facilitators have been recruited and County / City Development Boards have been established. However, while the National Adult Learning Council was inaugurated in March 2002, it was never signed into statute, and indeed, its proposed functions have been under review by the Department of Education and Science since its inauguration. Until the council is signed into statute, its four Technical Support Units and a Forum for Practitioners cannot be established. Neither the proposed thirty-three Local Adult Learning Boards nor Inter-agency Working Group on Qualifications for Practitioners have been established.

As a policy *statement*, the *White Paper* on Adult Education (2000) offers two definitions of community education, definitions that are, however, underpinned by very different sets of assumptions about the social order and the role of education within that order; and making those assumptions explicit provides a key to identifying which ideology informs government *practice*.

One *White Paper* definition frames community education as "an extension of the service provided by second and third-level education institutions ... in this sense it is education in the community but not of the community" (p110) – reflecting the functionalist approach championed by such thinkers as Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Key assumptions about society and education underpinning the functionalist perspective may be summarised as follows:

- Society is consensual and static; its members share the same value-system
- Education is a neutral site responsible for the transmission of knowledge to equip individuals to take their places in the predefined socio-economic order
- The unequal distribution of power and resources reflect natural differences in ability and effort

The functionalist perspective then, takes a hierarchical social order for granted and thus those concerned with inequality look not to society's structure but to the individual to apply solutions. In this view, equality of opportunity in accessing education gives everyone an equal chance for social mobility; and the extent to which they succeed is dependent on their individual capabilities. By overlooking the structural forces that impede the performance of one individual and enhance the performance of another, this perspective can explain inequality as the fault of the individual.

The other *White Paper* definition frames community education "in a more ideological sense as a process of communal education towards empowerment, both at individual and collective level" (p110) – reflecting the radical approach championed by neo-

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Marxist thinkers, of whom Paulo Freire is counted among the most noted[5]. Key assumptions about society and education underpinning the radical perspective may be summarised as follows:

- Society is neither static nor predefined; social realities are constructed, contested and reconstructed through human action
- Education is a site of ideological struggle between reproduction of, and resistance to, the constructed reality
- Consciousness-raising is the mechanism for challenging unjust realities and bringing about social transformation

In contrast to the functionalist approach, the radical perspective views society as an antagonistic set of social relations characterised by the oppression of some groups through winning their consent to the reality constructed by the dominant groups. In this perspective, those concerned with inequality seek to raise the consciousness of the dominated thereby equipping them to recognise and challenge injustices in the established order.

While government *policy* articulates both functionalist and radical interpretations of society and the role of education within it, which interpretation could be said to inform government *practice* in Irish society?

The structures proposed in the *White Paper* on Adult Education (2000) offer a policy framework for the future direction of community education that is, indeed, in keeping with the radical definition of education as "a process of communal education towards empowerment, both at individual and collective level" (p110). Should these structures be actualised, they hold potential for enabling the community sector to play a key role in negotiating a more just and inclusive society, thus setting in motion "the quantum leap" the government "envisages for the sector", and, by extension, for society (p150). However, since publication of the *White Paper*, government has prioritised

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[5] This approach, which builds and expands on the work of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) in their analysis of class relations, has been adopted by theorists across a range of academic disciplines. Chapter two discussed Connell's use of this approach in his analysis of gender relations, and the final part of this chapter discusses Freire's use of it in his critical pedagogy for challenging structural inequality.

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interventions that serve the needs of the economy over those that might enable the disenfranchised to rejoin and recreate a more equitable society – practice that works to affirm and perpetuate functionalist ideology and undermine democracy.

Indeed, a recent political incident clearly demonstrates the current government's ideological vision for the future direction of Irish society. On Monday 6th September 2004 An Taoiseach invited Fr Healy, head of the Conference of Religious in Ireland and well-known speaker against social injustice to address government; an invitation that could have been interpreted as demonstrative of a political will to listen and act upon suggestions of ways and means whereby government could create a more inclusive and democratic society. Following his address, Fr Healy's optimism - "I have the feeling that the kind of priorities I was outlining met with a resonance from a lot of the TDs and senators there" – was proved ill founded by the responses of Minister for Finance Charlie McCreevy and Tánaiste Mary Harney. In response to Fr Healy's outline plan for redistribution of wealth and power, for promotion of citizenship and democracy, McCreevy concluded: " if we followed Fr Healy's proposals we would bankrupt the country, what he and people like him spout is rubbish"; to which Ms Harney added: "the reality is that the policies Fr Healy advocates, in my view, would cause economic disaster"[6].

This thesis, this government-sponsored research project, appeals to government to honour its stated commitment to the ethos and values of the community sector by translating its policy statements into lived practice and thereby upholding fundamental democratic principles. For regrettably, not only has government failed to implement all but two of its proposals, but it made no increase in investment in community education during 2004, indeed it made three cutbacks that further undermine the role and well being of the community sector[7].

Given the dearth of research, scholarly analysis and precedent, men's community education practitioners need a comprehensive support system that encompasses both

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[6] See *Irish Times*: Tuesday 7th September 2004, pp 6-7; Monday 13th September 2004, p7.
[7] These cutbacks were made in the Community Employment Scheme and Community Development Support Programme - cutbacks in the former were made without prior evaluation of the value and usefulness of the scheme. The government also cutback on its contributions to most community development organisations by 10% in 2004 (AONTAS at http://www.aontas.com).

the organisational and pedagogical dimensions of their evolving work, for, as one practitioner put it: *"we're really only beginning ... we lack vision, skills, resources ... we haven't really worked out how to work with the men ... it's all new ... we're floundering before we can even gain a foothold"* (No4). Thus, developing a support system will require long-term support from both the government and the academy so that practitioners can be enabled to build an organisational skills-base, carve out a vision, develop models of practice and pedagogical strategies for working with men, engage in critical analysis of their evolving work and themes in men's lives, enter into dialogue with each other, participate in the policy arena, and take a central role as communicators and translators in a two-way dialogue between the academic world and participants in men's groups based in the community. This thesis will now propose specific measures to be incorporated into the government-proposed structure and beyond, if men's groups are to be supported to achieve these goals.

Language Use in Official Policy Documents:

The first step that must be taken in developing a conceptual framework to underpin men's development work lies in the domain of language: specifically, it lies in naming the sex of targeted beneficiaries of government initiatives. This language change is not recommended as a means of setting men's groups in opposition to women's groups in the struggle to secure funding and support. Rather, it is recommended as a means of foregrounding in the institutional framework the idea of men as gendered beings; and also as a means of changing men's perceptions of community education as 'women's education' and thereby popularising the notion of male participation in community-based initiatives. When it was decided that investment in the Women's Education Initiative (WEI) should be extended to include men, the government invited representatives of men's groups to enter into exploratory talks. These talks took place in Wynn's Hotel in Dublin on 27th March 2000 at which government-sponsored literature entitled *Men's Education Initiative (MEI): Consultation Process* was disseminated[8]. During the consultation process, government representatives consistently referred to the WEI and MEI as parallel projects within a single initiative; yet, when the initiative was launched both sexes were included under the gender-neutral title Education Equality Initiative (EEI). Whatever good intentions may have

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[8] This project attended the consultation process as participant-observer.

inspired the title of this initiative, it is not implausible to suggest that conceptually it perpetuates the idea of men as gender-free beings, and does little to popularise the notion of men as participants in community-based initiatives. As a first step, more gender-explicit use of language in official policy documents might help to break silences about masculinity and have a positive domino effect in assisting the take-off of men's development work. It might help raise awareness of the emergence of men's groups in the community sector and encourage government departments to breakdown their records of funding allocation by gender, which in turn, could help to track the extent to which men's groups are emerging and to raise their profile within the sector. This, in turn, might help to widen perceptions of gender-based concerns beyond that of relations between men and women to encompass the idea that men have 'gender issues'. And this heightened awareness might, in turn, help widen debate in the public sphere on changing meanings of masculinity, and encourage academia to play a role, not just in scholarly analysis of 'men's issues' but also in developing a framework for men to grapple with these issues[9].

Developing an Organisational Skills Base for Men's Groups

Developing an organisational skills base for community workers involved with men's groups is a fundamental need that must be addressed before the more sophisticated work of developing models of practice and pedagogical strategies can be addressed. Practitioners still participating in the Dublin Men's Coalition point to the 'short-lived' nature of men's groups, attributing their demise to: *"lack of basic financial resources and skills"* (No. 4); and thus creating mechanisms to ensure the survival of emergent men's groups is prerequisite to creating mechanisms to ensure they can flourish. In many cases:

> *Financial resources are so scarce that often <u>one</u> person has to do the job of co-ordinator <u>and</u> tutor and this means nothing is really done right because you're trying to learn two skills at the one time ... and so much of your time is spent trying to learn how to type, fill out forms and write reports ... that you can't even think about ways of working with the men ... you're just responding*

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[9] The importance of language is further discussed in the section of this chapter that deals with the role of practitioners as 'translators' in a two-way communicative process between the academic world and participants in men's groups based in the community; and in the section that deals with the communicative process between men within men's groups.

on your feet all the time ... then you run out of money and the whole thing
goes bang.

(Practitioner No.1)

Men's groups then, need to be resourced so that the roles of co-ordinator /
administrator and tutor / practitioner can be segregated and personnel can receive the
training and education necessary to equip them to fulfil their respective roles[10]. It is
regrettable that government cutbacks in the Community Employment Scheme and
Community Development Support Programme has reduced community groups'
access to valuable support by way of administrative staff and to training opportunities,
particularly regarding daily clerical duties and the task of submitting funding
applications, progress reports, financial reports and project evaluation reports[11]. Until
the National Adult Learning Council is signed into statute, a key potential source of
training for administrative personnel in men's groups remains inaccessible: the
proposed Community Education Technical Support Unit of the council – described in
the *White Paper* as "the pivotal link between the National Adult Learning Council and
the Community Education Sector" (p115). The brief for this proposed support unit
includes working with Community Education Facilitators to support the "capacity
building" of target groups. And while this thesis acknowledges the *White Paper*'s
counting of men's groups among the listed target groups, it urges government to
actualise these support systems as a matter of urgency (p115). Given the four year
delay in implementing all but two of the *White Paper*'s proposals, it is difficult to
disagree with AONTAS' suggestion that: "the Department of Education and Science
appears to be engaged in a policy of rationalisation disguised as co-ordination"
(AONTAS at http://www.aontas.com).

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[10] The framework for the development of men's groups within the community sector proposed by this
thesis segregates the organisational and pedagogical dimension of men's development work. The
former pertains to administrative workers and all resources necessary to the daily running of men's
groups without which they cannot survive; responsibility for supporting this dimension is targeted
chiefly at government. The latter pertains to practitioners and the development of models of practice
and pedagogical strategies for working with men's groups; responsibility for supporting this dimension
is targeted at both government and the academy. Thus, discussion of government structures, whether
extant or proposed, treats the organisational and pedagogical dimensions of men's groups discretely.
[11] The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (restructured from the Department of
Social, Community and Family Affairs) not only reduced the number of Training and Support
Agencies for the community sector from thirteen to six but also reduced the training budget of the
remaining six agencies (AONTAS at http://www.aontas.com).

The task of securing funding for premises, equipment, hiring and training of personnel remains a central and daunting challenge for all community groups and this thesis also urges speedy implementation of the proposed streamlined funding mechanism to be achieved under the auspices of the proposed Local Adult Learning Boards[12].

Developing and Sharing Models of Practice for Men's Groups

In 1997 Mel Cousins argued:

> Men's groups are very far behind women's groups in terms of their development. Indeed, it is perhaps more correct to say that men's groups are on an entirely different path of development from women's groups and perhaps one of the weaknesses of work in this area has been an assumption that models which have worked with women can simply be transferred to men's groups. The record to date would suggest that this is not the case. … the overall conclusion of this review is that there is a shortage of ideas upon which to spend money (pp 39-40).

Two years later Kelleher and Kelleher concluded:

> Men's groups are beginning to develop methodologies on how to organise and develop men's groups. … Given their stage of development and the challenges they face, it is important that these groups are resourced. It is also important that a regional and national framework be put in place to support the development of an infrastructure of locally-based men's groups (1999, p48).

Five years later, the status of men's groups remains the same; they stand in need of a framework that can support the development of both their functional and creative capabilities and can provide a site for sharing and exchanging emergent learnings.

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[12] The *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector* (2000) also made recommendations for the development of a more coherent system of funding and supports for community groups. Regrettably however, such recommendations are being no more speedily implemented than the proposals for developing the field of community education; and the main issue, the development of a relationship between the state and the community and voluntary sector is still being debated (AONTAS at http://www.aontas.com).

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The functional or organisational dimension of men's development work has just been discussed and the remainder of this thesis is concerned with the creative dimension: with developing practitioners' capabilities in the world of ideas and analysis and with enabling them to play a central role as communicators and translators in a two-way dialogue between the academic world and participants in men's groups based in the community – a proposal that involves the support and co-operation of government and the academy. The remainder of part one focuses on aspects of a proposed framework that call for either government intervention or the co-operative intervention of government and the academy; part two focuses specifically on the role of the academy in supporting practitioners engaged in men's development work.

The *White Paper* on Adult Education (2000) rightfully acknowledges the pioneering role women's groups have played in developing the community education sector. Against all the odds female practitioners have struggled to win government respect and support for the community sector and to develop and share models of practice and pedagogical strategies for their work with women's groups. It is hardly surprising then, that the government should propose:

- exploring through this team of animateurs [Community Education Facilitators] and through central technical support from the National Adult Learning Council, the approaches pioneered within the community-based women's groups to other sectors, - specifically in relation to: -

  disadvantaged, hard-to-reach men;
  travellers and ethnic minorities;
  people with disability;
  community arts groups;
  the elderly;

  (*Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000, p17)

The observations, learnings and findings of this study suggest that seeking to transfer and test "the approaches pioneered within the community-based women's groups" to men's groups will delay and impede rather than advance the development of the field of men's community education, and, in the process, waste valuable and scarce resources. The practitioner whose voice opened this chapter proclaimed "*we don't*

know how men's groups will evolve ... but it will be <u>completely different</u> to the way women's groups evolved ... its about trying to define a practice ... a philosophy or belief' (No.2) – demonstrating that little has changed since Cousins (1997) argued that the trajectory of men's groups is "entirely different" to that of women's groups, that the assumption that models of practice can simply be transferred from women's groups to men's group is a "weakness in the area", and that there is "a shortage of ideas" about how to advance the field (pp 39-40). While women's groups emerged as a site for *initiating change*, this study's findings suggest that men's groups are emerging as a site for *responding to change*. It is hardly surprising then, that the issues and themes identified by this study as being of concern to men are markedly different from the issues and themes that were, and still are, of concern to women since the evolution of women's groups from the early 1980s onward[13]. Arguably then, while men's groups may borrow some learnings from the experiences of women's groups within the sector, and while they may borrow elements of the methodologies adopted by women's groups, for instance the use of consciousness-raising, there is little that they can do with these borrowings in the absence of an ideational base to underpin and inform them[14] Unquestionably then, what is now needed is a comprehensive framework comprising inter-dependent and inter-active elements wherein practitioners can be supported to explore and exchange ideas, analyse emergent ideas and themes, and from such analyses identify, test, develop and share models of practice best suited to men's development work. To serve this end, this study proposes that government and the academy jointly spearhead the establishment of two inter-related units - a Men's Development Unit in the political arena and a Men's Studies Unit in the academic arena. While part two of this chapter details the role of the proposed Men's Studies Unit in supporting practitioners engaged in men's

[13] I am referring to the issues and themes identified as of concern in the emergent men's movement in Ireland discussed in chapter one; themes in public discourse on masculinity and gender relations identified and analysed in chapter two; themes practitioners identified as central to their everyday work with men's groups listed in chapter three and to be further discussed in this chapter, and themes identified as central to the lives of the men who participated in the Ballymun and Tallaght case studies discussed and analysed in chapters four and five. The overall significance of these themes for men's development work is discussed in part two of this chapter which is concerned with the role of the academy, and in part three which is concerned with pedagogical strategies for practitioners working with men's groups.
[14] Indeed, the final part of this thesis proposes a pedagogical strategy for practitioners working with men's groups that incorporates the consciousness-raising approach. However, while this approach has been adopted in a multiplicity of contexts, the realities to be explored, challenged, contested and transformed are unique to each context within which the consciousness-raising experience is activated and thus identifying themes drawn from the realities of men's lives *qua* men is prerequisite to enabling practitioners to engage in this process with men's groups.

development work, the remainder of part one defines the relationship between the proposed Men's Studies Unit and Men's Development Unit, and specifies a role for the latter within the structures proposed in the *White Paper* on Adult Education 2000.

The Relationship between the proposed Men's Studies Unit and Men's Development Unit

It is opportune that this study's proposals can be made at a time when thinking in the policy arena and adult education sector dovetails on the issue of quality assurance and professionalisation of the sector, with policy makers and community representatives in agreement on the need for co-operatively developing mechanisms whereby the work of practitioners can be formally recognised through a flexible certification process that not only offers practitioners access to academic theory but also welcomes and validates the special knowledge and insights they have acquired through their everyday experiences in the communities they serve[15]. However, men's groups constitute a new interest in the adult community education sector in Ireland whose development is hampered by lack of precedent, dearth of research and scholarship, and a low level of dialogue between practitioners and the academy and between practitioners and the policy arena; and thus, this study's proposal for the establishment of a Men's Studies Unit and Men's Development Unit is offered as a means of establishing a coherent communicative process between practitioners, the academy and government so that emergent learnings can be shared and such learnings can inform the future direction of policy and practice.

Within this configuration then, the Men's Studies Unit (located in at least one, but hopefully more than one, third-level institution) is proposed as a site for exploration and analysis of meanings of masculinity and gender relations in Irish society and for launching emergent insights and learnings into the policy arena via the proposed Men's Development Unit[16]. Thus informed by the outcomes and conclusions of

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[15] The establishment, under the 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, Further Education and Training Awards Council and Higher Education and Training Awards Council has created a climate favourable to the negotiation of such a flexible certification process for practitioners in the emergent field of men's community education.

[16] This proposal posits a key role for practitioners as communicators and translators in a two-way dialogue between the academic world and participants in men's groups as a means of advancing the study of masculinity and gender relations in a way that is inclusive and meaningful to the Irish context; and detailed discussion of this dimension of the proposal is offered in part two of this chapter.

scholarly inquiry and analyses, the proposed Men's Development Unit would be well positioned to advise government on the most appropriate policies and practices to be developed, not just in the domain of men's community education per se, but also, for instance, in the domains of health, welfare, housing and law.

The failure of the Dublin Men's Coalition to develop as a site for practitioners to explore and share ideas on evolving methodologies, and as a platform from which to launch emergent insights and concerns into the policy arena suggests that, in the main, men's groups are operating in isolation from each other and are without a strong and coherent voice in the policy arena. The establishment of a Men's Development Unit is proposed not just as a means of articulating in the policy arena insights and learnings emerging from the proposed Men's Studies Unit, but also as a central source for monitoring, supporting, and cohering the development of men's groups within a local, regional and national infrastructure.

The Role of the proposed Men's Development Unit within Structures for the Advancement of Adult Community Education proposed in *Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000.

It must be stressed that in proposing a Men's Development Unit this thesis does not mean to undermine the voice of women's groups in contributing to the shaping and developing of the community education sector. Rather, it is intended as a means of enabling men's groups, as a new inchoate interest, to also participate in this process at a critical moment in the history of the sector – with the recruitment of a national team of Community Education Facilitators heralding opportunities for "mainstreaming of relevant lessons into national policy and practice" (*Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000, p114).[17]

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[17] This thesis acknowledges that the question of representation poses profound challenge to all community-based groups. However, as a new and un-networked interest in the community sector, the proposed Men's Development Unit could, on behalf of men's groups, mirror the role the National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks (NCCWN) plays on behalf of women's groups. Formed in 2003, NCCWN "is a collective mechanism for Women's Networks to participate in, develop and respond to national policy in a number of key areas, including Community Education" (AONTAS, 2000, p34).

The Role of the Proposed Men's Development Unit in relation to Community Education Facilitators.

While there are now thirty-seven Community Education Facilitators employed within the Vocational Education Committee's adult education service, they are not operating within the context defined for them in the *White Paper* – based in the proposed Local Adult Learning Boards and networked under the proposed Community Education Technical Support Unit of the National Adult Learning Council. Nonetheless, the dimension of the work of Community Education Facilitators that relates to men's groups could be greatly enhanced if it were to be informed by input from the Men's Development Unit proposed by this thesis[18]. For, inter alia:

> Community Education Facilitators will be required to demonstrate a deep rooted knowledge of the communities they serve and a clear understanding and empathy with the philosophy and processes of community education.
>
> *(Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000, p115)

> Community Education Facilitators are given responsibility for:
> - Promoting the development and nurturing of new community based learning groups
> - Sharing good practice from the sector and supporting the mainstreaming of relevant lessons into national policy and practice
>
> *(Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000, p114)

> Community Education Facilitators already recruited have acted in an enabling role supporting groups through:
> - Programme development and tutor sourcing
> - Information dissemination
>
> *(Newsheet*, AONTAS, June 2004)

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[18] The role of Community Education Facilitators in supporting the development of the functional or organisational capabilities of men's groups has already been discussed. The remainder of this thesis is concerned with mechanisms for supporting the creative dimension of men's development work, that is with developing practitioners' capabilities in the world of ideas and analysis as they engage in the process of developing methodologies for their work with men's groups.

Thus Community Education Facilitators are beginning, and will continue, to play a critically important role in supporting the development of community groups; and given the lack of precedent for men's groups, the proposed Men's Development Unit would provide these facilitators with a vital source of learning and information about emergent ideas, insights and findings in the field of men's community education. For, while conducting their duties with excellence demands that Community Education Facilitators hold a "clear understanding of the philosophy and processes of community education", this is not a fixed or static end in itself. Rather, it is only to be expected that new philosophies and new processes will emerge as men's community education practitioners (supported by the academy) identify and test models of practice for their work with men's groups. It is vital that Community Education Facilitators be made aware of such emergent learnings, understandings, philosophies and processes if they are to meet their responsibilities of "promoting the development and nurturing of new community-based learning groups, sharing good practice, and supporting mainstreaming of relevant lessons into national policy and practice" (*Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000, p114). It is of note that Community Education Facilitators have already begun to assist community groups with programme development, tutor sourcing and information dissemination (AONTAS, *Newsheet*, June 2004). Without doubt, the crucial tasks of sourcing tutors for men's groups and of assisting with programme development could be best conducted if Community Education Facilitators had access to emergent ideas and learnings on the workings of men's groups via the Men's Development Unit proposed by this thesis. This framework would ensure that the work of Community Education Facilitators be informed by up-to-date understandings of good practice for working with men, understandings they could, in turn, communicate to the tutors that they source.

The Role of the Proposed Men's Development Unit in relation to two key Technical Support Units of the National Adult Learning Council.

The *White Paper* on Adult Education (2000, p115, p190) proposes that the National Adult Learning Council establish a Community Education Technical Support Unit to coordinate the work of the national team of Community Education Facilitators; proposing (inter alia) that this unit and team:

- Interact with the NGO structure throughout the country in developing a Community Education model in a number of sectors, namely: -

    Community-Based Women's Groups

    Men's Groups

    Travellers and other Ethnic Minorities

    People with Disabilities

    Community Arts Groups

    Older People

- Promote and monitor innovative pedagogical approaches in community education

(Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education, 2000, p190)

Given that men's groups are, in the main, inadequately resourced and operating in isolation from each other, and given the absence of precedent and dearth of scholarly inquiry and analysis to guide and inform their work, the task of "developing a community education model" and "monitoring innovative pedagogical approaches" in men's community education remains onerous and disjointed for men's groups, the team and unit. Undoubtedly then, as an agent for disseminating insights and learnings emerging from the co-operative endeavours of practitioners and the academy[19], and as an agent for monitoring and supporting the development of men's groups nationwide, the Men's Development Unit proposed by this thesis could greatly assist and cohere the collective endeavours of practitioners, the team and unit in advancing the field of men's community education.

It is welcome that the *White Paper* on Adult Education (2000) proposes not just that the proposed Community Education Technical Support Unit but also the proposed Research Unit of the National Adult Learning Council undertake or commission studies and evaluations of models of practice being developed in the community education sector. For, without doubt, there is need for intensive and continuous research and dialogue so that emergent and ongoing needs of men's groups can be identified and addressed, and ongoing learnings and insights can be shared among

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[19] This co-operative relationship between the academy and practitioners is discussed in part two of this thesis, which is concerned with the role of the academy in advancing the field of men's community education.

practitioners and can inform the future direction of policy and practice in the field of men's community education.

Part Two: The Role of the Academy in Advancing the Field of Men's Community Education in Ireland

Given the absence of precedent for emergent men's groups, the dearth of research and scholarship concerning the male gender in Ireland, and practitioners' quest to *"define a practice ... a philosophy or belief"*, it is vital that the academy support the nascent field of men's community education through establishing a Men's Studies Unit (Practitioner No.2 opening quote to this chapter). Indeed, establishing such a unit would serve, not only the needs of men's groups per se, but also the wider societal need for a site to explore, analyse and negotiate meanings of masculinity and gender relations in contemporary Irish society.

Of the seven universities in the Irish Republic: Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, Dublin City University, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, University of Limerick, National University of Ireland, Galway, and University College Cork - only four are currently providing courses for people practising in the community and voluntary sector[20]. While the *White Paper* on Supporting Voluntary Activity (2000, pp81-2) celebrates the endeavours of seven third-level colleges in providing courses to "meet the specific needs of the community and voluntary sector", and promises "the Implementation and Advisory Group will monitor developments and act as a catalyst in ensuring that good ideas find a home", three of these colleges have since ceased to provide such programmes[21]. The remaining four universities: University College Dublin, National University of Ireland Maynooth, University College Cork and National University of Ireland, Galway offer a comprehensive range of courses aimed at the community and voluntary sector.

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[20] By currently I mean for the academic year 2004 – 2005.
[21] These are: Trinity College Dublin, Dublin City University and University of Limerick. I made telephone inquiries to these universities but failed to ascertain specific reasons for discontinuance of courses aimed at the community and voluntary sector. Dublin City University attributed termination of such courses to the closure of its community office; while University of Limerick explained that up to 2004, it had delivered and validated courses for PAUL Partnership, but its "main focus is on providing post-grad courses for teachers".

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Collectively, these four universities provide generic programmes in adult and community education and in community development and practice comprising a multiplicity of course options aimed at serving the diverse needs of the community and voluntary sector[22]. In most cases, attainment of prior educational qualifications is not prerequisite to entry and, in some cases, prior experiential learning is accredited and the certification process is linked to the European Credit Transfer System. Many of these programmes offer progression routes from certificate to post-graduate level with flexible delivery mechanisms, such as outreach, modular and part-time options. While the Adult Education Units of these universities offer a range of entry points to accommodate diverse levels of educational attainment, and while they tailor courses to meet the needs of many working in the community and voluntary sector, they have yet to tailor a course to meet the needs of practitioners working with men's groups[23]. However, given the dearth of Irish research and scholarship on the male gender and given that men's groups have only recently emerged in the community sector, designing a course to serve the needs of practitioners in this area remains a challenging task, and one that demands the establishment of a Men's Studies Unit as its starting point. It is opportune that this thesis can offer its proposal for the establishment of a Men's Studies Unit at a time when stakeholders in the field of community education are particularly concerned with professionalising the sector and government acknowledges:

> While it is essential that Adult Education retain the flexibility and freedom to draw from a wide range of sources and expertise, it is vital that, over time, qualifications for the teaching and practice of Adult Education be accorded formal recognition. This process needs to recognise the diversity of the sector and provide for the multiplicity of actors and providers in the field.
>
> (*Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000, p150)

As new 'actors and providers in the field', "*floundering before [they] can even gain a foothold*" it is vital that the needs of practitioners working with men's groups be

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[22] University College Dublin, National University of Ireland Maynooth, University College Cork and National University of Ireland, Galway – the prospectuses from these institutions contain comprehensive details of the programmes and course options they offer in adult and community education and in community development and practice.

[23] For instance, inter alia the posts of: 'youth worker', 'counsellor', 'literacy tutor', 'adult community education practitioner', 'training and development officer'.

explored and addressed without delay (Practitioner No.4). It is thus regrettable that, over the four years that have elapsed since publication of the *White Paper* on Adult Education (2000), government failed to establish the Inter-Agency Working Group on Qualifications for Practitioners it proposed to:

- Represent the wide range of agencies in the field
- Identify generic training needs as well as the scope and need for specific specialisms on an elective basis
- Explore with relevant third-level colleges the scope for modular and flexible approaches to the development of nationally certified inservice and pre-service training programmes
- Make recommendations on the future recognition of qualifications in the Adult Education sector

adding:

> Given the diffused range of interests involved in the sector, it will be essential to progress this work on a phased basis, underpinned by an inclusive participative consultation process, systematic research and a review of best international practice in this area.
>
> *(Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000, p151)

It is of further regret that government failure to sign the National Adult Learning Council into statute has left practitioners bereft of the Forum for Adult Education Practitioners it proposed be established under the auspices of the council (*Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education*, 2000, p153). By the absence of such a forum, practitioners are denied a central site for exchanging and sharing ideas, forging new thinking and innovations, gaining peer support, and informing the development of policy and practice in the field of adult community education[24].

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[24] A) It is worth mentioning here that, in association with the National Development Plan Training of Trainers initiative, the Adult Education Unit of University College Dublin hosts periodic professional development workshops for tutors and course co-ordinators in the field of adult education. Following from these workshops, informative booklets are posted on the unit's web at http://www.ucd.ie/adulted. Current booklets offer information and guidance on: Adult Learning Styles; Facilitation Skills; Assessing Adult Learners; Course Design and Planning; Professional Portfolio Development; Assessment Guidelines for Students. B) The recent establishment of the Adult Education Research Association is also worth mentioning. This association aims to bring adult education researchers together with a view to identifying research undertaken to date and encouraging engagement in research that will impact on policy and practice – contact Rhonda.wynne@ucd.ie or gemma@nala.ie

Had the admirable aspirations for the community education sector articulated by government been realised, particularly had the Inter-Agency Working Group on Qualifications for Practitioners and Forum for Practitioners been established, men's groups would have had access to support systems and structures necessary, not just to their immediate survival, but also to their growth and development in the long term.

The Men's Studies Unit proposed by this thesis is suggested, not just as a mechanism for supporting practitioners, but also as a mechanism for launching the field of men's studies in Ireland. For this reason, it proposes that the Men's Studies Unit develop curriculum and certification processes in the general domain of Men's Studies as an academic discipline and in the specific domain of Men's Development Work as a practice[25]. This thesis, however, focuses specifically on proposing measures and processes for supporting men's development work as practice – indeed, as praxis.

> *I know I speak for all of us in the Dublin Men's Coalition when I say this. I know we have the experience, capacity and commitment to develop, with an appropriate educational agency or institution, a recognised qualification for practitioners doing men's development work. This qualification would have to be from foundation to degree level so people could work their way up. The curriculum development process may take time, but the advantage of having a recognised or understood approach to men's issues would validate our own work, support men correctly, help develop new community-based men's groups, and raise awareness of men's issues generally. In order that our work continue in a more structured way, while providing an appropriate service to our participants, our work, which can be demanding and challenging, can only benefit from a deeper understanding of the issues that affect men in general.*

(Practitioner No.2)

Consider for a moment what exactly this practitioner, on behalf of this peers, is saying, what exactly he is asking of the academy:

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[25] Modules developed by the Men's Studies Unit could be accredited as Men's Studies awards or they could be accredited as modular options within broader interdisciplinary programmes, for instance – Human Development Studies, Gender Studies, Culture Studies, Community Studies – from certificate to post-graduate level.

We have *the experience and capacity and commitment to develop* our practice

We seek the support of *an appropriate educational agency or institution*

We seek an inclusive structure of support *so people could work their way up*

We seek to forge *recognised or understood approaches to men's issues*

We seek *validation of our own work*

We seek ways to *support men correctly*

We seek to *raise awareness of men's issues generally*

We seek *a deeper understanding of the issues that affect men in general*

The fundamental message the practitioners who participated in this study are sending to the academy is that they are seeking a collaborative supportive site for grappling with "*men's issues*", for opening up debate on men as gendered beings, for converting tacit understandings into propositional statements so that meanings of masculinity can be discussed, analysed and negotiated in both the academic arena and within men's groups. To initiate this process this thesis now proposes a model of practice for the Men's Studies Unit - a model that is inclusive, 'live' and meaningful – as it posits a central role for practitioners as communicators and translators in a two-way dialogue between the academic world and men's groups, and, following Freire, draws on themes from practitioners' experiences, from the lives of men participating in men's groups, and from public discourse on gender as its focus of analysis. A diagrammatic overview of this proposed model is offered in Appendix 14 and the remainder of part two describes and explains it, offering some examples of its application.

The Proposed Model of Practice for the Men's Studies Unit:

This thesis proposes an award entitled *Men's Development Work as Praxis*, whereby the Men's Studies Unit would provide three core courses, a series of seminars, and a range of electives, on a modular basis from certificate to post-graduate level, with multiple entry points to cater to the diverse levels of educational attainment amongst practitioners in the field of men's development work[26]. This structured, yet flexible, radical model of practice is first briefly described and then explained:

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[26] To grant widest possible access and flexibility it is envisaged that prior educational qualifications be not prerequisite to embarking on this course of study, that prior experiential learning be accredited; and that the certification process be linked to the European Credit Transfer System.

Description of the Proposed Model of Practice for the Men's Studies Unit:

Core Courses

The three inter-related core courses would be entitled:

- *Exploration and Analysis of Meanings of Masculinity from the Male Perspective*
- *Language and Communication*
- *Critical Pedagogical Strategies for Working with Men's Groups*

Seminars

Subject matter for seminars would be drawn from: issues and themes identified by practitioners as central to their everyday men's development work; issues and themes in the lives of men participating in men's groups; and issues and themes in public discourse on masculinity and gender relations in Irish society.

Electives

The range of electives would include some courses already being provided for the community sector, for instance: *Community Development, Community Arts, Group Work, Addiction Studies, Leadership, Counselling, Social Analysis,* and *Research Methods*; as well as: *Feminisms, Gender Meanings in Bunreacht na hÉireann, The Impact of EU Directives on the Irish Legislative Framework and Implications for Gender, Gender Meanings and Representations in the Media, Men's Health Issues, Teaching Thinking* (de Bono)[27].

Relationships between Elements of the Proposed Model of Practice

The seminar process and three core courses are proposed as inter-related and complementary elements of a radical model of practice aimed at equipping men to critically analyse their lives *qua* men. The course *Exploration and Analysis of Meanings of Masculinity* would introduce practitioners to perspectives on the male gender and gender relations as theorised by male academics in the field of men's

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[27] This thesis also anticipates a need for the Men's Studies Unit to provide workshops for skills enhancement in the domains, for instance, of: computer use; fund-raising and making funding applications; conducting an evaluation; report writing; making sense of the systems and structures that intersect the policy arena and community and voluntary sector; and taking up advocacy roles. Further workshops would be provided as ongoing needs of practitioners are identified.

studies[28]. The course *Pedagogical Strategies for Working with Men's Groups* would introduce practitioners to the consciousness-raising approach championed by Paulo Freire[29]. At seminars practitioners and their tutors would engage in the consciousness-raising process, setting theories on masculinity, gender relations and culture in dialogue with themes drawn from their work and life experiences, as a means of negotiating and generating new understandings of their world. The course *Language and Communication*, would equip practitioners to play the vital role this thesis posits for them as 'translators' in a two-way communicative process between the academy and men participating in men's groups[30].

Within this model then, practitioners would enter into a dialogical relationship with each other and their tutor engaging in critical analysis of their experiences *as practitioners* and *as men*. Returning to their men's groups they would translate academic theory into the everyday language of the men thus equipping them to collaboratively engage in critical analysis of the realities of their lives as men. And, just as they would communicate academic theory to men's groups, practitioners would, in turn, communicate to the academy understandings of masculinity being forged through the consciousness-raising processes of men's groups. This ongoing dialogical relationship between the academy and men's groups is proposed as an inclusive and co-operative mechanism for men to discuss, analyse and negotiate meanings of masculinity in contemporary Ireland[31].

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[28] Course content would include: profeminist theoretical perspectives; analysis of conceptualisations of gender informing the eight perspectives of the men's movement in the international arena identified by Clatterbaugh (1997) and Messner (1997); masculinity politics in the international arena and Ireland; key debates within the field of men's studies; the historical development of men's studies as an academic discipline in the international arena; the status of men's studies in the academy.

[29] Course content would focus on the consciousness-raising pedagogical approach championed by Freire and on theories of culture and society informing it; practitioners would thus be introduced to the work of other critical culture theorists who also expand Marx's theory of 'false consciousness' into the realm of culture and communications, for instance, Althusser's theory of 'ideology as practice' and Gramsci's theory of 'hegemony or ideology as struggle'.

[30] Course content would include theoretical perspectives on language and communication drawing on the work, for instance, of Saussure, Sapir, Whorf, Chomsky, Davies, Tolson, allowing practitioners to engage with ideas concerning the relationship between language and thought and between language and reality.

[31] The role of the Men's Studies Unit in communicating new learnings to the Men's Development Unit for dissemination to Community Education Facilitators, men's groups nationwide and the policy arena would ensure that discourses on meanings of masculinity be fully inclusive of all stakeholders.

This posited communicative role demands that practitioners cultivate a critical awareness of language for if they are to identify 'generative themes' as material for their collaboration in consciousness-raising processes in men's groups, they must be equipped to tune into the "thought-language" these men "use to refer to reality, the levels at which they perceive that reality and their view of the world, which is the source of their generative themes" (Freire, 1972, p69). And if practitioners are to translate academic discourses into the everyday language of the men they work with, they must be equipped with the skills to study the men's use of language for clues to the cognitive methods they employ to conceptualise the world[32]. The importance of the role of language in the construction and negotiation of meaning is discussed in detail in part three, which is concerned with the communicative process within men's groups.

Examples of How the Proposed Model of Practice might be Applied

As this model aims to establish a dialogical relationship between the academy, practitioners and men's groups, issues for analysis will be ever changing, determined as they are by the 'generative themes' of a given context at a given moment in time. If this model were to be implemented immediately, but with practitioners outside of the Dublin Men's Coalition, then themes in public discourse arising from the *Exploring Masculinities* controversy could serve as initial material for analysis - pending practitioners' identification of the 'thematic universe' of their men's groups. However, were this model to be implemented with the Dublin Men's Coalition as participants, how might the issues and themes arising from this study's findings be addressed within it?

A relationship and overlap may be identified between issues and themes in public discourse on gender discussed in the first two chapters[33], issues and themes in the lives of the men who participated in the Ballymun and Tallaght case studies discussed in chapters four and five, and issues and themes practitioners identified as central to their everyday work with men's groups listed in chapter three and discussed over the

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[32] For instance, the Ballymun men's penchant for using metaphor and depicting scenarios identified by this study suggest that theoretical concepts could be communicated to them through use of metaphor and analogy and/or the critical drama techniques of, for example, Agusto Boal.

[33] It was noted in chapter two that the dominant voices in public discourse arising from the *Exploring Masculinities* controversy were those articulating the men's rights perspective.

course of this chapter. For the purpose of this exercise, dominant and overlapping themes discussed in preceding chapters are now condensed, collectively summarised and classified as 'men's issues', and the relationship between these issues and the themes identified by practitioners are then discussed:

Themes Identified by Practitioners	Men's Issues
	Men, especially fathers are not treated fairly by the courts
Anger and Frustration Political Apathy	
	Feminism is dictating an agenda for society that favours women
A Sense of Failure as Men	Loss of traditional framework for defining oneself as a man
Homophobia	
	Male isolation, depression and suicide
Mental Health Problems	

Now consider the following extract from a focus group discussion with the Dublin Men's Coalition:

> *We want to give them a framework to enable them to think for themselves ... to recognise their feelings and deal with them ... because if the feelings and head are in conflict you get nowhere ... They believed in something or other, they thought they were on top of the world ... then the whole thing collapsed ... And they are so angry.*

<div align="right">(Practitioner No.3)</div>

> *Yes. There's a lot of anger and frustration ... at family law, housing discrimination ... that men are considered expendable ... only good for work – and when you lose it you don't exist. There's anger that a woman can exist as a person, a man cannot ...*

<div align="right">(Practitioner No.2)</div>

I wonder is the anger a natural stage of development? A stage you need to go through? The danger is in getting stuck in the blaming women stage – not blaming the system but misplaced anger at women.

(Practitioner No.1)

There is a need for family law reform definitely. But instead of the agitation and placards ... instead of the militant approach of the Men's Council, it should be a quiet and positive contribution. [34]

(Practitioner No.4)

This conversation between practitioners participating in the Dublin Men's Coalition encapsulates all the concerns of this study. These practitioners acknowledge the legitimacy of men's rights concerns and the need for institutional reform but reject the "militant" approach of this perspective[35]. They are concerned about some men's "misplaced anger at women not the system". They want to give the men in their groups a "framework to think for themselves". They want to provide a site for men to "recognise their feelings and deal with them". They refer to the outer world of gender relations and the inner world of belief, perception and feeling. Clearly these practitioners are seeking a model of practice that incorporates a process of gender analysis so that the "misplaced anger at women" of some men might be redirected at "the system" – and thus this thesis proposes a model of practice that offers a site for men to engage in critical analysis of 'the system'. This radical model posits 'the system', the patriarchal system, as manifest in *both* the external world of socio-economic and gender relations and the inner world of belief, perception and feeling – and proposes mechanisms for men to critically engage with their experiencing of 'the system' as posited in this way[36] [37].

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[34] Practitioner No.4 is referring to the Men's Council of Ireland discussed in chapter one.

[35] Indeed, these practitioners requested that this project state: "the Dublin Men's Coalition disassociates itself from the Men's Council of Ireland".

[36] Having posited 'the system' in this way, it will hereinafter be referred to as 'the patriarchal system'.

[37] It is interesting to note that while Freire has been critiqued by some feminists for his 'gender blindness' the value of his pedagogical strategy lies in its adaptability – for it is being proposed here as a model of practice for raising men's awareness of themselves as gendered beings. And, while Freire used his model to empower people to challenge structural inequality, it is proposed here as a means of enabling men not only to challenge structural inequality including gender inequality, and not just gender inequality in its most frequent concern with relations of power between men and women but in its much less common concern with relations of power between men.

As a means of engaging men in critical reflection on the patriarchal system as manifest in the external world of gender relations, this model of practice could draw on two themes practitioners identified as central to their work and two themes classified as 'men's issues':

Themes Identified by Practitioners	Men's Issues
	Men, especially fathers are not treated fairly by the courts
Anger and Frustration Political Apathy	
	Feminism is dictating an agenda for society that favours women

This model could offer a site for men to reflect on the legitimate concerns of the men's rights perspective concerning the absence of constitutional protection for fatherhood with the electives: *Feminisms* and *Gender Meanings in Bunreacht na hÉireann*, providing material for this reflection[38]. As discussed in chapter two, the men's rights perspective blames feminism for the family court's 'discrimination against men', depicting feminism as a monolithic misandrist school of thought dominating the power arena, and framing men and women as competitors in a zero-sum power game. In inviting practitioners and men's groups to engage with a range of feminist perspectives, to explore the ideology of gender enshrined in *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, and identify the intended beneficiaries of that ideology, this model could offer a site wherein the idea of feminism as a monolithic and misandrist school of thought and as responsible for the *long-standing* absence of constitutional protection for fatherhood in Ireland might be challenged[39] [40].

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[38] It must be noted that the content of electives proposed by this thesis are based on this study's findings; and it is envisaged that, as further issues and concerns pertaining to men's lives are identified by stakeholders in the field of men's community education, further electives would be designed and offered in response to such ongoing insights and learnings, thereby ensuring that the process remains 'live' and meaningful.

[39] Chapter two discussed the ideological construction of gender enshrined in Bunreacht na hÉireann that was upheld by successive legislatures for many decades and its implications for relations of power in the everyday lives of men and women in Irish society.

[40] The two dimensional 'fixed and fluid' approach adopted by this project (see Appendix 9) offers practitioners a semi-structured format whereby in the 'fixed' element they would impart theoretical perspectives drawn from the electives and in the 'fluid' element would engage the men in theorising on men's rights issues and teasing out strategies for resolving them.

Providing a site that affirms the legitimacy of men's rights concerns but offers material for critical analysis of their causal source could enable men to recognise the absence of constitutional protection for fathers as the by-product of the state's institutionalisation of a particular ideology of gender, that ironically privileges them (but as men, not fathers) and thus "misplaced anger at women" might be converted into political will to challenge the patriarchal system as oppressive to some men as well as to women.

The third and final part of this thesis now turns to the inner world of belief, perception, feeling, and the communicative process within men's groups

Part Three: The Communicative Process between Men in Men's Groups

As a means of engaging men in critical reflection on the patriarchal system as manifest in the inner world of belief, perception and feeling, the model proposed by this thesis could draw on the remaining three themes identified by practitioners as central to their work with men's groups and two themes classified as 'men's issues':

Themes Identified by Practitioners	Men's Issues
A Sense of Failure as Men	Loss of traditional framework for defining oneself as a man
Homophobia	
	Male isolation, depression and suicide
Mental Health Problems	

> Only by men entering into dialogue with each other explicitly *as men* can the experience of manhood be truly named in the radical way needed to redress the basic sense of isolation. Until this happens the tendency for men to view each other as potential enemies rather than as brothers will continue to take its toll. An inherited culture of secrecy and silence views any kind of in-depth dialogue between men as a betrayal of masculinity.
>
> (Arthurs, Ferguson and Grace, 1995, p461)

Drawing on Kimmel's work, several chapters in this thesis discussed homophobia as not just fear of gay men per se, but fear of being perceived as gay in the 'evaluative

eyes' of other men. As such homophobia can be explained as a controlling practice within male culture, with men who engage in behaviour that fails to conform to the hegemonic model of masculinity placing themselves at risk of ridicule through being labelled as gay or 'sissy'. Homophobia thus poses a huge barrier to men entering into dialogue with each other: *There is this big gay thing, you know, the stigma about men talking together, there's something wrong with it* (Participant No.16, Appendix 2).

Homophobia then plays a key role in proscribing in-depth dialogue between men and thus isolated from each other men have little choice but to internalise the hegemonic model of masculinity as the only and 'real' way to be a man[41]. Thus isolated from each other, men are deprived of a site to explore and challenge contradictions between the dominant ideology of masculinity and the realities of their everyday lives. Arguably, the absence of such a site staves off challenge to the patriarchal system from within, and leaves men who fail to live up to the hegemonic model falling prey to Taboo Zone Oppression[42]:

> *Men think they have to be the breadwinner, the strong one, the one out there doing the thing. This is the way it's looked at in society. So when men can't do this, when a crisis occurs, their whole world collapses. That's it – they're worthless, they're useless, their whole self is gone.*
>
> (Participant No.2 Appendix 2)

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[41] It is worth noting that while the concept of homophobia is theorised by academics writing from many countries, the practitioners who participated in this study suggest homophobia as a problematic construct has special significance for Ireland. These practitioners suggest that, due to sexual abuse of boys in institutions run by the clergy up to the 1970s, many Irish men tend to conflate homosexuality with paedophilia and thus tend to express very high levels of antipathy toward gay men. This explanation for the high levels of homophobia these practitioners witness could well be plausible. The *Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland* (2002) report shows "more than a quarter of men (28%) in Ireland have been sexually abused or violated in their lifetime". Indeed, the report shows that the problem of sex abuse in Irish society has not abated, with figures here significantly higher than Europe and America (see Appendix 15). Given also the high levels of homophobia across twelve Irish schools reported by Lynch and Lodge (2002), it is highly regrettable that these theorists point to profound silence on the issue of sexual identity, not just in the education system but also in the research literature, silences that can only work to reproduce prejudice and discrimination against the gay community.

[42] Taboo Zone oppression is characterised by struggle to reconcile the dominant version of masculinity as 'powerful' and 'breadwinner' with the reality of powerlessness and unemployment, while loss of belief in the self diminishes capacity to envision and negotiate alternative ways of being (see page 2).

Borrowing from Freire and Tolson, the radical anti-patriarchal consciousness-raising model of practice proposed by this thesis will thus pose a profound challenge to individual men on two counts[43]. In breaking the culture of silence by entering into a critical dialogical relationship with each other they will be perceived as enemies and betrayers by those who benefit from this silence, for as Kimmel argues: "men's silence is what keeps the system running" (1994, p131). And, having been 'submerged in a culture of silence', they will have to find new language if they are to imagine and speak new realities[44].

The capacity of language to imprison or liberate, to either lock one into an externally constructed reality or to enable one to challenge constructed realities and create new realities is of central concern to both Freire and Tolson, with the latter focussing specifically on the role of language as an ideological instrument in the construction of masculinity and patriarchy:

> Social consciousness is as much structured by the 'codes' of a general ideological discourse, as it is by institutional boundaries and rules of behaviour. Patriarchy is a 'general ideology' substantially carried by codes of speech ... through language patriarchy remains a powerful source of definition. It is the social language of which 'man', as such, is the subject: an assertive language of politics and the market-place; a rational language which makes definitions and connections – the language of abstraction. It is also in the silences of this language that a repressed masculinity is imprisoned – as abstraction formalizes a man's identity, as rationality represses irrationality.

(Tolson, 1977, p140)

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[43] This thesis critiques the patriarchal system as not just damaging to women but also as damaging to many men. While it privileges men as a group over women as a group, the patriarchal system reproduces a hierarchy of masculinities wherein many men are marginalised by virtue of their class, ethnicity or sexual orientation; and in aspiring to the hegemonic model, many undergo the 'passive trauma' or psychological processes that culminate in disconnection from the self. In engaging men in critical reflection on the patriarchal system as manifest in the inner world of belief, perception and feeling, practitioners could impart theoretical perspectives drawn from their core courses, for instance: Kimmel's theorising on the role of homophobia in reproducing inequalities in the gender order and the social practices ('evaluative eyes') that work to sustain homophobia, Real's theorising on the 'passive trauma' that accompanies the acquisition of hegemonic masculinity; and Tolson's theorising on the role of language in the construction of realities.

[44] As demonstrated in chapter four, this quest for new language was palpable among the men in the Ballymun Men's Group.

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As a male analysing the communicative process between men who engaged in anti-sexist consciousness-raising processes, Tolson's (1977) rich account of the experience may hold learnings for emergent men's group in helping them anticipate potential challenges, pitfalls and rewards to be gained from the experience. Tolson recalls the group's gradual awareness of the limits the patriarchal language imposes on men's capacity to communicate with self or other men and tells of their struggle to break free of the boundaries of inherited language:

> We wanted to rediscover the experience of becoming a man – taking seriously our shortcomings and learning from the analysis. But we began to discover we had no language of feeling. We were trapped in the public specialized languages of work, learned in universities or factories, which acted as a shield against deeper emotional solidarities (p135).

> The experience of speaking, at length, to other men about your life, was itself disconcerting. You began to feel detached from your own 'persona' … The self-detachment achieved through speaking began to give meaning to the notion of 'consciousness-raising' for it became possible to say the unsayable, to open up closed areas of identity … to move beyond the role playing and the debating techniques of traditional masculinity (p136).

In daring to 'say the unsayable'[45] Tolson's group began to break 'the silences' that serve to 'imprison a repressed masculinity' and to recreate their relation to the world, concluding:

> Becoming conscious of masculinity thus not only involves transforming social institutions, but also understanding the language of patriarchy. And 'consciousness-raising' is, perhaps, an activity appropriate to linguistic transformation. It requires learning a new way of speaking, which needs to accompany the deconstruction of masculinity (p141).

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[45] This daring 'to say the unsayable' strongly resonates with the Ballymun men's daring to 'come out emotionally'.

The framework for men's development work offered by this thesis is aimed at establishing a communicative process between the proposed Men's Studies Unit, Men's Development Unit and individual men's groups as a mechanism for initiating an inclusive dialogical relationship founded upon consciousness-raising processes that will enable men to discuss, analyse and negotiate meanings of masculinity in contemporary Ireland. For:

> ...as Ricoeur points out recurrently in his philosophy, the role of the intellectual is to point out contradictions, bring them into conflict and through communication between them bring out something creatively new. This is also our task as adult educators, whether teachers, practitioners or researchers.
>
> (Gustavsson, 1997, p248)

Appendices

Journalist sues for libel over Terry Keane gossip column

THE journalist John Waters yesterday complained in the High Court in Dublin that a *Sunday Times* article written by gossip columnist Terry Keane meant he was a bad father who would be unsympathetic to his six-year-old daughter's future needs.

On the opening day of his libel action against the newspaper, Mr Waters said that when he read the article by Ms Keane his reaction was one of absolute horror that she had dragged Roisin into a piece she had written about an address he had given at the Abbey Theatre.

Mr Waters (47) said that stood out as the most outstanding aspect of the article, which is at the centre of his action against Times Newspapers Ltd, Virginia Street, London. His address was given before the start of the Greek play, *Medea*, in June 2000.

He told Mr Justice Kearns and a jury that part of Ms Keane's article was the opposite of the truth, which was that he loved his daughter above anything else in the world in this life. His concern was that on the basis of his work in the public arena anyone would draw his daughter into the matter when he was on stage talking about a play that was 2,500 years old.

That she should be metaphorically dragged from her bed and put into the debate left him weak and dizzy with nausea that any human being would do that to him and to her. It "took my breath away" that this could happen in what purported to be a newspaper dealing with public issues.

Mr Waters, who is an *Irish Times* columnist, said Ms Keane had trawled through his speech to look for something she might "mangle" into some shape to suit her purpose. The "props" used were a misuse of his words. The core meaning of his script had been taken out.

The article meant John Waters did not care about love while he had spent the previous four years demonstrating at every available opportunity that he absolutely believed in love in a total and unmitigating way, he added.

The Terry Keane column in the *Sunday Times* on June 18th, 2000, was under the heading, "Allow me the last word on John Waters' world."

It said: "Last Tuesday Ireland's foremost masculinist, John Waters, gave a pre-performance talk on *Medea*, which is being staged nightly at the Abbey Theatre to rave reviews. Mr Waters uses the opportunity for a gender-based assault. He told us: 'In the end, Medea goes unpunished.' Having lost her husband and murdered her own babies, are we to suppose she lived happily ever after?

"According to Waters' world: 'I'm afraid I don't believe in love; I don't believe in personality disorder; I don't believe in negative childhood experience; I don't believe in female biochemistry; I don't believe in postnatal depression; I don't believe in hormones, I don't believe in mood swings, I don't believe in self-pity; I don't believe in victimhood; I don't believe in heroines; I don't believe in universal motherhood; I don't believe in strong women; I don't believe in grand passion; I just believe in right and wrong, good and evil.'

"His un-credo makes me cringe and my sympathy goes to his toddler, Róisín. When she becomes a teenager and, I hope, believes in love, should she suffer from mood swings or any affliction of womanhood, she will be truly goosed. And better not ask dad for tea or sympathy . . . or help."

It is claimed that the newspaper failed to publish sentences immediately preceding and subsequent to the quotation attributed to Mr Waters in the article which qualified and/or explained the nature and quality of his quoted words and provided a context to it. The contextual or explanatory sentences were deliberately omitted from the quotation to alter the import of Mr Waters's words to portray him in an adverse light, it is pleaded.

Mr Waters claims the words mean he was a bad father; an unsympathetic person, in particular in relation to his daughter and her needs; that he was not a helpful or supportive father who would not be expected to provide assistance when she needed it.

The defence denies the words bore the meanings claimed and pleads that they were fair comment on a matter of public interest. It is denied Mr Waters's character and reputation had been damaged or that the words were published maliciously.

Mr Garrett Cooney SC, for Mr Waters, outlined Mr Waters's relationship with singer Sinéad O'Connor, whom he met in 1995. The friendship deepened, and there was a period of intimacy over two to three months. Sinéad became pregnant, and their daughter Róisín was born.

The relationship between Mr Waters and Ms O'Connor became turbulent. Mr Waters felt a great responsibility to his daughter.

Counsel said Mr Waters had accepted an invitation to address the audience before the opening of *Medea* in the Abbey. He delivered a prepared script in relation to the play which drew a good response from the audience. One would have expected the newspaper would have sent one of its critics to it. Instead, a gossip columnist, Ms Keane, was sent.

What appeared in the *Sunday Times* was a very nasty and vile piece of journalism which essentially attacked Mr Waters in the way he was then, and might in the future, be caring for his daughter. It was far removed from anything Mr Waters said in his address. The transcript contained controversial views about Irish society in the context of the play. What was relevant was the summary.

On July 9th, 2000, without agreement, the newspaper published a clarification. In it, Ms Keane said Mr Waters had expressed concern that the article might have been taken to suggest he was unfit to bring up his daughter.

It added: "That is not what I said, or meant to say. While I disagree strongly with his views on women and their place in society, I have no doubt that John is fit and capable of bringing up his daughter."

In evidence Mr Waters, a native of Castlerea, Co Roscommon, said he worked as a clerical officer with CIÉ before taking over his father's mailcoach driver's job on his retirement. He began sending articles to *Hot Press* magazine and got a staff job there in 1984. He worked with other publications later.

He met Sinéad O'Connor in 1995. The relationship became intimate, and they had a brief romance as a result of which which Sinéad became pregnant. The relationship lasted another two months, and the break-up was acrimonious. The real problem was the amount of publicity.

Mr Waters said he was very happy about the pregnancy. He thought they briefly considered marrying, but the relationship broke down. Ms O'Connor was living in London, and he was living in Dublin. He attended Róisín's birth in London on March 10th, 1996. He was very strongly of the view that he had a lifelong responsibility towards his child and would do whatever he could towards carrying it out.

The day Róisín was born he went into a church in London and vowed that he would always love her and do what he could to protect her. He decided he would visit her every week or 10 days for three days. In the first three years of her life he made over 100 round trips (to London) to see her.

Mr Waters said he and Sinéad had a reasonably amicable relationship and would share custody of Róisín. When she was three, there was a serious breakdown in the relationship and it was necessary to get involved in legal proceedings. The proceedings here related to publicity. There were family law proceedings in England. His objective was to achieve a form of joint custody ratified in law.

By May 2000 they had obtained a final transfer of the family proceedings from the UK to here. Róisín's residence was transferred to this jurisdiction, and she now lived here with him. There was a consent order for joint custody in this jurisdiction.

The hearing continues today.

John Waters and former *Sunday Times* gossip columnist Terry Keane leaving the court yesterday after the opening of the case in which he is suing the newspaper for alleged libel. Photographs: Ronan Quinlan/Collins

HOME NEWS

Columnist claims attack on his character

THE journalist and columnist John Waters has told the High Court that an article by columnist Terry Keane in the *Sunday Times* in June 2000 was a vicious attack on his character and reputation.

The article by Ms Keane said that her sympathy went out to "his toddler, Roisin", the six-year-old daughter of Mr Waters and singer Sinead O'Connor, which whom he had had a brief relationship.

Mr Waters told Mr Justice Kearns and a jury that that was to suggest that Roisín deserved sympathy because he was her father. What worse thing could be said than that his daughter deserved pity and sympathy for having him as her father, he asked.

Mr Waters is suing Times Newspapers Ltd, Victoria Street, London, over an article in the Terry Keane column of the *Sunday Times* on June 18th, 2000. It appeared shortly after he gave an address in the Abbey Theatre prior to the opening of the 2,500-year-old Greek tragedy, *Medea*.

During his cross-examination yesterday, Mr Eoin McCullough SC, for the defence, took Mr Waters through several of his *Irish Times* columns relating to feminism and men and women in modern society.

In the course of the article, it was stated: "His un-credo makes me cringe and my sympathy goes to his toddler, Roisin. When she becomes a teenager and, I hope, believes in love, should she suffer from mood swings or any afflication of womanhood, she will be truly goosed. And better not ask dad for tea or sympathy . . . or help."

It concluded: "He also left the stage quickly, thus depriving his

audience of any right of reply. But I suppose we can hardly expect him let a woman have the last word."

Mr Waters claims the words meant he was a bad father; an unsympathethic person in particular in relation to his daughter and her needs; and a "masculinist" who was anti-women and/or a misogynist.

The defence denies the words bore the meanings claimed and pleads that they were fair comment on a matter of public interest, namely Mr Waters's speech in the Abbey. It is denied Mr Waters's character and reputation had been damaged or that the words were published maliciously.

In evidence, Mr Waters told his counsel, Mr Gerry Danaher SC, that the article stated he was the kind of man who would withhold support, affection and love from his daughter. The viciousness of the attack on his character and reputation was so bound up with his fatherhood that he could not imagine a more fundamental assault on his character.

It was also an assault on his journalistic reputation, to say he went to the Abbey for the speech and instead engaged in a rant against women. A lot of people believed he was a solid, responsible person, and to suggest that he would rant and use what were purported to be his own words from his speech to back up words taken out of context appalled him.

Asked about the statement that he "left the stage quickly", Mr Waters said he took that to mean he was a coward. The right of reply was not part of the assignment at the Abbey. There was not time on the night. He was limited to a half-hour. He relished and

enjoyed controversy. It enhanced his own view and understanding of the subject.

After the article appeared he contacted his solicitor. He wanted an apology and for it to be made clear to readers that the article was wrong. He needed clarification, a few lines to say the article was completely wrong, that the newspaper apologised and accepted that Mr Waters was a good father and a journalist of integrity. That was all he wanted, and if he had

got it, it would have been the end of it.

Mr Waters told Mr Justice Kearns and the jury that he had no desire to go through "this ordeal" of the action. The wording of an offer by the newspaper to publish a statement was completely inappropriate.

He wanted the *Sunday Times* to restore his reputation to what it had been before they assaulted it. What was proposed made the situation worse and amounted to a

denial. Having called him a bad father, they were now saying they did not say that, which was not true.

Mr Waters was referred to further correspondence and said that at a later stage he was looking for a contribution to a charity and a sum in damages. It was clear as time passed that the *Sunday Times* had no desire to redress the wrong on his character and reputation and was treating the matter in a contemptous way. A clarification was

published on July 9th, 2000, and legal proceedings then commenced. The clarification exacerbated the situation.

They were in court because he had no other choice. His reputation as a father was central to his identity as a human being, and his reputation as a journalist was central to him making a living.

The *Sunday Times* had called him a coward. To say that a professional commentator was unwilling to engage in public debate would

disqualify him from commentating.

Under cross-examination by Mr McCullough, Mr Waters agreed that he had written about the family law system and, as he saw it, fathers being discriminated against in that system.

Copies of Mr Waters's columns in *The Irish Times* were handed to the jury. At one stage, when counsel referred to an article on male suicide and Mr Waters's comments and said it was "pretty strong stuff", Mr Waters replied: "That is my job." He said he did not find it difficult to produce such columns once a week and had lots of opinions.

He said his "core quarrel with feminism" was that feminists had no interest in putting men back into family life. He denied that his views were anti-women. He agreed that his weekly column, in which he frequently writes about the male role in society, could be strong stuff and got a strong reaction from readers. He believed that for 30 years there had been a one-sided debate about gender issues. As a journalist and editor he facilitated and participated in that debate.

But there was another side, he added during his cross-examination, and as a journalist he had a responsibility to put that side forward. There were problems in society as a result of extreme feminist ideology.

Counsel suggested that many people perceived Mr Waters was attacking women and that many of the letters in *The Irish Times* took the view that he had a misogynistic view. Mr Waters said that was alleged from time to time but he disagreed with it.

The hearing continues today.

The former *Sunday Times* columnist, Terry Keane, arriving for the second day of a libel action against her and the newspaper by the *Irish Times* columnist John Waters. Photograph: Ronan Quinlan/Collins

Waters made gender-based assault on women, says Keane

GOSSIP columnist Terry Keane said yesterday that she believed words used by journalist John Waters in an address at the Abbey Theatre before the start of the play *Medea* two years ago were a gender-based assault on women.

She told Mr Justice Kearns and a High Court jury that the words were intemperate, insulting and "obsessively cracked". She was giving evidence on the the third day of the libel action by Mr Waters against the *Sunday Times* over an article by Ms Keane about his speech in the Abbey. Ms Keane said she had been told of it the following day by journalist and author June Levine.

The action is over an article in the "Terry Keane Column" of the *Sunday Times* on June 18th, 2000. Mr Waters claims the words used meant he was a bad father and an unsympathetic person in particular in relation to his daughter, Roisin, and her needs. Roisin is the six-year-old daughter of Mr Waters and singer Sinead O'Connor with whom he had a brief relationship.

The article, referring to Mr Waters's Abbey speech, said "His un-credo makes me cringe and my sympathy goes out to his toddler, Roisin. When she becomes a teenager and I hope, believes in love, should she suffer from mood swings or any affliction of womanhood, she will be truly goosed. And better not ask dad for tea or sympathy...or help."

In its defence, Times Newspapers Ltd denies the words bore the meanings claimed and says they were fair comment on a matter of public interest. It is also pleaded that the words were true in substance and in fact.

Ms Keane, who went into the witness box late yesterday afternoon, described herself as a retired journalist, having retired in the last few months. She said she had worked with *The Irish Times*, *Sunday Press* and *Sunday Independent*, where she was a gossip columnist. In 1998, she joined the *Sunday Times* on a two-year contract but was unable to fulfil that because of illness.

She said she had known Ms Levine - who was the first witness for the defence - for 40 years and they were very close friends. She (Ms Keane) had not attended the production of *Medea* involved in the case but had attended another production. Ms Levine came to her house the day after Mr

Waters's speech for a chat. She had not come specifically to discuss what Mr Waters had said.

Ms Levine was "reeling" from the previous night in the Abbey and was extremely angry and upset at what she had heard from Mr Waters. She (Ms Keane) was not surprised by the intemperance of the words used by Mr Waters. She was familiar with Mr Waters's columns about men's rights and his grievances and the apparent damage that had been done to him by the custody case (relating to his daughter) he had gone through.

She scribbled down notes from what Ms Levine told her. Subsequently, she believed, she contacted Ms Levine again on the phone. She assumed Ms Levine was speaking from her notes (taken at the Abbey). She thought what Mr Waters had said was intemperate, violent, unpleasant and highly insulting to women. He had "overshot his own standards" in his intemperance in what he was saying viz-a-viz men and women.

Ms Keane said Ms Levine was an accurate journalist and she had no reason to believe she was speaking anything but the truth. She (Ms Keane) described Mr Waters's words as intemperate and insulting and obsessively "cracked". Asked by Mr Garrett Cooney SC, for Mr Waters, if she had also used the word "cracked," she said she had – "as an adjective for cracked pot".

Asked by Mr Eoin McCullough SC, for the defence, about the use of the word "masculinist" in the column, Ms Keane said she would have thought Mr Waters would have described himself as that with pride.

Earlier, Ms Levine, in her evidence, said she attended Mr Waters's speech in the Abbey and became so angry with what he was saying that she wrote notes. She noted down three passages which she found upsetting. They were about women being the main cause of divorce and of suicide in Ireland and abuse of children. She was hurt and angered. It was a general onslaught against women. The speech was so provocative that she felt a little time could have been provided to discussing it.

She got a copy of the speech and put it in a safe place but could not find it for a few weeks. She talked to Ms Keane about Mr Waters's speech the following morning.

Under cross-examination by Mr

Former *Sunday Times* journalist Terry Keane entering the High Court yesterday on the third day of the action for libel by journalist John Waters. Photograph: Marc O'Sullivan/Collins

Cooney, Ms Levine said her husband was well-known psychiatrist Dr Ivor Browne. She knew Mr Waters had consulted him professionally in relation to the difficulties about his daughter and Ms O'Connor.

When she told Ms Keane about Mr Waters's speech next day, she (Ms Levine) had the passage of the speech "off by heart". She had listened to it in the Abbey and written it down. She was satisfied that what Ms Keane had written was accurate. She agreed it was not a full reproduction of what was said.

Asked if she had deliberately omitted to tell Ms Keane of words quoted at the start and end of the passage quoted, Ms Levine said she did not think she did. She probably did not think them of any importance. She had the words "off by heart" for quite a while.

When counsel put it that she remembered 80-90 per cent of the passage but could not remember the qualifying words and the commencement and conclusion of it, Ms Levine replied "Do you not

think 80-90 per cent is pretty good?" Counsel said the omitted words changed the sense of the words quoted by Ms Keane. Ms Levine said she obviously did not remember them.

She knew Ms Keane had been working with the *Sunday Independent* previously and if she had still been working for that newspaper she would not have given the words to her. She thought the whole case was "much ado about nothing". Asked by counsel for the *Sunday Times* if she felt she misled Ms Keane, she said she thought she must have misled her.

Mr Waters, who was in the witness box for the third day yesterday, told the court that he had turned down an offer from the *Sunday Times* to write a letter of reply to Ms Keane's article because it would have meant a public squabble with the newspaper about "my private capacity as a father". He said he would debate any other issue with her but that would have meant he would be dragged into a controversy about something which did not

have a public dimension, his fatherhood.

Mr Waters said the *Sunday Times* presented a very serious misrepresentation of his statement. His speech in the Abbey had run to 7,000 words. To deal with his speech in that way was inappropriate.

Ms Keane was "sneering" at him through his daughter – that hopefully Roisin would not be like her father and would believe in love.

The statement attributed to him "I don't believe in love" was an extraordinary one and one he was glad he did not make it. It was meant to mean he was not capable of loving a woman.

The *Irish Times* Religious Affairs Correspondent, Mr Patsy McGarry, called as a witness by Mr Waters's side, said he read the *Sunday Times* article. It would have been perceived as deeply injurious to Mr Waters's reputation. It would have conveyed to the reader that he was a "freak".

The hearing continues today.

Greek tragedy presents its comic dimensions

By Frank McNally

JOURNALISTS are the modern-day equivalent of the "Greek chorus", a woman told John Waters after his address on *Medea* in the Abbey Theatre, an account of which led to his libel case against the *Sunday Times* and Terry Keane.

Yesterday, as the legal drama continued to occupy the main stage in the High Court, journalists had temporarily abandoned the chorus to take up central roles. And, while the issues are inextricably tied to the plot of Euripides's tragedy, the evidence was not without its comic moments.

The story unfolding before the court began over coffee in Ranelagh two years

ago, when Ms Keane received a visit from her south Dublin neighbour and friend of "nearly 40 years", journalist June Levine. Ms Levine had attended Mr Waters's pre-show talk the night before and was still furious at what she saw as its "onslaught on women".

Giving evidence yesterday, she said she knew the most annoying parts by heart, including what the plaintiff himself described in court as his humorous exaggeration of "*schadenfreude*" among women in the Abbey audience. Editing what she thought irrelevant, but which the plaintiff says is crucial to understanding his talk, she recounted the excerpt reproduced by Ms Keane. It was not a premeditated exercise, she insisted, just "something to talk about over coffee".

There were some things even friends of 40 years don't talk about, however. Asked if they had been friendly during the years of Ms Keane's gossip column in the *Sunday Independent*, Ms Levine replied that she never read that newspaper. And asked if she was aware that Ms Keane had since described her old column as "poisonous and pernicious", Ms Levine said she was not, but the description "doesn't seem too inaccurate".

The public gallery could not contain its *schadenfreude* at this point, and the laughter was only encouraged when, asked if she had reservations about giving the Medea story to her friend, Ms Levine added: "I wouldn't have given it to her for the *Sunday Independent*." So this was a new Terry Keane, "not pol-

sonous or pernicious", asked Garret Cooney SC, now playing to the gallery at the expense of the chorus. "People can change," said Ms Levine.

The witnesses changed soon afterwards, Ms Keane herself taking the stand briefly to recount her career in journalism, starting with *The Irish Times* in 1963, and to describe Mr Waters's views on *Medea* as "cracked" but "a damn good story". She returns today.

The plaintiff's case ended earlier, with glowing references for Mr Waters from *Irish Times* Religious Affairs Correspondent Patsy McGarry. Mr Waters concluded his own evidence by rebutting Ms Keane's suggestion that he had left the Abbey stage in a hurry on the night in question.

HOME NEWS

Columnist says she does not consider Waters a bad father

GOSSIP columnist Ms Terry Keane told the High Court yesterday an article she wrote in the *Sunday Times* two years ago was not meant to convey journalist John Waters was "a bad father". She did not say Mr Waters was a bad father or attack his journalism in any way. She believed Mr Waters was a good father. "None of us are perfect parents," she said.

What she was saying in her article was that if Mr Waters held the beliefs referred to in the article, he would not be a sympathetic parent in circumstances where his daughter suffered female problems.

She thought Mr Waters was paranoid and saw insults where there were none.

When she wrote the article she, "like everybody else", was well aware of Mr Waters's custody proceedings. She disagreed he was in a position different to other fathers. There were many single fathers and her article was "absolutely not" deeply wounding and hurtful but was the reaction of a mother of children saying: "My God, I hope he has more sympathy. If not, God help the women in his life."

Denying she had brought Mr Waters's daughter Roisin into the public arena, she said Roisin was a very high-profile child because of her parentage and Mr Waters himself had mentioned her very frequently. Ms Keane denied she was being "deep down and personal".

Mr Garrett Cooney SC, for Mr Waters, suggested that what was written by Ms Keane was in keeping with the form of *Sunday*

Independent journalism she herself had described as "malicious". "I suggest, Mr Cooney, that you are wrong," she replied.

Ms Keane, who wrote a gossip column for the *Sunday Independent* before moving to the *Sunday Times*, was being cross-examined on the fourth day of Mr Waters's libel action against the *Sunday Times* arising out of a piece in her column of June 18th, 2000.

Mr Waters claims the words meant he was a bad father and an unsympathetic person, in particular in relation to his daughter, Róisín, and her needs. Róisín is the six-year-old daughter of Mr Waters and singer Sinéad O'Connor.

Times Newspapers Ltd, of Victoria Street, London, denies the words bore the meanings claimed and pleads they were fair comment on a matter of public interest and true in substance and in fact.

The article was published a number of days after Mr Waters gave a speech at the Abbey Theatre prior to the opening there of the Greek tragedy *Medea*.

Yesterday, Ms Keane said she was told of Mr Waters's speech the next day by her good friend June Levine – a journalist and author. One passage in the article began: "According to Waters's world: 'I'm afraid I don't believe in love . . . '" If Mr Waters did not believe in what she had referred to in the article he would be unsympathetic to his daughter if in the future she was having boyfriend trouble or PMT. Lots of parents were unsympathetic if their chil-

dren came in late – that made them concerned parents. She did not think Mr Waters was a bad father. As a mother of four children, she thought children needed sympathy. She knew Mr Waters was "eccentric and very sensitive".

Ms Keane said she did not think she was trying to change what Mr Waters had said. She had put it into context.

She did not put in the last section of what he said because it was "part of his blind spot", she said. Because of his experience he was very damaged by what had happened and she thought he was paranoid and saw insults where there were none, she added.

Only somebody paranoid and oversensitive would have read her piece the way he did. She just believed that if Mr Waters believed what he said, it was going to be very hard on his daughter.

Asked about Mr Waters leaving the theatre without a right-of-reply from the audience, Ms Keane said people like Mr Waters did not like women to have the last word. If he had been allocated a half-hour for his speech, why did he not make the speech 25 minutes and get some reaction from the audience.

She said writing the article would have taken about 20 minutes. She didn't believe she had written it out beforehand. She had dictated it.

Evidence concluded late yesterday and the hearing was adjourned until Tuesday when counsel for both sides will address the jury. Mr Justice Kearns will then address the jury, either late on Tuesday or on Wednesday.

Sunday Times Irish editor Fiona McHugh, left, leaving the High Court with Terry Keane yesterday. On the right is journalist June Levine. Photograph: Ronan Quinlan/Collins

Keane recalls a 'gentle jibe' at the President's style

WHEN she called former President Mary Robinson "Her Poloness" in a *Sunday Independent* column it was "just a gentle jibe", Ms Terry Keane said.

Mr Garrett Cooney SC, for Mr John Waters, referred Ms Keane to several columns under the title "The Keane Edge" which appeared in the *Sunday Independent* over a number of years.

Asked about references to Mary Robinson as "Her Poloness", she said this was a nickname she gave the then President in jest. "She mostly wore polo-necks and she was deified by everybody, and it was a funny remark – it is a pun on polos and holiness."

Earlier Ms Keane said she had worked with the *Sunday Independent* for 12 years before moving to the *Sunday Times*. She

was given £65,000 "hello money" by the *Sunday Times* and £50,000 for 48 articles in a two-year contract.

She agreed the public assumed she was associated with the *Sunday Independent* column but it was an "open secret" in journalistic circles that she was part of a team writing it. Her column in the *Sunday Independent* had slowly become "bitchy and malicious". "It started off as funny and entertaining, not malicious and pernicious, but it did become that."

She had been uncomfortable with the column in the last few years before she left the *Sunday Independent* but had very little money.

"When you have very little money, you sometimes have to do the unpleasant job. If I had known I would have cleaned

latrines. We have to regret the past, not change it,"

Mr Cooney referred Ms Keane to another *Sunday Independent* piece about the sex of Bono's child before the singer knew, prior to the birth. She had nothing to do with that piece. Unfortunately, it was under her name and she had to take the heat. She thought the piece was disgusting and objected to it.

Asked what was the difference between the money paid by the *Sunday Independent* and the *Sunday Times*, Ms Keane said: "I suppose, after tax, a couple of hundred quid." Pressed further, she said she was paid £1,000 by the *Sunday Times* and about £750 by the *Sunday Independent*.

Asked about a piece referring to Sinead O'Connor's pregnancy and the sex of the

baby and if that had been her article, Ms Keane said she certainly had not written it. She was probably living in Kerry then, recovering from a hysterectomy. The article was under her name so she was perfectly happy to take responsibility for it.

Questioned further about the *Sunday Independent* column, she said she very often found it too "cringe making" to read it.

Ms Keane said Mr Waters had written in *The Irish Times* that journalists in Middle Abbey Street were lackeys because they referred to Dr A.J.F. O'Reilly and not "Tony." Her point in one column was that was the sort of pretentious, populist rubbish he was going along with. *The Irish Times* did not refer to its chairman as "Tcommy" or "Tommy

McDowell." She got the notes on which she based her piece in the *Sunday Times* from June Levine. She would have phoned back Ms Levine to get part of the quotations from her. Asked what she did with her notes, she said they would probably have been thrown out. Nobody in the *Sunday Times* asked her for her notes and she had never looked for them.

Ms Keane said she had not asked Ms Levine if Mr Waters had furnished a script of his address. She was using Ms Levine's impressions as a member of the audience and her impressions of the speech. She had no reason to believe Ms Levine had any agenda or that she was lying. Several weeks later, Ms Levine told her that Mr Waters had given a script to Tony Barry, who had staged the Abbey.

Irish Times columnist John Waters leaving the Four Courts yesterday after being awarded €84,000 in his libel action against the *Sunday Times*. Photograph: Joe St Leger

Keane absent as Waters wins €84,000 for libel

By Frank McNally

TERRY Keane was not in court for the verdict in the libel case brought by John Waters, just as she was not in the audience for his Abbey Theatre address on *Medea* two years ago.

But her account of the latter cost the *Sunday Times* dearly in the former yesterday, when a jury agreed with the plaintiff that it had maligned his reputation as a father and a journalist.

Ms Keane's report was headlined "Allow me the last word on John Waters' world", a reference to what she claimed was his hasty departure from the stage on the night in question, and the audience's inability to reply to his comments on the play's theme of violence by women.

Ironically, after a week-long trial, Ms Keane herself had departed the scene before the denouement. In her absence, Mr Waters had the last and only words, and €84,000 in damages too.

Outside the court, pale, emotional but dignified, the *Irish Times*'s columnist said "nobody should have to go through this to vindicate his name and reputation". But he was grateful to the jury for the vindication.

He also thanked "two very special people" in his life: "Róisín for being my daughter" and "God, for the strength and courage to get through this ordeal".

The ordeal lasted two hours and 45 minutes after the jury was sent out in the mid-afternoon. When the verdict was read out, Mr Waters was hugged by his long-time friend and former member of the Freshmen showband, Derek Dean.

Otherwise the courtroom was quiet, except for the rustle of copies of the *Sunday Times*'s prepared statement, which regretted only that "personality issues" had clouded a case concerning "the fundamental right of journalists to comment robustly on matters of public interest".

The jurors had been brought back briefly by the judge, to clarify his plea to them to consider whether, in his speech on *Medea*, Mr Waters had "broken the nexus" or "severed the umbilical cord" between discussion of the Greek tragedy, and instead embarked on the general "assault" on women alleged by Ms Keane.

The predominantly young jury might have been forgiven for thinking a nexus was the sort of car driven by lawyers.

On the question of umbilical cords, there seemed to be an invisible one connecting Ms Keane's most recent employer with an earlier one. Plaintiff's counsel referred repeatedly to the *Sunday Independent* as the defence, her old gossip column clearly still casting a long shadow.

Court report: page 4

4   **C**   THE IRISH TIMES, Wednesday, April 24, 2002

HOME NEWS

Waters awarded €84,000 damages plus costs against 'Sunday Times'

AN *Irish Times* columnist Mr John Waters has won his High Court libel action against the *Sunday Times* over an article by gossip columnist Ms Terry Keane which, Mr Waters claimed, meant he was a bad father. He was awarded damages of €84,000 and costs.

The total costs of the five-day action are estimated at about €250,000. After the jury of six women and five men had returned its verdict, Mr Justice Kearns allowed a stay until Wednesday next to give time to lawyers for the defence to take instructions on whether they wanted a longer stay to allow an appeal.

One juror who had been present last week was excused from attending yesterday because of a commitment. The 11-member jury's decision came after deliberations of just over 2½ hours.

Mr Waters sued Times Newspapers Ltd, Victoria Street, London, publisher of the *Sunday Times*, over the article by Ms Keane published on June 18th, 2000. This was some days after Mr Waters had given a 30-minute address to the audience at the Abbey Theatre before the opening of a performance of the Greek tragedy, *Medea*.

The article called Mr Waters "Ireland's foremost masculinist" and referred to his pre-performance talk at the Abbey, saying he had used it for "a gender-based assault". The concluding two paragraphs stated: "His un-credo makes me cringe and my sympathy goes out to his toddler, Roisin. When she becomes a teenager and, I hope, believes in love, should she suffer from mood swings or any affliction of womanhood, she will be truly goosed. And better not ask Dad for tea or sympathy . . or help.

"He also left the stage quickly, thus depriving his audience of any right of reply. But I suppose we can hardly expect him to let a woman have the last word."

High-profile libel cases

● **Fianna Fáil deputy Ms Beverley Cooper-Flynn failed to win damages in her case against RTE and other defendants over allegations that she encouraged tax-evasion. Her appeal is pending.**
● **Mr Proinsias de Rossa won £300,000 in an action against the *Sunday Independent* over an article by Mr Eamon Dunphy which concerned a letter to the Soviet Communist Party.**
● **Mr Seán McPhilemy won £145,000 damages plus an estimated £870,000 in costs, in 2000 in an libel action against the *Sunday Times* over his "Ulster death squads" documentary .**

It was claimed by Mr Waters that the words in the article meant he was a bad father and that his daughter deserved sympathy or pity as a consequence of his failings as her father. The defence denied the words bore the meanings claimed.

In its verdict, the jury found the words in the article did mean Mr Waters used his address in the Abbey to mount a gender-based assault, having been told by the judge to give such an answer. But they found that meaning was not true in substance or in fact.

The jury also found the words meant Mr Waters was a bad father who would unfairly withhold sympathy and help from his daughter in later life and that he had behaved in an unfair and cowardly way by denying his audience in the Abbey a right of reply.

In his closing address to the jury, Mr Justice Kearns said its approach did not require "rocket science". They should adopt a detailed, surgical and analytical

The Ireland Editor of the *Sunday Times*, Ms Fiona McHugh, leaving the Four Courts after the libel case yesterday.
Photograph: Photocall Ireland

approach, bring "buckets of common sense" and go about its deliberations in a calm and dispassionate way.

Describing the case as a relatively simple one, he said there were three issues the jurors would have to decide. The first concerned the meaning of the words in the article and, if they found for Mr Waters on that, they would, in effect, have decided that defamation occurred. The defence was denying the words carried the meaning which Mr Waters and his legal team said they did. The second issue was whether the *Sunday Times* had made out a justified defence. The third issue was damages.

The judge said the appropriate meaning of the words should be the type of meaning the average reader would get from reading it. The article should be looked at as a whole. If the jury decided on damages, they should be proportionate to the injury suffered.

Earlier, Mr Eoin McCullough SC, for the defence, said that as a result of a ruling by the judge, the jury did not have to consider the issue of fair comment. The central issue was the meanings of the words in the article and whether they bore the meanings of which Mr Waters had complained.

The case was unusual in featuring a dispute between two well-known and controversial characters. Mr Waters in his *Irish Times* column said things to get the readers talking. His articles were not only controversial, but the language was forceful. Ms Keane had said that for 12 years prior to 1999, she was the person whose name was given to a gossip column in the *Sunday Independent*.

Mr McCullough told the jury it was not to assume that if the words used in the article by Ms Keane about Mr Waters were true, this made Mr Waters a bad father. Being criticised or given out to by an unsympathetic father did not make one a bad father or parent. Mr Waters was not a bad parent if he failed in one respect or another to offer sympathy or help to his young daughter. It was simply not true to say the article suggested he was a bad father.

Mr Gerry Danaher SC, for Mr Waters, said libel was about reputation and Mr Waters had said his reputation was priceless. Mr Waters had a reputation as a father. In difficult circumstances, he was able to play a vital and central role in relation to Roisin. He had had to fight a legal battle to establish that right.

There had been an attempt to portray Mr Waters as some form of obsessional paranoid dealing with only one issue. A number of his articles had been put to him, but he had joined *The Irish Times* in 1995 and had written some 350 columns. All of those could have been put to him to give a true impression of what he was

Appendix 2

Profile of Ballymun Men's Group Membership

Participant Number	Age Leaving School	Attendance Frequency Per Week	Career Path	Employment Status	Marital Status	Post School Education / Training Completed	Post School Education / Training in Progress	Qualifications Leaving School
1	14	2 - 3 Days	Semi-Skilled	LTU	Separated	None	-	Primary Cert
2	18	4-5 Days	Professional	Part-time	Separated	Academic Degree	-	Leaving Cert
3	13	1 Day	Semi-Skilled	Retired	Married	Job Related	-	Primary Cert
4	13	4-5 Days	Semi-Skilled	LTU	Separated	Community Based	-	Primary Cert
5	14	2 - 3 Days	Semi-Skilled	Retired	Widowed	Job Related	-	Primary Cert
6	16	2 - 3 Days	Semi-Skilled	LTU	Separated *	Job Related	-	Group Cert
7	14	2 - 3 Days	Semi-Skilled	Black Economy	Married	Job Related	-	None
8	14	4-5 Days	Unskilled	LTU	Separated	Job Related	-	None
9	17	4-5 Days	Semi-Skilled	LTU	Cohabiting #	Vocational	-	Leaving Cert
10	16	Less than 1 Day	Unskilled	Unemployed	Married	Vocational	-	None
11	14	1 Day	Unskilled	LTU	Married	None	-	Primary Cert
12	14	4-5 Days	Unskilled	Retired	Single	Job Related	-	None
13	14	2 - 3 Days	Semi-Skilled	Part-time	Separated	Community Based	-	None
14	13	2 - 3 Days	Skilled	Retired	Married	None	-	Primary Cert
15	16	2 - 3 Days	Semi-Skilled	Unemployed	Separated *	Vocational	-	Group Cert
16	15	4-5 Days	Semi-Skilled	Full Time	Married	Vocational	-	Group Cert
17	14	1 Day	Unskilled	LTU	Married	None	-	None
18	14	1 Day	Unskilled	Black Economy	Married	None	-	None

LTU = Long Term Unemployed (Over Three Years)
* Separated Twice
# Cohabiting In Second Relationship

Appendix 3

Profile of Tallaght Men's Group Membership

Participant Number	Age	Age Leaving School	Career Path	Employment Status	Marital Status	Post Grad Qualification	Post School Education / Training Completed	Post School Education / Training in Progress	Qualifications Leaving School
1	40-50	18	I T Sector	Self Employed	Married	-	Job Related	Academic Degree (OU)	Leaving Cert
2	30-40	16	Skilled	Employed	Married	-	Vocational Apprenticeship	-	None
3	40-50	13	Unskilled	Employed	Married	-	Community Based	Community Based	Primary Cert
4	40-50	16	Skilled	Self Employed	Married	-	Vocational Apprenticeship	-	Inter Cert

Appendix 4

Profile of Practitioners belonging to Dublin Men's Coalition

Practitioner Number	Age	Age Leaving School	Employment Status	Practice Location	Post Graduation Qualification	Post School Education / Training Completed	Qualifications Leaving School	Remuneration
1	50-60	18	Part-time	Ballymun & Tallaght Men's Groups	In Progress	Academic Degree	Leaving Cert	Paid Work
2	40-50	18	Full Time	Blanchardstown Men's Outreach Project	None	Academic Degree	Leaving Cert	Paid Work
3	40-50	18	Part-time	Blanchardstown Men's Group	In Progress	Academic Degree	Leaving Cert	Voluntary Work
4	40-50	16	Full Time	Ballymun Men's Group	None	Community Based	Group Cert	Paid Work

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule for Membership of Ballymun Men's Group

Introduction:

As you know I am studying the growth and development of men's groups in Ireland and exploring their potential as a source of support for men and as a site for men's education. While women's groups have been operating for about twenty years now, men have only much more recently begun to form groups in their localities. Conducting this kind of research helped women to identify their needs, develop ways of working together, share ideas and form networks. I hope this research project will assist in a similar sharing of knowledge among men's groups.

Explaining the Interview Format:

The first part of this interview is about asking for your thoughts and ideas on men's changing lives and on your involvement with the Ballymun Men's Group. In the second part, I hope we can discuss your experience as a participant on the *Men on the Go* Programme/s.

Explaining Confidentiality and Validation Measures

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in this project and to promise that I will uphold a strict code of confidentiality and your identity will be protected. When I have typed up the interviews I will meet you again to read back what you have said to make sure I have got it right. As you know, I am doing this research for my PhD study and so I might take some quotes from your interview and analyse them in my written work for college. This written work will be in college jargon so I will explain to you, along with the other men in the group, in plain language, the main issues or themes I deem to be of concern in your lives, based on the times I spent here with the men's group and on my analysis of your interviews. Is that okay with you?

Part One - Theme: Men's Changing Lives and Men's Groups

Q. With more and more women working now, and with increased unemployment for men, gender roles in the family and workplace have changed a lot.
What has this meant for you personally:

      A - In your private life of family and close relationships?

      B - In your public or social life?

Q. Do you think men and women are treated equally in today's world?

Q. The idea of 'men's issues' is beginning to take hold. What are the things men are concerned about, talking about, annoyed about?

Q. What are men's groups about?

Q. What made you join the men's group?

Q. Is there a need in society for Men's Groups?

Q. In my last research project the men said that being slagged as 'sissy', 'gay' or 'mad' was the biggest barrier to joining men's groups. Did you find that?

Q. Do you think men's groups are the same as women's groups, or are they different?

Q. Do men communicate with each other in the same way that women communicate with each other, or is there a difference?

Q. In one of your discussions on the *Men on the Go* programme, someone suggested that the image of men needed to change. I would love to hear your views on this

      A - What do you think is the image of men?

      B - Does it need to change?

Q. People say that we are living in the age of technology, the information age. What does this mean for you personally?

Q. The need to motivate men was brought up in one of your class discussions.

     A - What do you think makes men lose motivation?

     B - How could they be helped to become motivated again?

Part Two – Theme: *Men on the Go* Programmes

Q. What made you enrol on the *Men on the Go* programme/s?

Q. What did the title *Men on the Go* suggest to you?

Q. When you enrolled for the second programme it was entitled *Men on the Go Part Two*. But because the programme introduced you to de Bono's 'thinking tools', its name could have been changed to *Critical Thinking Skills*. It may be difficult for you to answer this now that you have done the course, but had the title 'Critical Thinking Skills' been flagged up at enrolment, would it have made a difference in your decision to enrol?

Q. Is the title of a programme important when you are deciding whether or not to enrol?

Q. Do the words 'programme', 'course' or 'module' make a difference when deciding whether or not to enrol?

Q. What other titles might help to attract men to programmes?

Q. If you were trying to get a friend to come to the programme what kind of things would you say?

     A - How would you describe it?

     B - Would you call it a programme, course, module, something else, or nothing at all?

Q. What did you like about the *Men on the Go* programme/s?

Q. What did you not like or would like to see changed on the *Men on the Go* programmes?

Q. A - What did you learn on the *Men on the Go* programmes?

    B - Did you use that learning in any situation?

Q Having participated on the *Men on the Go* programme/s, do you feel differently about anything

    A - Regarding yourself?

    B – Regarding the topics that were discussed?

Q. Which venue did you prefer

    A - DCU or Axis?

    B - Why?

Q. Will you talk to me about the project you did for graduation day?

    A - Why you chose it?

    B - What it means to you?

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule for Membership of Tallaght Men's Group

Introduction:

As you know I am studying the growth and development of men's groups in Ireland and exploring their potential as a source of support for men and as a site for men's education. While women's groups have been operating for about twenty years now, men have only much more recently begun to form groups in their localities. Conducting this kind of research helped women to identify their needs, develop ways of working together, share ideas and form networks. I hope this research project will assist in a similar sharing of knowledge among men's groups.

Explaining the Interview Format:

The first part of this interview is about asking for your thoughts and ideas on men's changing lives and, on your involvement with the Tallaght Men's Group and what you think about the idea of men's groups in general. In the second part, I hope we can discuss your experience as a participant on the *Thinking Skills* Module.

Explaining Confidentiality and Validation Measures

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in this project and to promise that I will uphold a strict code of confidentiality and your identity will be protected. When I have typed up the interviews I will meet you again to read back what you have said to make sure I have got it right. As you know, I am doing this research for my PhD study and so I might take some quotes from your interview and analyse them in my written work for college. This written work will be in college jargon so I will explain to you, along with the other men in the group, in plain language, the main issues or themes I deem to be of concern in your lives, based on the times I spent here with the group and on my analysis of your interviews. Is that okay with you?

Part One - Theme: Men's Changing Lives and the Idea of Men's Groups

Q. With more and more women working now, and with increased unemployment for men, gender roles in the family and workplace have changed a lot. What has this meant for you personally:

      A - In your private life of family and close relationships?

      B - In your public or social life?

Q. Do you think men and women are treated equally in today's world?

Q. The idea of 'men's issues' is beginning to take hold. Do you think men have issues?

Q. In a discussion amongst men in the Ballymun Men's Group someone said that the image of men needed to change. I would love to hear your views on this

      A - What do you think is the image of men?

      B - Does it need to change?

Q. People say that we are living in the age of technology, the information age. What does this mean for you personally?

Q. What did you think when you received a letter inviting you to attend a discussion with a view to forming a men's group?

Q. What did you think of the discussions when we were setting up the Tallaght Men's Group?

Q. Did you have doubts about joining the Tallaght Men's Group?

Q. What made you decide to join the Tallaght Men's Group?

Q. In my last research project the men said that being slagged as 'sissy', 'gay' or 'mad' was the biggest barrier to joining men's groups. What do you think of that?

Q. If you were trying to get a friend to join the Tallaght Men's Group:

    A - What kind of things would you say?

    B - What would you call it?

    C - How would you describe it?

Q. Would you like to see the Tallaght Men's Group continue?

Q. Would you like to see the Tallaght Men's Group expanded to include other men?

Q. Would you be prepared to play a role in the development and expansion of the Tallaght Men's Group?

Q. If the Tallaght Men's Group is to develop:

    A - Have you any ideas for how often it would meet?

    B - What it would be about?

    C - What kind of things it would do?

Q. What do you think of An Cosán as a location for a men's group?

Q. Is the location for a men's group important?

Q. What would you say men's groups are about?

Q. Is there a need in society for men's groups?

Q. Do you think men's groups can or will catch on?

Q. What have you gained from being a member of the Tallaght Men's Group?

Part Two – Theme *Thinking Skills* Module

Q. Do you think of the Tallaght Men's Group as group in its own right, or do you think of it as a number of individual men coming to An Cosán to attend the *Thinking Skills* module?

Q. We used the word module. Do the words 'module', 'course' or 'programme' make a difference when deciding whether or not to participate in community education?

Q. What kinds of titles might help to attract men to community education modules?

Q. As a participant in the *Thinking Skills* module
      A - What have you gained or learned from it?
      B - Did you use that learning in any situation?

Q. What did you like about the *Thinking Skills* module?

Q. What did you not like or would like to see changed on the *Thinking Skills* module?

Q. Have you any suggestions or ideas for the next module?

Q. What is your connection with An Cosán?

Appendix 7: Focus Group Schedule for Practitioners

Introduction

May I take this opportunity to thank you for participating in this project which, as you know, is part of a PhD study that hopes to identify ways that you can be supported in your men's development work.

As participant observer at your monthly meetings I identified six recurring themes in your conversations that I would like to explore with you as well as some other themes that are relevant to my focus of inquiry.

I noted at your meetings that you tended to focus on the big question of funding and on concerns arising from your everyday work with men's groups but you didn't talk about your models of practice. I would like to find out if you have developed models and the learnings arising from this process.

I would also like to explore your experience of networking – how useful or supportive it has been.

The focus group format is designed to encourage you to interact with each other, exchanging ideas and perspectives on themes specified by the researcher. It is hoped that the process of exchanging views and experiences might spark new ideas that will be helpful to you in your work. The **broad themes for in-depth discussion are as follows:**

Part One: Exploration of Recurring Themes at your Monthly Meetings
- Funding
- Anger and frustration
- Political apathy
- Homophobia
- A sense of failure as men
- Mental health problems

Part Two: Exploration of Methodological Issues for Men's Development Work

- Your philosophies on working with men
- Your models of practice
- Problematic aspects of your work
- The networking experience

As I know most of you are familiar with academic jargon and keen to know the study outcomes. I will make copies of relevant extracts from the PhD thesis available to you and will welcome your comments. And I hope I can make recommendations in the thesis that will assist and support you in your work.

Thanks again for participating in this study.

Appendix 8: Account of Proceedings at Discussion Group Meetings leading to the Establishment of the Tallaght Men's Group.

First Meeting 12th December 2002

All eleven targeted men accepted the invitation to attend at An Cosán to discuss the possibility of starting a men's group and organising a ten-week community education programme. I opened the proceeding by introducing myself, explaining my project and the role An Cosán had offered to play within it. I then introduced the men from the Ballymun Men's Group and the practitioner, and invited the targeted men to introduce themselves individually and, as they did so, to state their understandings of what the mooted men's group might entail.

Before they introduced themselves, I asked the men not to equate community education with school. I explained that community education encompasses a variety of activities, ranging from what might be loosely described as 'self-development' to more formal programmes leading to various forms of accreditation. I explained that the idea of men's groups has taken hold in some communities and these groups describe themselves as being engaged in men's development work, which includes such activities as: holding workshops on issues of concern to men; group discussion work to identify and address challenges men face in today's world; and provision of a range of developmental programmes, some of which are informal while others lead to academic or vocational accreditation. Given this wide definition of community education, I explained, the men were being offered an opportunity to negotiate the form and content for a ten-week programme with the Ballymun men and practitioner placing their experiences and ideas at their disposal in this endeavour. Thus I asked the targeted men to offer their views on such questions as to: what might be the purpose of a men's group?; how might it achieve that purpose?; what supports and resources might it need?; how often might it meet?

As the Tallaght men introduced themselves and expressed their views, it emerged that they were living in diverse localities within the Tallaght area, had varied biographies and consequently varied educational attainment, and held diverse expectations of what the proposed men's group might entail. Three of them introduced themselves as voluntary community workers, two of whom were working with 'troubled' youths and

one of whom was working with parents of children at risk of leaving school early; these men expressed the wish to acquire skills that would enhance their contributions to their respective communities. Some of the men expressed a wish to discuss men's changing roles and in particular, challenges facing fathers; while others strongly opposed the idea of discussing 'men's roles', suggesting instead, the men's group should provide 'real education' such as a computer course or an introduction to sociology, or 'anything else that the practitioner might suggest'. Some of them said they were 'open to anything', while others had difficulty identifying what they wanted. When all the Tallaght men had introduced themselves and expressed their views, the discussion was thrown open and the Ballymun men were invited to contribute to it, but no consensus was reached, indeed the discussion became quite heated as the various suggestions were debated. Bringing the meeting to a close, I informed the men that all suggestions had been noted and asked them if they would be willing to return for a second discussion at which the practitioner and I would propose a ten-week programme that would incorporate as many of their suggestions as possible, and a vote would be taken on this proposal. All eleven men agreed to attend a second meeting, which was scheduled for 23rd January 2003.

Taking account of the men's suggestions and expectations, the practitioner and I agreed that the programme we had designed and implemented in Ballymun could be tested with the Tallaght men's group (Appendix 9). It would be flexible enough to cater to their diverse expectations and, as these men were unacquainted with each other, would provide a semi-structured forum wherein they could simultaneously acquire analytical skills and get to know each other through entering into discussion.

Second Meeting 23rd January 2003

It was disappointing that, despite their verbal commitment, and despite my sending them reminder letters, only six of the eleven men attended the meeting on 23rd January 2003 at which the practitioner and I proposed the programme. We explained that the programme format incorporated all of the men's suggestions and aimed to serve all of their needs. For, it would provide the voluntary community workers with a forum for discussing and teasing out solutions to challenges in their work; likewise, it would provide a forum for those who wished to discuss men's changing roles and challenges facing fathers; the men's acquisition of analytical skills would meet the

needs of those looking for 'real education'; and, hopefully, the programme would appeal to those who were 'open to anything' and those who 'didn't know' what they wanted. The practitioner then 'demonstrated' one of de Bono's 'thinking tools' and how it might be applied to solving a problem; and all of the six men present agreed that the proposed programme would suit them. As five of the men had failed to attend, it was agreed that I would write to them again inviting them to a third meeting on 13th February 2003 at which the practitioner and I would again propose the programme in the hope that they too would find it appealing; and the six men present committed to attending the third meeting.

I wrote to the five absentees on 27th January updating them on the outcome of the second meeting and inviting them to the third one; however, all of them contacted me to decline the invitation. In excusing themselves from the process, these five men offered two reasons: 'I still don't know what I want'; and 'I'm afraid it would be above me'. Despite my assurances that the proposed programme was flexible enough to 'have something for everyone', and that no one would be 'forced into anything' (assurances reiterated by the practitioner who also contacted them by phone), and despite my appeals for them to 'give the third meeting a try', I never heard from these men again. Given the diversity of lifestyles and educational attainment among the men who attended the first meeting, it is likely that the men who retreated from the process had the lowest educational qualifications and consequently experienced a sense of inadequacy in the face of this challenge. This project regrets that men likely to benefit most from the learning experience withdrew from the process, a reminder of the enormity of the challenge involved in winning men over to community-based programmes.

Third Meeting 13th February 2003

The third and final meeting took place on 13th February 2003, with only five of the six men who had attended the second meeting in attendance. The practitioner repeated his demonstration and all five men enrolled for the programme, which ran on one evening per week from 27th February to 8th May 2003 with a one hundred per cent retention rate.

Appendix 9:

Summary Account of the Collaborative Process of Programme Development

This appendix summarises three key stages in this developmental process, explaining the local context and rationale for programme design at each stage. Pedagogical theories and philosophies informing this process are discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Stage One: Designing a Programme for the Ballymun Men's Group

It was our intention to provide a programme that would equip the individual and the collective with analytical tools necessary to critically appraise their world and to identify possibilities, alternatives and choices in their everyday circumstances.

In this endeavour, we designed a two-dimensional programme based on the work of Edward de Bono containing one 'fixed' and one 'fluid' dimension. In this model, for the first hour of each two-hour session, the 'fixed element', the practitioner introduces participants to one of de Bono's 'thinking tools'; and for the second hour, the 'fluid' dimension, participants apply the 'thinking tools' to analysis of themes, topics and issues of their choice. Given that the preceding programme designed by the Education Co-ordinator had been named *Men on the Go*, and that this programme was offered as a follow-on measure, it was, in this site, entitled *Men on the Go Part Two*.

It was envisaged that topics and themes generated by the men for discussion and analysis would provide insight into key concerns in their everyday world, and the ways in which they respond to these concerns; and thus themes generated in these discussions would be used as subject matter for future programmes.

Stage Two: Testing the Programme's Potential for Transferability

Taking account of the targeted men's suggestions and expectations voiced during the discussion group meetings, the practitioner and I agreed that the programme could be tested for transferability value with the Tallaght Men's Group. Firstly, we deemed that it would be flexible enough to cater to their diverse expectations (see Appendix 8). Secondly, as these men were unacquainted with each other, it would provide a semi-structured forum wherein they could simultaneously acquire analytical skills and get

to know each other through entering into discussion. In this new site, we proposed the programme to the men as "a men's community education module entitled *Thinking Skills*".

As in Ballymun, it was envisaged that topics and themes generated by the men for discussion and analysis would provide insight into key concerns in their everyday world, and the ways in which they respond to these concerns; and thus themes generated in these discussions would be used as subject matter for future programmes should the Tallaght Men's Group chose not to disband on completion of the module.

While the 'fixed' element of the programme remained the same in each research site, the 'fluid' element, the topics and themes the men generated for discussion, were markedly different. These themes and their meanings in the lives of the men in the respective settings are discussed in the case study chapters. As this programme proved a useful mechanism in both sites for facilitating dialogue between the men and for providing insight into the central themes in their respective worlds, the final chapter discusses the possibility of incorporating it into a wider conceptual framework for the future development of the field of men's community education.

Stage Three: Designing a Follow-on Programme for the Tallaght Men's Group
Although my fieldwork scheduled for this site concluded on completion of the ten-week module in May 2003, the men requested that a follow-on programme be provided for the, then forthcoming, autumn. Meeting this request allowed for further collaborative exploration of ideas, and the timing of events proved advantageous in this endeavour. By summer 2003 both the practitioner and I had gained tacit understandings of the participants and their world; and this period of collaboration coincided with my analysis of data gathered in this site; thus the study findings could inform the task of programme design. Based on these shared insights the practitioner and I designed a second programme for the Tallaght Men's Group, which ran for twenty weeks from autumn 2003 to spring 2004, and for which An Cosán secured funding from Vodafone Foundation Ireland. Although it was beyond the scope of my study schedule to observe implementation of the second programme, I made two observational return trips to the field and kept in regular communication with the practitioner from whom I received comprehensive feedback.

Realising the programme name to be of extreme importance to two of the Tallaght men in accounting for their membership of the men's group to their peers, we entitled the programme *A Module on Human Development* incorporating, as in the preceding programme, a 'fixed' and a 'fluid' dimension. In the first hour of this weekly two-hour programme, the practitioner imparts concepts from the disciplines of sociology, psychology and philosophy, and in the second hour, facilitates group discussion and analysis of these concepts. Thus, while the first programme equips participants with analytical tools and facilitates application of these tools to analysis of issues of concern in their lives, the second programme broadens the framework for analysis by introducing participants to a range of perspectives on these issues drawn from relevant academic disciplines.

We deemed the form and content of this programme to be apt on three counts. Firstly, the men were already familiar and comfortable with the two-dimensional 'fixed and fluid' approach. Secondly, we deemed the 'fluid' dimension to be a vital mechanism for creating a discursive space for the men to exchange ideas and negotiate meanings. Thirdly, this 'fixed and fluid' programme infrastructure provided the means whereby the facilitator could act as 'translator' of the study findings to the participants. This task of translating was achieved through using themes from the study findings as foundational subject matter for the programme. Then, in the 'fixed' dimension, the practitioner introduced the men to academic theorising of these themes; and in the 'fluid' dimension, facilitated them to analyse these themes within a framework of personal experience and academic theory. As they engaged with these themes, the practitioner drew their attention to the various conceptualisations of gender at play, and to the process in which they were engaged – that of interrogating and negotiating understandings of themselves and their relation to the world through dialogue.

This project is in regular communication with the practitioner, who continues to employ this methodology with the men, and the possibility of incorporating this model of practice into a wider conceptual framework for the future development of the field of men's community education is discussed in the final chapter.

Appendix 10: Example of Quantitative Search Operation conducted in NVivo

Correlation between Interview Data Coding Pattern and Participant Attribute 'Attendance Frequency Per Week'.

Participant No.	No. Of Times Coded	Attendance Frequency
9	802	4-5 Days
4	555	4-5 Days
8	537	4-5 Days
16	447	4-5 Days
12	387	4-5 Days
15	371	2-3 Days
2	314	4-5 Days
1	296	2-3 Days
3	286	1 Day
5	275	2-3 Days
14	272	2-3 Days
18	272	1 Day
7	271	2-3 Days
13	231	2-3 Days
10	217	Less Than 1 Day
6	211	2-3 Days
17	153	1 Day
11	152	1 Day

Participant No.	No. of Passages Coded	Attendance Frequency	
9	322611	4-5 Days	
4	261435	4-5 Days	
8	222239	4-5 Days	
12	193648	4-5 Days	
16	175071	4-5 Days	
5	109917	2-3 Days	
2	108978	4-5 Days	
1	108011	2-3 Days	
3	107117	1 Day	
15	102115	2-3 Days	
6	98484	2-3 Days	
7	95648	2-3 Days	
10	88459	Less Than 1 Day	
18	76058	1 Day	
13	74723	2-3 Days	
14	72657	2-3 Days	
17	31559	1 Day	
11	30644	1 Day	

Participant Nos: 2, 4, 8, 9, 12, and 16 appear at the top of both tables

Participant Nos: 5 and 15 only appear at the top of one or other table

Search operation result shows the most highly represented voices across all categories in the study

to be the six men with the highest attendance levels at the men's centre - Participant Nos: 2, 4, 8, 9, 12, and 16

Appendix 11: Example of Boolean Search Operation conducted in NVivo

Search Type Boolean - Union: text with any of these properties: {text coded by the node, '(5 1) Wives', text coded by the node, '(5 2) Marriage', text coded by the node, '(5 3) Fathers', text coded by the node, (5 4) Transitions'}

Search Scope: Tallaght Interviews (1) (2) (3) (4)

Search Result is a node coding all the finds to: (21 1) entitled 'Change'
Document finds are spread to enclosing paragraphs. Node finds are spread to enclosing paragraphs[1].

---

[1] Further analysis of text segments housed in new node 'change' led to identification of three issues – working wives, the spousal relationship, and the meaning of fatherhood - as key aspects of change that are of concern in the Tallaght men's lives.

Language Use   Choice   Acts of Association "Disassociation   Difference   Technology   Blame   Why Men's Groups   Evidence   Cautionary Tales   Perspectives on An Cosán   Homespun Theories and Myths

(A) Matrix Co-Occurrence
Query ──────────►

(B) Result ──────────►

Voice Representation Across Categories

(C) Data coded on from
Query Result ──────────►

Proactive Engagement   Reactive Engagement
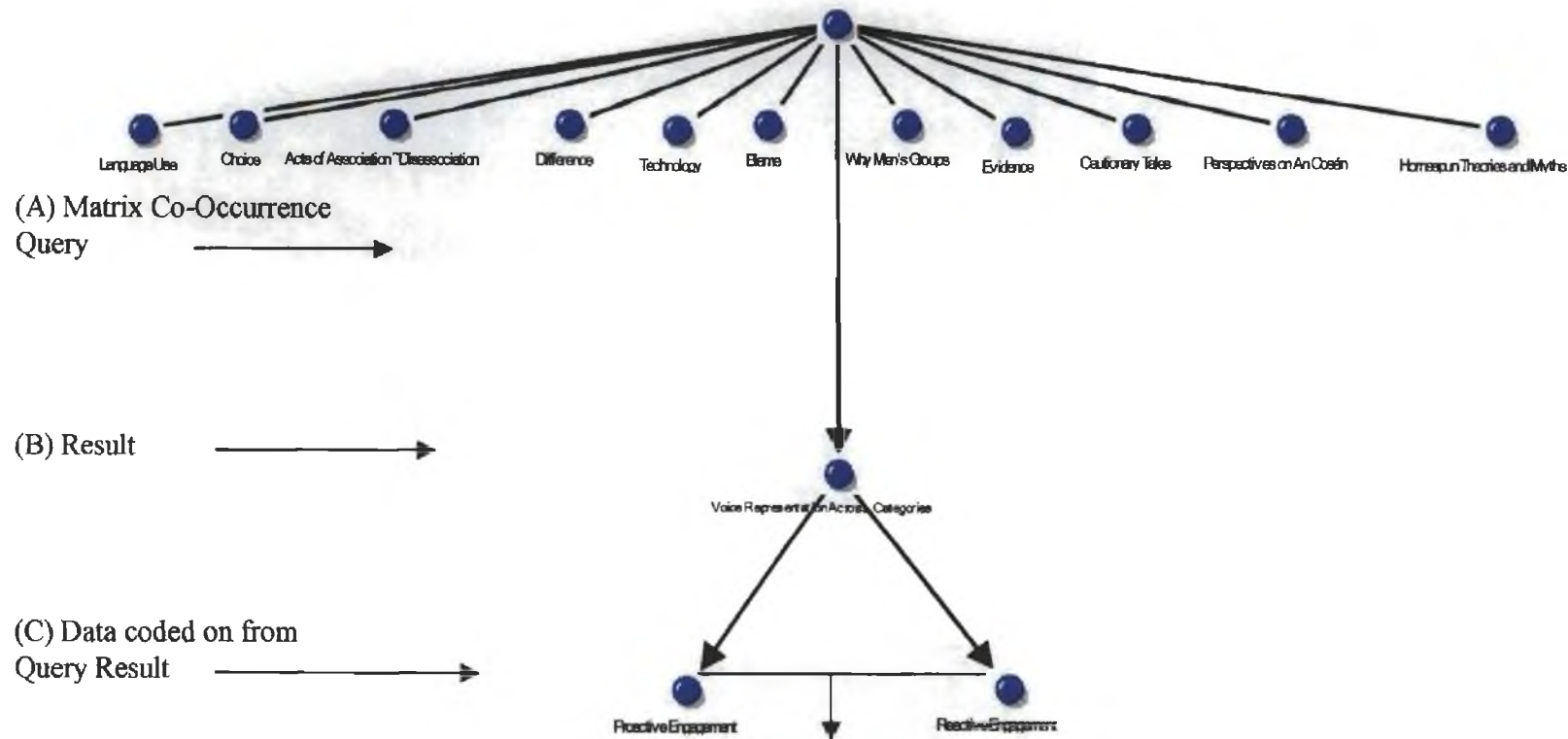
(D) Voice Representation
Report ──────────►

Participant	Number of Times coded To 'Proactive Engagement'	Number of Times coded To 'Reactive Engagement'
1	0	99
2	130	0
3	0	108
4	110	0

Appendix 12: Example of Proximity Search Operation conducted in NVivo
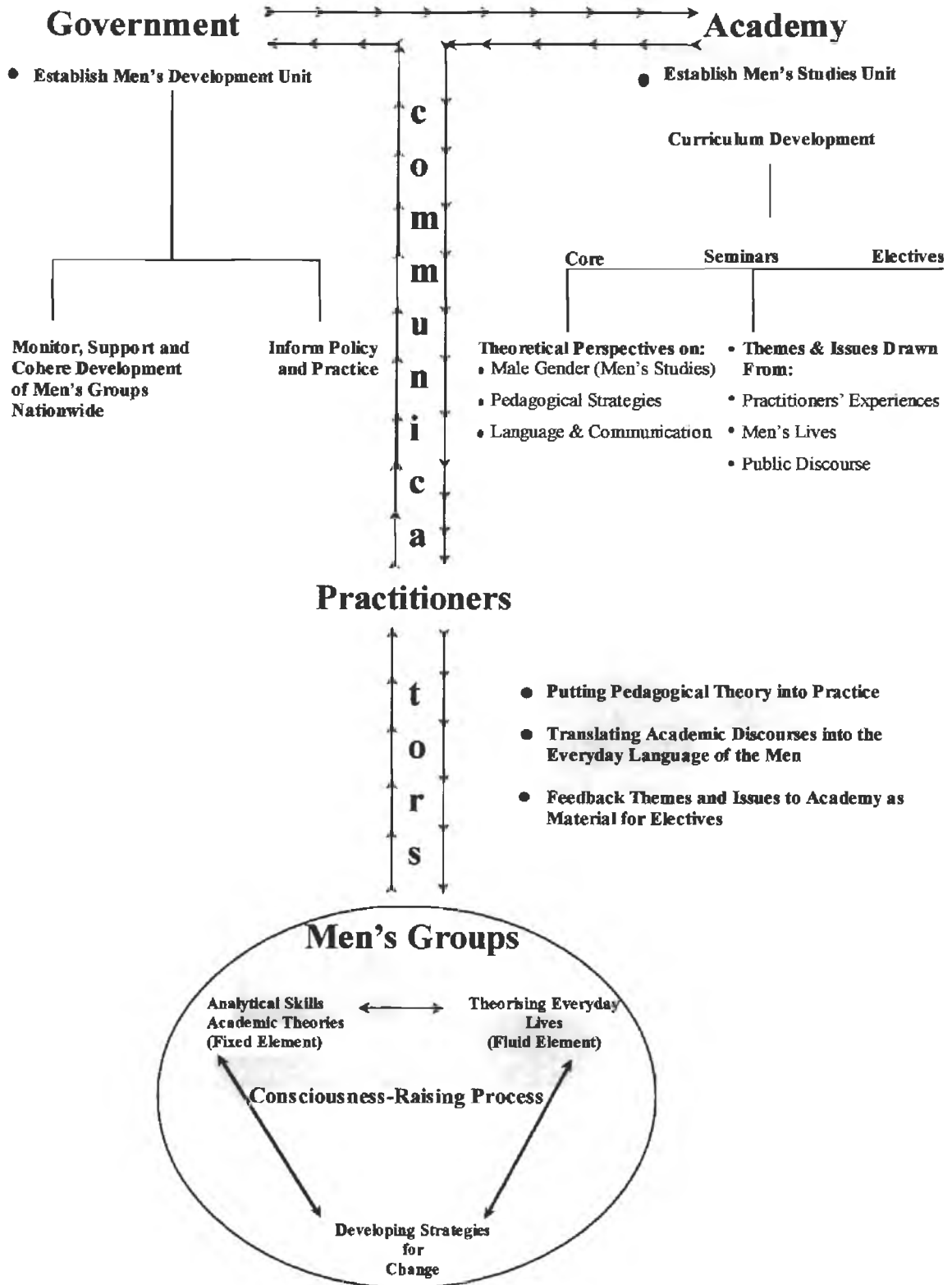
Appendix 13: Testimony Extract

'Coming Home from Work':

I find, and I've always found this, even with my own mother, when I'd come home from work ... you can imagine with my mother what it was like being at home all day with a gang of kids, I'm from a family of ten, there were five younger than me, I was working at fourteen, so the younger ones would have been aged six, eight, nine, those sort of ages. So she'd have a tough day with the kids and I'd come in from work exhausted. I'd be so exhausted that all I would want to do would be to get into the house, sit in the chair, and catch my breath. But it would be 'how did it go today?', 'how was work today?', you know? I'd no more want to talk about it but I'd have to say 'great'. And I'm still in that situation. When I come home from work I just want to get into the house, familiarise myself with the surroundings, sit down, relax, unwind; and <u>then</u> I'll talk. But as soon as I walk in I'm met with a barrage and straight away my defences go up because I'm just not in the humour of talking. I'm just not in the mood; and I think women make that mistake, maybe I shouldn't call it a mistake, but I think she should realise by now ... because I'm saying it to her now, I'm saying 'will you leave me alone for half an hour?' do you see what I'm saying?

(Participant No.3)

Appendix 14:
Proposed Framework for Advancing the Field of Men's Community Education in Ireland

Government ➤ Academy

- Establish Men's Development Unit
- Establish Men's Studies Unit

c o m m u n i c a

Curriculum Development

Core   Seminars   Electives

Monitor, Support and
Cohere Development
of Men's Groups
Nationwide

Inform Policy
and Practice

Theoretical Perspectives on:
- Male Gender (Men's Studies)
- Pedagogical Strategies
- Language & Communication

- **Themes & Issues Drawn From:**
- Practitioners' Experiences
- Men's Lives
- Public Discourse

Practitioners

t o r s

- **Putting Pedagogical Theory into Practice**
- **Translating Academic Discourses into the Everyday Language of the Men**
- **Feedback Themes and Issues to Academy as Material for Electives**

Men's Groups

Analytical Skills
Academic Theories
(Fixed Element) ⟷ Theorising Everyday Lives
(Fluid Element)

Consciousness-Raising Process

Developing Strategies
for
Change

Study shows sex abuse figures here higher than Europe, US

By Kitty Holland

IRELAND has a "more serious problem" with child sexual abuse than either the rest of Europe or North America, a conference in Dublin was told yesterday.

Prof David Finkelhor, director of the Crimes Against Children Research Centre at the University of New Hampshire, said the figures were particularly stark for boys and men.

He was speaking at a conference to mark the publication of a study which shows more than 40 per cent of women (42 per cent) and more than a quarter of men (28 per cent) here have been sexual abused or violated in their lifetime.

The *Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland* report, commissioned by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, also finds the most serious form of sexual violence – forced penetrative abuse – has been experienced by 10 per cent of women and three per cent of men.

The study was carried out by the Royal College of Surgeons and involved telephone interviews with over 3,000 randomly invited adults.

Some 71 per cent of those invited to take part did so.

Sexual abuse is defined as either contact or non-contact abuse. Non-contact abuse could involve forcing someone to view pornography or watch sexual acts.

Comparing the findings of the report with findings from similar studies across Europe and North America, Prof Finkelhor described them as "sobering and certainly concerning".

"The numbers do appear particularly high in Ireland." He compared child sexual abuse rates in the three areas and found that while 17 per cent of women in Europe had experienced sexual abuse as children and 29 per cent had in North America, some 30 per cent of Irish women said they had been sexually abused as children.

Among men, 5 per cent in Europe and 7 per cent in North America had experienced sexual abuse as children. In Ireland, however, 24 per cent of men were sexually abused as boys.

"The rates for men are 3½ times higher here than in North America, where the rates are relatively high," he said.

Though conceding he was not an expert on Irish society, Prof Finkelhor said his findings from North American studies on the factors which made young people more vulnerable to sexual abuse might help inquiries into why Ireland had such "particularly high" rates of child abuse.

Among the factors in a young person's environment which seemed to render them vulnerable, he said were alcohol misuse, the nature of their schooling, especially gender segregation, social isolation and an excess of men without a sexual partner in their immediate area.

Among the more disturbing findings of the report was the "very low level of willingness among people to report sexual assaults to the gardaí," said chairperson of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, Ms Breda Allen.

Almost half (47 per cent) of those interviewed said they had never told anyone about the abuse before. Just 1 per cent of men and 7.8 per cent of women had disclosed the abuse to the Garda.

"The big reason is the legal system," said Ms Allen. "It is adversarial, switches the onus from the alleged perpetrator to the victim." The report recommends that a public awareness campaign be developed and that barriers to disclosure of sexual assaults and abuse be lifted.

The Fine Gael spokesman on Health, Mr Gay Mitchell, said the Oireachtas should examine the report and "see what the State should be doing to call to account those who have been involved in abuse"

Dr Gill Mezey, St George's Hospital Medical School, London, speaking on sexual abuse of men at Dublin Castle.Photograph: Alan Betson

COMPARISON OF ADULTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ABUSE IN THEIR CHILDHOOD
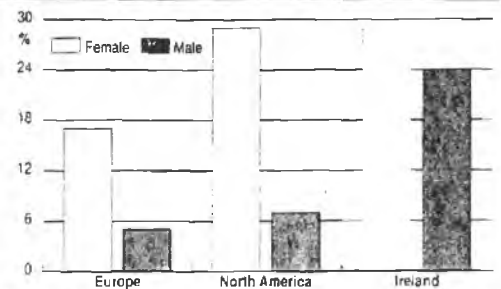
Source: Prof. David Finkelhor, University of New Hampshire

Audit Trail

Stage 1:
Generating Broad Participant-Driven and Researcher- Driven Categories

Stage 2:
Developing Propositional Statements to serve as Rules for Inclusion so as to Cohere Meanings Embedded in Data Coded to Each Category
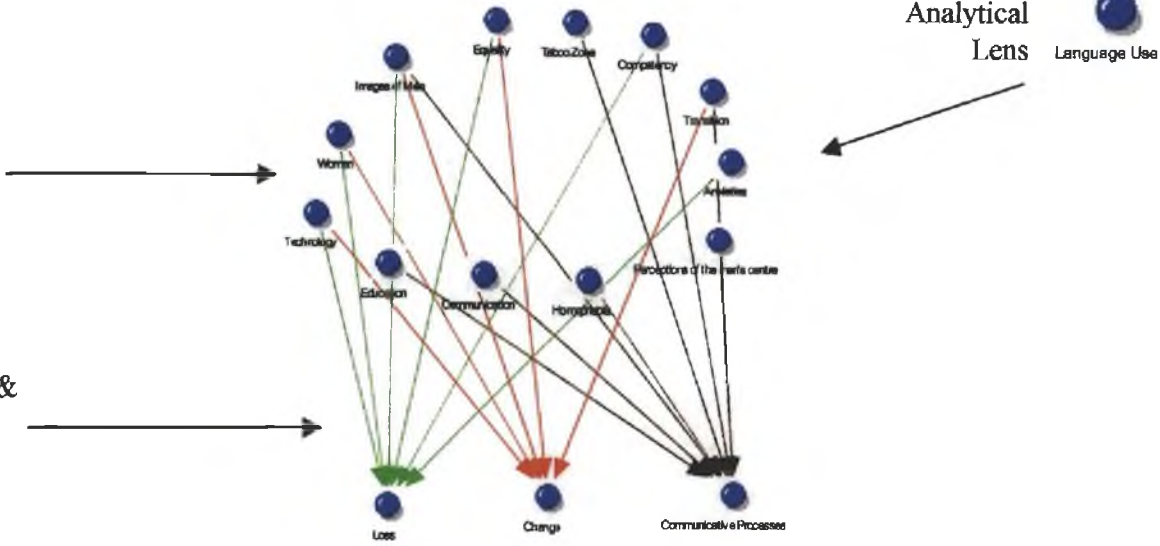
Stage 3:
Category Refinement – Further Distilling of Meanings & Identifying Relationships Between Clusters of Meanings

Stage 4:
Refined Categories, Their Relatedness, and Outcome Propositions or Finding Statements

Analytical Lens

Appendix A1: Audit Trail (Chart Form) Mapping the Development of Conceptual Categories during Data Analysis of Ballymun Case Study

Appendix A2: Node Report for Ballymun Analysis Stages 1- 4

Stage 1: Generating broad participant-driven and researcher-driven categories

Nodes:

128   (24 1)   Anxieties

129   (24 2)   Communication

130   (24 3)   Competency

131   (24 4)   Education

132   (24 5)   Equality

133   (24 6)   Homophobia

134   (24 7)   Images of Men

135   (24 8)   Language Use

136   (24 9)   People

137   (24 10) Taboo Zone

138   (24 11) Technology

139   (24 12) The Men's Centre – perspectives on

Stage 2: Developing propositional statements to serve as rules for inclusion so as to cohere meanings embedded in data coded to each category

Nodes:

(18 1) Anxieties

Propositional Statement: *The men are worried about loneliness, unemployment, poverty - they seem to feel a sense of loss.*

(18 2) Communication

Propositional Statement: *Some of the men feel that they can communicate their problems, difficulties and emotions to each other in the safety of the men's centre.*

(18 3) Competency

Propositional Statement: *The men are realising that competencies can be learned thereby placing a "huge crack in the criteria" for 'real man'. There seems to be a sense that the group's competency compensates for the individual's sense of incompetency, inadequacy and failure.*

(18 4) Education

Propositional Statement: *The men are surprised that they are enjoying education; they thought that it would be like school.*

(18 5) Equality

Propositional Statement: *How individual men feel about gender equality seems to be related to their perceptions of women. Some of them think "it's better now that women and men are getting more equal"; others think "everything is going with the women now" - especially the courts.*

(18 6) Homophobia

Propositional Statement: *Some of the men make light of homophobic slagging; they explain it as just "the way men are". Others are consciously overcoming fear of ridicule and "making the journey of coming out emotionally".*

(18 7) Images of Men

Propositional Statement: *The men are drawing on, and negotiating from, a mental bank of images including: "bread earner", "dominant one", "ousted one", "loser in court", "McDonald's dad" and "modern father".*

(18 8) Language Use

Propositional Statement: *Some men use plain straight language; some are reaching for metaphor as a mechanism for generating new meanings. The predominant style is emerging as rich descriptive narrative and vivid depictions of scenarios.*

(18 9) Women

[Category 'People' has now become category 'Women']

Propositional Statement: *Some of the men say the "women are people too"; some say "women, you'd never be up to them". They seem to conceptualise woman, not in the abstract but in terms of her role as wife and mother.*

(18 10) Taboo Zone

Propositional Statement: *As one participant put it – "It's an inside job!"*

(18 11) Technology

Propositional Statement: *The men feel that technology is inevitable and pervasive. They seem to feel inferior because they think they can't access the world of technology. They also feel that technology is intrusive – that 'big brother' is out there watching them.*

(18 12) Perceptions of the Men's Centre

[Category The Centre - perspectives on' has become 'Perceptions of the Men's Centre']

Propositional Statement: *The centre seems to be all things to all men. For some it's a place to go even thought they don't talk but just sit there; for more it's about tea and a chat, for some it's about accessing education; for others it's about deep communication with other men.*

(18 13) Transition

Propositional Statement: *The men seem to feel that the old world was settled and predictable, but now everything is changing and they are trying to cope with a sense of loss. Some of them are attempting to use the centre as a site for rebuilding their lives.*

Stage 3: Category refinement – distilling and crystallising meanings and identifying relationships between clusters of meanings.

Nodes:

(20 1) Change

Houses data 'coded on' from: 'Equality', 'Images of Men', 'Women', 'Technology', 'Transition'.

(20 2) Loss

Houses data 'coded on' from: 'Anxieties', 'Competency', 'Equality', 'Images of Men', 'Women', 'Technology'.

(20 3) The Communicative Process

Houses data 'coded on' from: 'Communication', 'Competency', 'Education', 'Images of Men', 'Taboo Zone', 'Homophobia', 'Perceptions of the Men's Centre', 'Transition'.

Stage 4: Refined categories, their relatedness, and outcome propositions or findings statements

Nodes:

(19 1) Change

Outcome Proposition: *Coping with change encompasses four sub themes: change in family forms and norms; changed skills-base of the labour market; changing technologies; and changing landscape through ten-year urban regeneration programme.*

(19 2) Loss

Outcome Proposition: *The impact of such change is correlated to many of the men's acute sense of loss: loss of the provider role; loss of family life through separation and divorce; loss of access to, and status in, the workplace; and loss of bearing and direction in an ever-changing physical and symbolic landscape.*
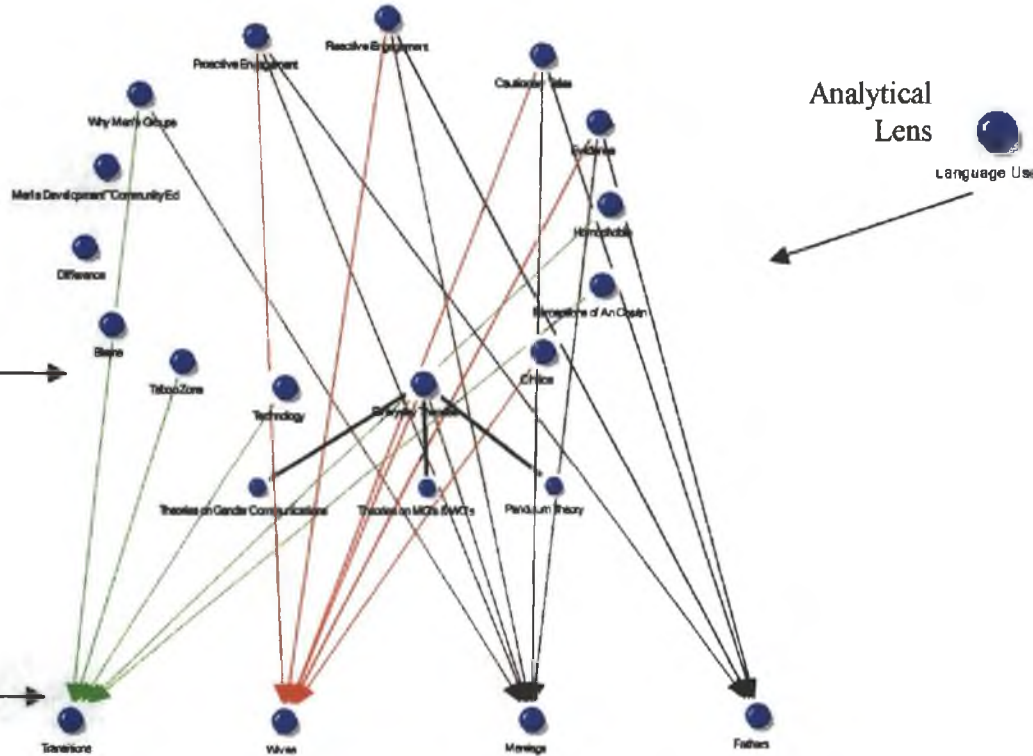
(19 3) The Reflexive Project

Outcome Proposition: *Through entering into communion and dialogue some of the men are engaging in the reflexive project of constructing identity.*

Stage 1:
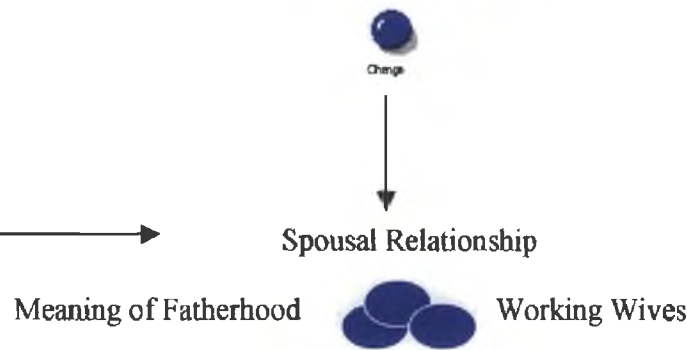Generating Broad Participant-Driven and Researcher- Driven Categories

Stage 2:
Developing Propositional Statements to serve as Rules for Inclusion so as to cohere Meanings Embedded in Data Coded to Each Category

Stage 3:
Category Refinement – Further Distilling of Meanings & Identifying Relationships Between Clusters of Meanings

Stage 4:
Refined Categories, Their Relatedness, and Outcome Propositions or Findings Statements

Analytical Lens

Spousal Relationship

Meaning of Fatherhood   Working Wives

Appendix B2: Node Report for Tallaght Analysis Stages 1- 4

Stage 1: Generating broad participant-driven and researcher-driven categories

Nodes:

115	(22 1)	Choice
116	(22 2)	Blame
117	(22 3)	Difference
118	(22 17)	Technology
119	(22 18)	Perspectives of An Cosan
120	(22 19)	Cautionary Tales
121	(22 20)	Evidence
122	(22 21)	Why Men's Groups
123	(22 25)	Language Use
124	(22 26)	Homespun Theories and Myths
125	(22 30))	Acts of Association / Disassociation

Stage 2: Developing propositional statements to serve as rules for inclusion so as to cohere meanings embedded in data coded to each category

Nodes:

(17 1) Choice

Propositional Statement: *Some of the speakers say "men don't have choice"; they have to be a certain way.*

(17 2) Blame

Propositional Statement: *Some of the speakers say "men are blamed for everything"; that men are "given a bad press".*

(17 3) Difference

Propositional Statement: Some of the speakers talk of "the natural difference" between men and women; some talk of differences between men, especially when comparing "men today" with "men in my father's time".

(17 4) Technology

Propositional Statement: *All the speakers are comfortable with the idea of technology. Some are more skilled than others but the less skilled are not afraid of it and are willing to learn.*

(17 5) Perceptions of An Cosan

Propositional Statement: *The men perceive An Cosan primarily as a woman's place. While they don't have difficulty with that, they say that many men in the community have a negative view of An Cosan. They say other men think of An Cosan as a "threat to their marriages".*

(17 6) Cautionary Tales

Propositional Statement: *Cautionary Tales, to varying degrees, illustrate the speaker's witting or unwitting defence of the patriarchal order and / or his internalised traditional definition of masculinity.*

(17 7) Evidence

Propositional Statement: *The men offer anecdotal evidence, sometimes from personal experiences, sometimes from observations to support their everyday theories and cautionary tales.*

(17 8) Why Men's Groups

Propositional Statement: *The men's engagement with the idea of men's groups is correlated to their impressions of women's groups. They are also conscious of the reactions of other men to women's groups and to men's groups.*

(17 9) Language Use

Propositional Statement: *In the emerging pattern, two of the speakers use plain straight language, one uses ambiguous and often contradictory language, one tends toward clichéd language.*

(17 10) Everyday Theories

['Homespun Theories and Myths' has become 'Everyday Theories' with data coded to sub-categories in readiness for further analysis]

(17 10 1) Pendulum Theory (things have gone too far)

(17 10 2) Theories on Men's Groups and Women's Groups

(17 10 3) Theories on Gender Communications

(17 11) Taboo Zone

Propositional Statement: *Adhering to a rigid definition of masculinity seems to lock some men into a psychological imprisonment. The traditional blueprint for the enactment of masculinity is the key organising principle in their lives - there is only one way to be a man.*

(17 12) Proactive Engagement

Propositional Statement: *Speakers whose text segments are coded here are optimistic about the way gender roles are changing. They are creating new narratives of masculinity, questing for new ways of enacting masculinity that are different to their father's way.*

(17 13) Reactive Engagement

Propositional Statement: *Speakers whose text segments are coded here are unnerved about the way gender roles are changing. They are reiterating the traditional narrative of masculinity.*

(17 14) Homophobia

Propositional Statement: *The 'proactive' speakers are aware of homophobic remarks from peers when they talk about the men's group. One 'reactive' speaker explains homophobic slagging as "the natural way men carry on"; the other says "the label is wrong".*

(17 15) Men's Development / Community Education

Propositional Statement: *The men hold differing perceptions of 'education' and of 'men's development' – some focus on 'product', some are aware of 'process' also.*

Stage 3: Category refinement – identifying relationships between clusters of meanings.

Nodes:

(5 1) Wives

Houses data coded on from: 'Choice', 'Cautionary Tales', 'Evidence', 'Everyday Theories', 'Proactive Engagement', 'Reactive Engagement'

(5 2) Marriage

Houses data coded on from: 'Cautionary Tales', 'Evidence', 'Everyday Theories', 'Proactive Engagement', 'Reactive Engagement', 'Why Men's Groups'

(5 3) Fathers

Houses data coded on from: 'Cautionary Tales', 'Evidence', 'Proactive Engagement', 'Reactive Engagement'

(5 4) Transitions

Houses data coded on from: 'Technology', 'Why Men's Groups' 'Perceptions of An Cosan', 'Taboo Zone', 'Homophobia'

Stage 4 – Refined categories, their relatedness, and outcome propositions or findings statements

Nodes:

(21 1) Change

Outcome Proposition: *The men are predominantly concerned with the impact of societal change on gender roles in the home. Adopting either a 'proactive' or 'reactive' stance, they focus on three inter-related key issues: working wives, the spousal relationship, and the meaning of fatherhood.*

(21 1 1) Working Wives

Outcome Proposition: *The issue of working wives has implications for husbands' self-concept as 'provider', for the balance of power in the relationship, and for the enactment of fatherhood.*

(21 1 2) The Spousal Relationship

Outcome Proposition: *The men's discussion of the spousal relationship focuses on gender differences and communication issues.*

(21 1 3) The Meaning of Fatherhood

Outcome Proposition: *The men are enacting 'traditional' and 'new' models of fatherhood.*

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