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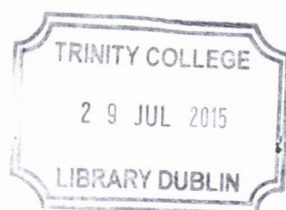
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*Jack's life: A Taylorean auto/biographical
study of the masculine identity of a young
Irish male undergraduate*

Ph.D.

2015

Connor Tiarnach O'Donoghue



Thesis 10653

Declaration

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Connor Tiarnach O'Donoghue

Summary

Masculinities is a relatively new field of study, grounded in anthropology, sociology and psychoanalysis. The most cited author in the field, Raewyn Connell, has developed a widely-used sociological theory of masculinities, based around the concepts of hegemony, complicity, subordination, authorisation and marginalisation structured in socially and culturally-specific gender regimes.

This study aims to augment the work of Connell and her peers by examining masculinities through the subjective lens on identity provided by Charles Taylor, a representative of a subjective school of thought that views identity as a stance taken by an individual within social and moral frameworks, that when we say who we are, we are expressing an inner self, oriented toward the social and moral space.

The research questions are: 1. How does the social and moral space in modern Ireland relate to the constitution of this young man's masculine identity? 2. How can the work of Charles Taylor on identity contribute to our understanding of this young man's masculinities?

In order to answer these questions, a narrative approach was taken and the auto/biography of a male undergraduate, Jack, was constructed, mainly through a series of seven semi-structured interviews, with the following topics: 1. A Timeline of My Life, 2. My Family, 3. My Social Life, 4. The Real Me, 5. Me, the Man, 6. My Body, and 7. My Life in University. These interviews were supported by written and visual data produced by the participant, as well as his Facebook account.

The product of this was a detailed auto/biography, told in both Jack's voice and in mine. This was analysed using a narrative approach, using socio-cultural questions drawn from the works of both Connell and Taylor on identity.

Conclusions were drawn include reflections on Jack's gendered identity, and its unstable development in opposition to the gender regime(s) that existed around him, as well as on the centrality of articulation and dialogue to the constitution of his masculinity. Contributions to both methodology (in terms of researcher reflexivity and the use of Facebook as a data generation tool) and theory (in terms of the utility of multiple gender regimes and the constructive power of dialogue on masculine identity) are proposed.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The significance of the field

“Masculinities” is the subject of this dissertation. This can be defined as the study of what it is to be male, or what it is to be a man. The most-cited author in the field is Raewyn Connell and she describes “crisis tendencies” in the gender order of the modern Western world (2005, p. 84). She goes on to identify these tendencies in three areas of modern life. Firstly, in power relations, the feminist movement and the equalising influence of free market economies have led to challenges to men’s domination of women. Secondly, in relations of production, married women’s place in the workforce has changed fundamentally and traditional manual labour-intensive industries are employing fewer and fewer men. Thirdly, in sexual and family relations, the role of the traditional nuclear family is being challenged and alternative sexualities are becoming more widely accepted.

While masculinities is a growing field globally, the area of youth masculinities in Ireland, which is the focus of this dissertation, is a relatively quiet one. Although some work has been done by Dónal O’Donoghue of the University of British Columbia (e.g. O’Donoghue, 2007), he stands out as one of the only people to have carried out more than one research project in the area. There was a brief flurry of academic interest around the time of the piloting of the Transition Year “Exploring Masculinities” module in Irish secondary schools in the year 2000, but since then, publication has died down to leave the field of Irish youth masculinities scarcely populated.

This lack of academic interest in Irish youth masculinities is unfortunate, given the challenges currently being faced by young Irish men. Among the “crisis tendencies” being exhibited by young Irish men are the prevalence of suicide, where over 80% of young people who commit suicide are men (National Suicide Research Foundation, 2012, p. 19); the high levels of young men involved in violence: in a Northern Ireland study, over 40% of all violent crimes against the person were committed by men under the age of 25 (McCreedy et al., 2006, p. 1); and the university dropout rates

among young men, where 1.4 men for every one woman fail to progress from first to second year of university (HEA, 2010, p. 44).

1.1.2 Broadening the Field: Charles Taylor

In response to these crisis tendencies, a broadening and deepening of the relatively empty academic field of Irish youth masculinities is crucial. This project aims to do this by augmenting current thought on gender and masculinities by Connell and her peers, which generally takes an objective view of identity (that identity is formed by social, cultural and historical influences), with the subjective thought on identity embraced by Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. His subjective lens, which incorporates concepts such as agency and free will, follows a tradition that goes back to Ancient Greek thought and continues through Christian philosophy, but is infrequently used in inquiries into gendered identities in an era of post-structuralism where it is frequently asserted that identity is merely a product of social, cultural and historical influences.

According to Taylor,

“People may see their identity as defined partly by some moral or spiritual commitment, say as a Catholic, or an anarchist. Or they may define it in part by the nation or tradition they belong to, as an Armenian, say, or a Québécois. What they are saying by this is that this provides the frame within which they can determine where they stand on questions of what is good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value. Put counterfactually, they are saying that were they to lose this commitment or identification, they would be at sea, as it were; they wouldn’t know anymore, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things was for them.” (1989, p. 27)

Taylor’s argument is that identity and morality, values or the ‘good’ are intertwined. He argues “to know who you are is to be oriented in a moral space” (1989, p. 29). So, for Taylor, when this identity is under threat, as the masculine identity is described above to be by Connell, the person loses the “frame” within which they can take a stand. Put simply, a crisis of identity (or crisis of masculinity) is also a crisis of morality. For Taylor, while the “frame” is culturally, socially or historically created, the stance with regard to the frame, or the “moral orientation” is subjective.

1.1.3 Deepening the field: Auto/biography

Just as the use of Taylor's philosophy of the subject to supplement current thinking allows for the broadening of thought on masculinities, an in-depth study is required to deepen discourse in the area as well. For this reason, a narrative approach was chosen for this study, constructing and analysing the auto/biography of one young man, which has the potential to reveal rich data that has true depth, unlike much research which tends to seek out generalities, commonalities and objective features of identity across whole groups of people and it is rare in the field of masculinities to study one subject to the level of depth aimed for here.

1.2 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter Outline

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review 1: Masculinities and Connell
3. Literature Review 2: Taylor on Identity
4. Methodology 1: Data Generation
5. Methodology 2: Data Analysis
6. Data Analysis 1: Interviews One and Two
7. Data Analysis 2: Interviews Three to Seven
8. Conclusions

Figure 1.1 Chapter Outline

This dissertation is structured as follows: In chapter two, the literature on masculinities is explored, with a particular focus on the work of the leading figure in the field, Raewyn Connell. Rather than proceeding simply with the perspective provided by Connell and her peers, this study aims to augment the sociological and cultural perspective available in their work with the rich work done in other disciplines on identity (in this case, masculine identity). Charles Taylor's work on identity is dealt with in chapter three. Taylor is the major living representative of the metaphysical tradition going back to the Greeks and coming to us through Kant and Hegel, which proposes an essentialist or normative concept of the self.

The fourth chapter starts by drawing from both Connell and Taylor and formulating research questions and outlines the auto/biographical approach used to answer these questions, as well as the tools (observation, social media and semi-structured interviews) used in the execution of this research approach. Chapter Five outlines the narrative approach used in the analysis of the data and also outlines the approach taken to researcher reflexivity.

Chapters six and seven consist of the data presentation and analysis. The data is analysed narratively, using the questions posed by masculinities theory and Taylor's philosophy of the subject as a guide. The dissertation ends with conclusions in Chapter 8.

Chapter Two

Masculinities and Connell

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will attempt to lay out the current state of the field of research on masculinities, with an emphasis on the theories of Raewyn Connell. Firstly, this section will start with a sketch of the main approaches to gender (2.2) and the history of masculinities as a field of study (2.3). Then, the writings of Connell, the most cited author in the field, will be more fully discussed. This includes her views on the attempts to define masculinity (or masculinities) (2.4.1), her own theory on masculinities (2.4.2) and her views on the history and politics of masculinities (2.4.3).

2.2 Approaches to Gender

Kimmel (2008) lays out four principal approaches to gender, the first of which is the sociobiological approach. This approach sets out from the perspective that men and women are biologically distinct, that their physical strength, hormonal make-up and brain chemistry make them different from one another. One field in which this approach is espoused is evolutionary psychology, where it is argued that male and female roles evolved differently because men and women have different bodies. For instance, women were more likely to stay at home than work in the field because they were likely to be too feeble once a month because of their menstrual cycle. Another example is the argument that men are more sexually aggressive and more likely to be promiscuous because their bodies can create vast amounts of semen, which is therefore of little value, but a woman is more likely to form attachments before a sexual relationship because she only has one egg, which has much greater value because it is a much scarcer resource. Sociobiology also includes a lot of sex-difference work, whereby the differences between male and female brain size or brain chemistry are measured (with what Kimmel believes to be variable and unreliable results) and the effects of the “male” hormone (testosterone) and the “female” one (oestrogen) are analysed.

A second approach to gender is the argument that gender is culturally constructed. Anthropologists have described cultures where men and women had substantially different roles. For example, in the 1930s, Margaret Mead studied three tribes in the

South Seas. She described two tribes where men and women were not strongly differentiated, one where all members of the tribe participated in child-rearing, and aggression was universally discouraged and another where men and women were equally aggressive, where women regarded pregnancy and childbirth as a hindrance to the productive work they wanted to do. The third tribe she described had men who were nurturing and gossipy, who loved shopping and spent a lot of time with children. In this tribe, women were generally dominant and were responsible for the fishing that was the source of the tribe's wealth. Stories, such as these, coupled with the accounts of the berdache, who crossed from one gender to another in North American native tribes, bolstered the view of gender as culturally, rather than biologically created.

Thirdly, there is the approach of developmental psychology. Psychoanalysis as one of the forerunners of masculinities studies will be discussed below, but Freud and his colleagues' ideas that a gendered identity is a journey, rather than a stable object, whether a biological one or a culturally given one, is a very influential one. Many of the best remembered concepts of Freudian psychoanalysis, be it castration anxiety or Oedipal complex are directly related to the *development* of a gender identity. Early psychoanalysis was based on the idea of a polarity between male and female, and the idea of a constructed gender identity on a scale between two extremes is one that is still popular. Functionalist sociology, with the idea of sex role theory (discussed below) is another example of this approach.

A final approach to gender is that of social constructionism. This could be viewed as a combination of the previous two approaches, whereby gender is a cultural concept, but also goes through a process of individual formation or development, throughout the life course. Most current academic work in the area of gender in the social sciences could be described as social constructionist. Social constructionism is broader in scope than sex role theory or Freudian psychoanalysis because it offers more than one way to describe difference. Difference can be sourced in individual experience, in race, in social class, as well as in the specific culture.

2.3 Masculinities as a Field of Study

The current popular and journalistic debate around masculinities follows a “popular media script” (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003, p. 7) of concern for the hard times men are facing. The stories that are popularly reported include ones of fathers deprived of custodial rights, of underachieving schoolboys and of violent football hooligans. The same authors claim that these stories are “followed by an explanation that the increase in these failed masculinities is caused by their [boys’ and men’s] inability to internalize appropriate models of masculinity” (2003, p. 7). The authors do not dismiss these concerns, but rather the conclusion that there clear *appropriate models of masculinity* that are known to us. The issue for many commentators on masculinities is one of “common sense”. We all feel we know what it is to be a man, or to be a woman, to be masculine or feminine, to be heterosexual or homosexual. Masculinities, as a field, sees its role in problematizing and contesting these categorisations, interrogating the truths they claim to provide.

Masculinities as a field of study developed through the efforts of different groups of people. The approaches to gender listed above were differently applied by different groups of researchers and academics to the study of masculinities. The developmental (psychological) view of gender discussed above was the basis for the functionalist sex role theorists (discussed in 2.3.1) and for psychoanalysts (discussed in 2.3.3). It partially influenced feminists, but they (as a whole) were and are more likely to take a social constructionist view of gender. Their contribution to masculinities as a field of study will be discussed in 2.3.2. Finally, the work of anthropologists on masculinity (discussed in 2.3.4) tended to take a cultural constructionist viewpoint. The work of sociobiologists has played a very small part in the literature on masculinities, and so, unlike the other approaches listed above, it will not feature in the next section.

2.3.1 Sociology: Sex Role Theory

Pease (2007) traces “sex role theory” back to Talcott Parsons, a structural functionalist who argued “that all societies needed to fulfil the functions of production and reproduction. In his view, these social activities required separate ‘instrumental’ and ‘expressive’ roles.” (p. 554) He assigned the instrumental role to

men (this covered areas such as rationality and competition) and the expressive role to women (covering creative and nurturing work). These roles were seen as complementary and therefore regulating people within these roles was seen as beneficial to society as a whole. For this reason, society took care to reproduce these roles in their young.

The idea of the male sex role was developed by Brannon in the 1970s. He outlined the essential elements of the role, rules that men needed to follow. These were “no sissy stuff”, “be a big wheel” (a breadwinner, a success), “be a sturdy oak” (physically and emotionally strong) and “give ‘em hell” (aggressive). Around the same time, Pleck was also writing about the male sex role. He described a sex role identity that had internal contradictions. This led to what he described as Male Sex Role Strain, which acknowledged strains and tensions in the sex role and allowed for attempts to address them.

Liberal feminism embraced sex role theory, especially with its inbuilt promise of men’s potential to change. If roles were reproduced generationally as functionalists believed, then a change in how children are reared could change the roles fulfilled by men. The so-called Men’s Liberationists also made use of it, claiming that men are oppressed by traditional sex roles.

Sex role theory has largely been disregarded by recent commentators on gender.

“A major criticism of sex role theory is that it under-emphasises the economic and political power that men exercise over women and cannot explain male domination or gender inequality. Nor is it able to explain men’s resistance to change. A number of critics have pointed out that by focusing on one normative standard of masculinity that is white, middle class and heterosexual, sex role theory is unable to account for the diversity and difference in men’s lives ... Because of its inability to theorise power and interests, and its assumption that a normative standard exists throughout history, many theorists argue that sex role theory is inadequate for explaining masculinity.” (Pease, 2007, p. 555)

2.3.2 Feminism

“A major success of early feminism is based on its explanatory power (and its mobilizing force) in uncovering the logic behind the organization of social inequalities, named as patriarchy” (Mac an Ghaill and Hayward, 2003, p. 8). In other

words, early feminism successfully found a way of describing the logic behind gender patterns and the dominance of men, which is what masculinities theorists are now attempting to do.

Mac an Ghaill and Hayward (2003) are among many who point out that “masculinities” is not a new science and that the social sciences were always interested in men. In fact, at its foundation, sociology concerned itself “almost exclusively with men” (Maynard, 1990, p. 282). Early studies of and around gender (generally conducted by feminists) were concerned with redressing this balance and adding women’s experiences and voices to the subject matter already in existence. This opened up the possibility of studying the plight of women under the patriarchy, and thus, the patriarchy itself.

According to Judith Kegan Gardiner (2007), feminist theories “analyse existing gender arrangements and the forces that uphold them, then imagine better alternatives and strategies to reach them” (p. 208). In the course of analysing gender arrangements and examining how they may be changed, it is and was inevitable that feminist theorists came to understandings about men, domination and masculinity that fed into the new subject of masculinities.

There are schools of “radical” feminism that see the basis of gender inequality as the domination of men over women. “For these theorists, masculinity produces crime, war and other forms of violence, while its apparently more rational forms may appear in the guise of the corrupt judge, the biased scientist or the masculinist law. For some radical feminists, penetrative heterosexual intercourse is so implicated in male dominance that women should avoid it” (Gardiner, 2007, p. 210).

When working with polarized (or at least *polarizable*) categories like men and women, it is almost inevitable that an analysis of one will lead to conclusions about the other, and so the fact that feminist thought features conclusions and theses on men and masculinities is almost a truism.

2.3.2a Trends in contemporary feminism

2.3.2a.1 Performativity

Judith Butler (1990) is a post-structuralist feminist who defines *performativity* as the repeated performance of a ritualised act or set of acts to produce a socially anticipated phenomenon (p. xv). She argues that gender is such a phenomenon and that it is produced by means of a “performance”, a series of acts. For Butler, gender is not the source of the acts, but rather the product of them. She argues that gender is “not a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.” (p. 191)

Butler distinguishes between individual acts that function as an expression of identity, and the reality “created through sustained social performances” (p. 192). She goes on to describe gender as a “strategy” in the sense that its maintenance over time is productive of identity.

The idea of performance as *action* is also a key attribute of Butler’s contribution to gender theory. Post-structuralist beliefs in the constructive powers of social, historical and cultural factors in our identity inform her belief that “the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence” (p. 34). Butler believes that the production of gender is regulated by social powers and constructs, creating the anticipation mentioned above. The performance, i.e. the *doing* of these actions produces the effects that are socially anticipated.

Butler describes her own approach to gender as normative, in the sense of the social anticipations mentioned above, but she believes in the possibility of subversive performativity, in particular through drag performance and transsexualism (p. xxiii), as they call gender norms into question and allow the possibility of the subversion of social regulation.

Normative definitions of masculinity will be discussed in section 2.4.1 and Butler’s insistence on the importance of the physical actions and their repeated performance

is influential on Connell's thinking on the body, discussed in section 2.4.2

2.3.2a.2 Intersectionality

Hankivsky (2014) claims that intersectionality has long been an interest of feminist work compiled by "Black activists and feminists, as well as Latina, post-colonial, queer and indigenous scholars"(p. 2), but it was Crenshaw (1989) who coined the term intersectionality, to describe an "understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g. 'race'/ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion)" (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 2).

Crenshaw is a legal scholar who wished to critique identity politics, including feminist activism. "Feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains. Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices." (1991, p. 1242)

Crenshaw develops the theory of intersectionality by examining the experiences of women of colour who had experienced violence, showing how their identities, both as women and as being of colour interacted with each other, showing that as women of colour, they were marginalised within the category of "women" as well as the category of "people of colour", and how these intersecting identities interacted to produce experiences of violence that were distinct from the experiences of people who were not women of colour.

Connell incorporates thinking on intersectionality into her theories on marginalisation and authorisation, discussed below at 2.4.2

2.3.3 Psychoanalysis

"Psychoanalytic accounts of gender formation are obviously problematic, but they are at least accounts. Psychoanalytic accounts are also necessarily prolonged and complicated, imprecise and incomplete, but mainly because they attempt to describe formations that are themselves prolonged, complicated, imprecise and incomplete. There are countless

ways to get gender wrong but no way to get it fully and happily right. This is why the 'talking cure' is in one sense interminable: no one is ever one; no one is ever done; no one can ever finally say or be enough. There is no cure for talking. The constitutive failure of psychoanalysis is thus the exact source of its value." (Thomas, 2007, p. 515)

Some of Connell's (1994) early work on gender involved examining the history of psychoanalysis as it related to masculinity. She focuses on Freud, who argued that gender had an architecture (that it was constructed). For Connell, the key contribution of Freud to the field of masculinities is the *Wolf Man* case. "Here he produced the first really detailed map of the contradictions and fissures within an adult man's personality. He showed an adult heterosexuality underpinned (and undermined) by several contradictory layers of unconscious emotion." (p. 14) Connell claims that it is now essential that any account of masculinity takes on the lessons of the *Wolf Man* case about "the tensions within masculine character and about its vicissitudes through a life history, the turnings, strategies, and negotiations involved." (p. 14)

Freud's masculinity was constructed on a shifting, dialogic, unstable base, and he drew a direct line between the relationship with the father and the construction of masculinity. He also speculated about a sociological aspect to his narrative of the formation of the individual, but this theory was never fully formed. However, the picture of gender as a fragile and changeable construction was a significant contribution to current understanding.

The next "moment" that Connell identifies dates to one of the early schismatics from Freudian psychoanalysis, Alfred Adler. He viewed masculinity and femininity as polarised, but was more politicised in his views, and belief that social devaluation of femininity had an impact on individual bearers of gender. Because children (of both sexes) are weak vis-à-vis adults, they are forced to take on the feminine side of the pole. As children mature, they see how society values manliness and they rebel, and all (in one form or another) make what Adler called the "masculine protest". The adult personality is a balance between the two poles. Masculine protest may continue as the person strives for independence, and it can be a significant element in the make-up of members of both sexes.

The classic anti-Freudian voice in the history of psychoanalysis was Carl Jung, who believed that masculinity and femininity existed within everyone, working in opposition to each other. The development of masculinity required the repression of femininity. "He presented this familiar opposition as rooted in timeless truths about the human psyche, through the theory of archetypes." (Connell, 1994, p. 21) Connell is disparaging about archetypes, which Jung claimed were images or ideals from history, present in the collective unconscious. The "men's movement" of the 1970s took a lot from the idea of archetypes, identifying gods and heroes from mythological sources and identifying the "essence" of manhood from their stories. Connell claims that archetypes are "fatally easy to find" (p. 21). The system of archetypes did work to rule out any possibility of historical change in the masculine or the feminine, though a change in the balance between them is possible. This idea has been popular in media, but the mainstream of sociological thought now sees gender as a historically changing and changeable structure.

Connell is cautious of labelling the first cohort of female psychoanalysts as feminists, but the works of authors such as Karen Horney did contribute to a less male-dominated understanding of gender. Horney's article "The Dread of Women" in 1932 took a step beyond the fear of the father that was key to Freud's Oedipus complex. Horney posited a deep-seated and repressed male fear of women, derived from a fear of the mother in childhood. The boy withdraws libido from his mother, resulting in phallic narcissism. They maintain self-respect by choosing weak and socially inferior women as love objects. Connell sees two positive results from the debate that Horney stoked: "the extent to which masculinity is a structure of over-compensation and the fundamental connection of the making of masculinity with the subordination of women." (p. 24)

Over the decades following the Second World War, when the centre of psychoanalytic thought crossed the Atlantic, the profession moved to the right, and principally became a method of "normalisation". Concurrently with this, gender anomalies were being catalogued and "medicalised", variously as perversions, illnesses, deviances and orientations. One of the greatest shifts that occurred was

what has been called the “invention of the transsexual”. This required the concept of a “unitary core gender identity” being laid down in childhood. This overrode the complex and sometimes contradictory gender identities of transsexuals. The definition of a male transsexual came to be seen as someone who believes that they are a woman, rather than someone who wants to be a woman. Connell sees this as a retrograde step, part of an impulse to normalise, as well as a denial of the complex, shifting and contradictory nature of masculinity, set out by Freud.

The Second World War also had the effect of having psychoanalysis look for the source of authoritarianism. Writing about Fascism, Wilhelm Reich asked about the social function of sexual repression. The answer he found is that it allowed for an “authoritarian patriarchy”. Reich saw the “authoritarian family” as the factory where the “authoritarian state” was produced. This analysis was influential on the so-called “Frankfurt School”, whose main work, Adorno et al.’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) is seen by Connell as a treatise on masculinity. It describes a masculinity that is marked by harshness, repression and domination, by oppression of women and maintenance of a strong patriarchy. It also recognises a second masculinity, “the democratic personality”. The recognition of a variety of, rather than a single stream of, masculinities was an important transition, though it was not immediately followed up on.

2.3.4 Anthropology

Like its sister science, sociology, anthropology has historically been a process of men writing about men. However, little anthropological work undertook the study of “men as men” or men as gendered subjects until the 1980s. Gutmann (2007) reviews this work and finds a few streams.

Many studies analyse how men in different cultures “perform” manhood. This involves looking at the rites of initiation into adult manhood, at how the members of different cultures talk about and conceptualise “being a man”. Another group of studies describe how men develop male identities in relation to women, one arguing that “even if women are not physically present with men while working or drinking, and even if not reflected in men’s conscious thoughts, women’s ‘presence’ is a

significant factor in men's own subjective understanding of what it means to be men" (Gutmann, 2007, p. 18). A third stream of anthropological work on masculinities studies "men-only" activities. These include male initiation rites, but also men's cults, men's bars and especially sex between men. Sex between men takes different roles in different cultures and the term "homosexuality" is little used in these studies, because it is seen as culturally too narrow.

Contemporary anthropology of gender can be seen as an effort to "describe and champion a vast diversity of masculinities and femininities in Latin America" (Gutmann, 2007, p. 19). However, the same dichotomous dualities recur with great regularity – men who take active and passive roles in sex with other men are one example. Another is the distinction between men and women, with the "sacred" distinction between sex and gender regularly blurred. For Gutmann, this is a reason to examine sexual practices without assuming a direct opposition between passivity and activity, rather than a reason to assume that if these two stand apart then all else can be taken for granted.

Anthropological study of gender has a more obviously political bent than some other areas of study. The exceptional cases of a "third gender" are used by those who are socially on the left, in the same way quantitative studies that show a predominance of two-sex, biologically defined gender regimes are used by those on the right.

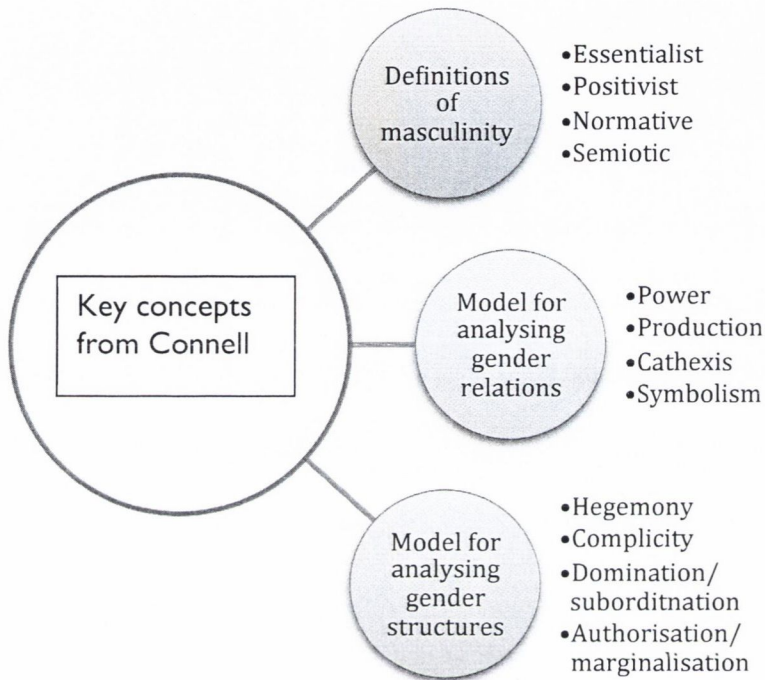
2.4 Connell on Masculinities

Raewyn Connell¹ is the dominant voice in the field of masculinities. She is one of the academics responsible for drawing together functionalist sociology, feminism, developmental psychoanalysis and anthropology into a comprehensive view of the history of the field in her 1995 (second edition 2005) standard work *Masculinities*. She herself draws from all of these, especially from psychoanalysis and feminism. She

¹ Raewyn Connell was born in 1944 as Robert William Connell. (Ledda, 2010). She is a transsexual woman who made the transition late in life. She was an activist in the "New Left" in Australia in the 1960s. "When appointed Professor at Macquarie University she was one of the youngest people ever appointed to an academic chair in Australia. Now she suspects she is one of the oldest people still to hold one." (Connell, 2010) Connell is now University Chair at the University of Sydney. She is one of the founders of the study of masculinities and her book *Masculinities* (1995, 2005) is the most cited in the area. Her work has extended across the social sciences in areas such as class, gender, education and healthcare, but internationally she is best-known for her theories on gender as a social structure. (Connell, 2010)

could be called a social constructionist (see section 2.4.2 below), but in addition she incorporates feminist writings on the centrality of the body to gender, though not in a biologically determinist way (see section 2.6 below).

Figure 2.1 Key Concepts from Connell



2.4.1 Defining Masculinities

Connell devotes a lot of attention to defining the term “masculinity”. For Connell, there are two basic components that feature in almost all possible definitions of the word. Firstly, modern usage assumes that “one’s behaviour results from the type of person one is” (2005, p. 67), a masculine person would behave differently from an unmasculine one. According to Connell, this presupposes a belief in personal agency and individual difference, and so “masculinity” is a notion that depends on a belief in the individual.

Secondly, masculinity is, by definition, relational. Masculinity cannot exist without femininity. “A culture that does not treat men and women as bearers of polarized character types, at least in principle, does not have a concept of masculinity in the sense of modern European/American culture.” (p. 68)

Connell goes on to outline four different, and, in her view, flawed definitions of masculinity, all of which take these ideas (of individualism and of the relational nature of masculinity) as given.

Essentialist definitions of masculinity centre on the notion that there is a core, or “essence” of the masculine. Different essentialists differ as to what this essence is. Freud considered the idea that it was “activity” as opposed to female passivity. Others include ideas like risk-taking, war-making or responsibility.

Connell claims that the weakness in this approach is “obvious”. It is the lack of agreement as to what this essence is - “the choice of the essence is quite arbitrary...Claims about the universal basis of masculinity tell us more about the ethos of the claimant than about anything else.” (p. 69)

Positivist definitions are among the simplest to come up with. These simply involve studying what men are and reporting this. For Connell, while this is the approach that forms the basis for much of the work on gender in psychology and ethnographies of men in a given culture, it presents a variety of difficulties.

Firstly, all descriptions require a standpoint. Decisions about what characteristics to count are made subjectively. Secondly, much positivist work on gender requires easy categorisation of people into “men” and “women”. This “is unavoidably a process of social attribution using common-sense typologies of gender. Positivist procedure thus rests on the very typifications that are supposedly under investigation in gender research” (p. 69). Thirdly, using “what men are” as the definition for masculinity rules out the idea that any man's behaviour is “feminine”. Connell claims that the idea of a man's femininity or a woman's masculinity is not trivial, as it is crucial “to psychoanalytic thinking about contradictions within personality” (p. 69). It is also fundamental to gender studies as a whole. If we dismiss the idea of men's femininity, then we have no need of “masculinity” as a term and we can simply rely on the term “men's” or “male”. “The terms ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ point beyond categorical sex difference to the ways men differ among themselves, and women differ among themselves, in matters of gender” (p. 69).

Normative definitions deal with the idea of a man with feminine characteristics, or a woman with male characteristics, by providing a standard, or a norm. Men may not necessarily meet this norm, but it is what they are measured against. Connell claims that this is the approach taken throughout much of literary and media studies. Sex-role theory often combines normative with essentialist definitions to give “culture’s blueprint of manhood” (p. 70).

The norm provided by John Wayne or Bruce Willis, shows up some fairly clear paradoxes, as there are very few John Waynes around. Connell says, “What is ‘normative’ about a norm hardly anyone meets? Are we to say the majority of men are unmasculine? How do we assay the toughness needed to resist the norm of toughness, or the heroism needed to come out as gay?” (p. 70)

Semiotic approaches are used by post-structuralist feminists and by Lacanian psychoanalysts when analysing gender. Signification is what is important here. Masculinity is non-femininity, and vice versa. “In the semiotic opposition of masculinity and femininity, masculinity is the unmarked term, the place of symbolic authority. The phallus is master-signifier, and femininity is symbolically defined by lack” (p. 70).

Connell thinks that this approach can be useful in cultural analysis, and is not as arbitrary as essentialism or normativism can be. However, she sees it as limited to discourse. It does not provide the tools to talk about other gendered arenas or places – “in production and consumption, places in institutions and in natural environments, places in social and military struggles” (p. 71).

2.4.2 Connell’s theory

“‘Masculinity’, to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell, 2005, p. 71).

Connell views gender as the way that social practice is organised in, around and with relation to the “reproductive arena”. This arena includes “sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity” (p. 71). Defining a social practice in relation to the body could be seen as biological reductionism and Connell is careful to place herself outside this. For her, gender “is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body” (p. 71). She goes on to claim that gender is historically formed and changes in response to and alongside social, economic and cultural shifts. Again, she counters the sociobiological argument that changes in gender are responses to evolutionary imperatives. Gender, she posits, is an example of history superseding biology.

Connell sees gender as something which is simultaneously greater and less tangible than simply a “social structure”.

“‘Configuration’ is perhaps too static a term. The important thing is the process of configuring practice. (Jean-Paul Sartre speaks in *Search for a Method* of the ‘unification of the means of action’.) Taking a dynamic view of the organisation of practice, we arrive at an understanding of masculinity and femininity as *gender projects*. These are processes of configuring practice through time, which transform their starting-points in gender structures.” (Connell, 2005, p. 72)

And however we choose to look at the social world, we will find a gender configuration of practice. The most common unit of analysis is the individual life, and what we call character is a configuration of social practice, which will include a strongly gendered element. Connell quotes Wendy Holloway, who says that gender identities are “fractured and shifting”, applying a post-structuralist interpretation of gender, saying that multiple discourses intersect in any individual life. And Connell concludes that this contributes to masculinities that are complex. “Any one masculinity, as a configuration of practice, is simultaneously positioned in a number of structures of relationship, which may be following different historical trajectories. Accordingly masculinity, like femininity, is always liable to internal contradiction and historical disruption.” (p. 73)

Connell analyses gender relations using a threefold model, to which she later adds a

fourth element (symbolism). The first of these is relations of power, which in the modern Western gender order is the subordination of women to men, known as the *patriarchy*. In spite of examples of reversals of and resistance to this pattern of domination, the pattern persists, albeit plagued by problems of legitimacy. The second is relations of production, the gendered division of both paid and unpaid labour. Thirdly, there is what Connell labels *cathexis*, the element of desire, sexuality and the emotional sphere. In *The Men and the Boys* (2000) and in the later edition of *Masculinities* (2005), she adds the relations of symbolism, which include levels of recognition and the confirming of status and legitimacy on different actions and actors.

Connell's major contribution to the field of masculinities is her incorporation of the idea of *hegemony*. She takes this from Gramsci's analysis of class relations, where hegemony is defined as "the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life". So, the hegemonic masculine is the "model" of masculinity that is favoured in one particular time and place and it helps sustain the patriarchy (the domination of women by men). It is not a "norm" that men in a society aspire to, and Connell sees it as "always contestable" (p. 76). This particular model of manhood is not necessarily the mode practised by most powerful people in a particular society. Women and effeminate or gay men can hold positions of power under the patriarchy's current state.

"Nevertheless, hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual. So the top levels of business, the military and government provide a fairly convincing *corporate* display of masculinity, still very little shaken by feminist women and dissenting men. It is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony (though violence often underpins authority)." (Connell, 2005, p. 77)

The form the hegemonic masculine takes changes from time to time and place to place. If there is power vested in hegemony, there must also be *subordination*. For Connell, the most obvious example of this among men is the subordination of gay men. Writing in 1995, she listed the everyday experiences of homosexual men, and included "political and cultural exclusion, cultural abuse...legal violence...street

violence...economic discrimination and personal boycotts.” (p. 78)

More significant than subordination in the maintenance of the hegemonic masculine is *complicity*. The majority of men may not practise the hegemonic pattern of masculinity, but they still benefit from the “patriarchal dividend”. Although many men may treat their own wives and mothers well, and may do their fair share of housework, on political and institutional levels they continue to support the subordination of women.

Connell sees *hegemony*, *domination/subordination* and *complicity* as relations within the gender order. She claims that gender cannot be treated in isolation and that it intersects or interacts with other social structures like race, class and nationality. “White men’s masculinities, for instance, are constructed not only in relation to white women, but also in relation to black men” (2005, p. 75). According to Connell, racial imagery is pervasive in Western masculinity discourses. One exemplar of this is the American black expression “the Man”, which fuses institutional and administrative power with white masculinity. *Marginalization* is a key characteristic here. Black men exercising the hegemonic pattern may be marginalised in comparison to white men who behave in the same way. The opposite of marginalization is *authorization*, so that the middle class man’s masculinity is “authorised” in a way the working class man’s is not. Black athletes or working class pop stars may be exemplars of the hegemonic masculine, but as their race or class is not authorised, there is no trickle-down effect.

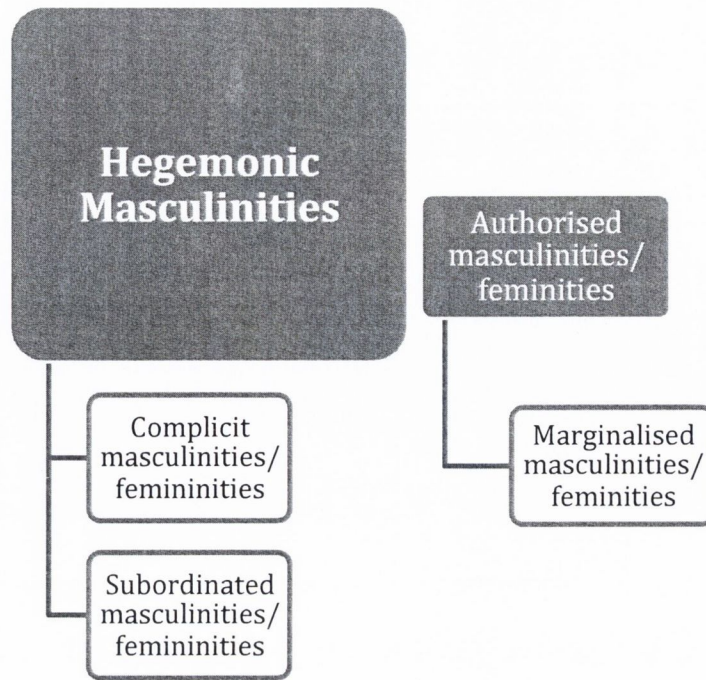


Figure 2.2 Connell's hierarchy

2.4.3 Connell on Masculinities in History and Politics

For Connell, gender practice constitutes reality. She claims that the changeable, or the social, is just as real as the unchanging or the biological. We are human because of this; no other species changes in the way we do. Just because gender is formed historically, it does not mean it is less real.

Connell sources the birth of many aspects of the modern Western gender order in the period 1450 – 1650, which also saw the birth of capitalism. During this period, she identifies four major developments. First is the Reformation. “Marital heterosexuality replaced monastic denial as the most honoured form of sexuality. The cultural authority of compulsory heterosexuality clearly followed this shift.” (2005, p. 186) The Reformation also led to a new emphasis being placed on the individual, as each person would have an individual relationship with God, unmediated by any priest. This concept of the individual is a prerequisite for the idea of masculinity i.e. a person whose gendered character impacts his actions must be an individual, with an individual character.

The second development noted is the dawn of the age of imperialism. The empires

were creations of the gendered occupations of sailor and sea trader, they were staffed almost entirely by men, and a male statecraft grew up with a legitimacy based on the threat of organised violence by male armies. Women, when they arrived in colonies, arrived as wives and servants. Exemplars of masculinity, such as the violent conquistador, the rough cowboy, and the tough frontiersman all grew out of the process of colonisation.

Thirdly, Connell notes the growth of cities as hubs of commercialism. Cities are simultaneously more anonymous and more regulated than the country. This fostered individualism, but also the “entrepreneurial culture and workplaces of commercial capitalism institutionalized a form of masculinity, creating and legitimating new forms of gendered work and power in the counting-house, the warehouse and the exchange.” (2005, 188) This change also saw other significant developments. The early commercially-based cities, such as London, Antwerp and Amsterdam saw the formation of sexual sub-cultures, which were the first direct predecessors of modern gay communities. Connell also notes the hardening of medical ideologies of gender, whereby anomalies such as hermaphroditism became classified as “deviant”.

Finally, Connell notes the onset of large-scale European civil war. This led to the strong, centralised state, supported by a masculinity embedded in armies. Military prowess, as a model of “manhood” and patriotism, was elevated in status. The beginnings of other shifts in the gender order began to make themselves known at this time. In the English Civil War, the Quakers were the first grouping to demand religious equality for women. Though this trend was quickly reversed, the door had been opened.

“With the eighteenth century, in seaboard Europe and North America at least, we can speak of a gender order in which masculinity in the modern sense – gendered individual character, defined through an opposition with femininity and institutionalized in economy and state – had been produced and stabilized.” (Connell, 2005, p. 189)

In the eighteenth century, a gentry masculinity (based on hereditary landowners) was dominant; it was integrated in capitalism (by gathering rents, and controlling the land for production) but not strict rationalism like the merchant class. The gentry class

was integrated in the administration of the state, in politics, and as justices of the peace. They were army officers and engaged in duels for honour. Domestic authority was maintained over women, although women sustained the gentry by building their social networks. They also maintained a brutal relationship with their agricultural workforce.

The last 200 years have seen the splitting of gentry masculinity and the emergence of new hegemonic masculinities, as well as new subordinated and marginalised masculinities. Connell identifies a number of trends of the last 200 years, including the rise of the liberal state and the dawning of free, universal education, leading to the breakdown of the gentry and the facilitation of demands for rights by women and men who held subordinated forms of masculinity in the working classes. The spread of industry and bureaucracy in the nineteenth century also took from the place of the gentry class, as did the democratisation of the massive warfare of the twentieth century.

The rise of business and the information economy saw a new split in hegemonic masculinities: between the “managers” and the “professionals”. Connell describes a polarity between dominance and technical expertise, which currently coexist as gendered practices, but with no winners.

While rationalisation became dominant in the big cities, violence and licence were spreading in the colonies, where frontiersman (an exemplar of masculinity) evolved into the scouting movement, Hitler Youth and the English Public School of 19th and 20th centuries. Connell sees all of these as attempts to foster particular forms of masculinity in the youth. These movements had limited success, but ideologists of the patriarchy were persistent in their efforts to control and reproduce certain forms of masculinity among young men. She sees these efforts as displaying a tension in modern masculinities. The ideology of a female (domestic) sphere in opposition to the male sphere was developed. The female sphere included rearing young boys, and the “masculinising” youth movements were seen as a way to avert danger of a feminising influence.

Historians tend to view the formation and transformation of gender relations as something external that is sourced in, for example, technology or class dynamics, but changes in gender relations can also come from within. Women's suffrage is an example of a change which originated within the gender order, albeit in the context of a more general broadening of political rights, and which can reveal the conflict of interests central to the modern gender order. Whether or not women campaigned for suffrage, their interests were served by its enactment. Whatever a man's beliefs about equality, his interests were served by the maintenance of male-only suffrage. The same applies to more recent gender struggles. Men are paid far more than women. Connell states that men's incomes are approximately double women's incomes in the developed world (when *all* incomes are counted and not simply incomes from full-time employment, where women are still paid less on average). She also lists figures demonstrating the imbalance of women in positions of corporate and political power. It is in men's interests to maintain the balance as it is. The politics of masculinities is not just about identities, it is about social justice. And Connell claims that the battle of the sexes is "no joke" (2005, p. 82), and that social struggle is inevitable.

She sees this structure of inequality as being supported by a structure of violence. Wife-killers, date rapists and wife-beaters are not the majority, but they do not necessarily see themselves as deviant. They often see themselves as acting out of right, or in Connell's words, "authorized by an ideology of supremacy" (p. 83). Many types of violence among men are characteristic of the hegemonic pattern of masculinity: gay bashing, gang violence, war are all "authorised" in the same way. Connell claims that a legitimate gender hierarchy would have less need to dominate in this way.

Connell describes a number of so-called "crisis tendencies" (referencing Habermas) in the modern gender order. In terms of *power* relations, she raises the issue of the continued fight for the emancipation of women, coupled with the universalising tendencies of capitalist market-based economies. These impinge on the interests of men. Connell claims that these changes have led to conflict and unsatisfactory conclusions in the family, and the state has stepped in in a patchwork and often

ineffective manner through, for instance, family law and population policy. This has led men to form unstable masculinities, built around feminism, or a resistance to it. In terms of *production* relations, men and women are more likely to be working equal hours than at any time in the last 100 years. However, men still benefit disproportionately from work. This tension can be contrasted with the unemployment rates in traditionally male-dominated occupations, which can in turn be compared with the trend whereby newer, more technologically-centred jobs tend to favour men. Threats to the stability of the current gender order can also be found in relations of *cathexis*. Here, alternatives to heterosexual marriage threaten the established order. Women's expectations from sexual relationships and their independence in relation to their bodies have also had a significant impact. Expectations around the emotions men feel and express are also changing.

For Connell, masculinities are not simply personal, or individual, even though we often understand them to be. Masculinities are players in global and local politics, in family relationships, in economies, and workplaces.

Chapter 3

Charles Taylor on Identity

3.1 Taylor on the Self

In his major work on identity, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Charles Taylor² outlines a history of the modern Western self. From the title and subtitle of the book, it is clear that he sees that the “self”, or identity, (and he uses these words more or less interchangeably, as I will in this dissertation) as something that has a history and that is culturally (or at least temporally) specific. In this he aligns himself with Foucault, the post-structuralists and their successors in current critical theory, who believe that identity is the *product* of social, cultural and historical powers. These aspects will be dealt with in section 3.3 below.

However, he differentiates himself from the post-structuralists in his claim that there are aspects of the self that exist outside of historical and cultural transmission of identity, and that these are common to all of us. In this, he is following a line of thought that was expressed by Plato and Aristotle and comes, via St Augustine and Thomas Aquinas into modern thought via Kant and Hegel. Each of these aspects is dealt with in more detail below: 1. the self has purposes, and acts to achieve these purposes (see 3.2.1); 2. that the self uses language expressively (3.2.2); 3. that the self interprets itself (3.2.3); 4. that the self is constructed dialogically (3.2.4); and 5. that the self is a moral being which uses strong evaluations (3.2.5).

3.2.1. Purpose

In an earlier work on the self, *Human Agency and Language*, Taylor describes one thing that sets humans, as well as animals, apart from other natural phenomena like, for example, apple trees and earthquakes. Apple trees do not have a purpose in themselves, they do not have desires or goals that they aim for. A human or an

² Charles Taylor was born in Montreal in 1931 to a Protestant English-speaking father and a Roman Catholic French-speaking mother. He completed two bachelor's degrees, one in his local university of McGill (in history) and the other in Oxford (in politics, philosophy and economics). He graduated from Oxford with a PhD in philosophy in 1961. He has held chairs in philosophy at both universities, and was a public figure in Canada, involving himself in Quebecois politics. He is well-known for his work on the self and has been awarded numerous prizes, among them the *Templeton Prize for Progress toward Research or Discoveries about Spiritual Realities*. His body of work has been described as “remarkable for its range – both for the number of areas and issues it addresses as well as for the breadth of scholarship it draws upon” (Abbey, 2011).

animal, on the other hand, will pursue a goal or a desire purposefully. Our understanding of our own identity will relate back to our purpose. For Taylor, a computer or a robot, no matter how well endowed with artificial intelligence, will never be a self, because they are given a purpose by a human, not by themselves (1985, p. 54). Abbey reads Taylor's writing about purpose as saying that "Order or patterns of behaviour cannot simply be accounted for by reference to external forces or impersonal laws: the purposes of the agents [person or animal] have to be considered in explaining that outcome" (2000, p. 63). This points to the centrality of the subject in interpreting selfhood.

So there are similarities between humans and animals for Taylor. They both have agency, acting on their desires towards their goals. However, they are also different. Humans use language: "Man is above all a language animal". (1985, p. 216).

3.2.2 Language

Taylor sees language as, according to his own term, "expressivist". As opposed to an empirical view of language that sees language as a means to communicate ideas that already exist, Taylor follows the ideas of the 18th century thinker Herder. This expressivist view is that language is creative, that words are constitutive of subjective thoughts and emotions. He claims that language "may not only make possible a new awareness of things, an ability to describe them; but also new ways of feeling, of responding to things. If in expressing our thoughts about things, we can come to have new thoughts; then in expressing our feelings, we can come to have transformed feelings." (1985, p. 233)

He does not describe language as existing in a vacuum. He agrees that language is a cultural phenomenon, that words are given to us by the culture and that much of what we say is a reproduction of what we hear. He believes that the human potential for creativity and originality exists alongside this. As will be discussed below, Taylor believes in a dialogical self, formed in conversation with others and with the culture. However, as will also be outlined in the next section, he believes that shared societal and linguistic notions, like gender, race, religion and nationality are chosen by us, rather than imposed on us by others.

3.2.3 Self-interpretation

A structuralist believes that to understand a person, we simply need to find “where” they are located. If we discover their class, age, race, educational background and other social and cultural attributes, then we discover that person. Taylor disagrees. He insists that human sciences cannot be investigated in the same way that natural sciences are because the subjects of human sciences can contribute with their own interpretations. In *Human Agency and Language*, he uses the example of shame, a feeling which he describes as “subject-referring”, saying that it cannot be objectively described:

“an explication cannot be found which does not invoke other meanings for the subject. Why is this subject shameful? Because something shows me up to be base, or to have some unavowable and degrading property, or to be dishonourable...other words appear, like 'base', 'dishonourable', 'degrading', or a host of moral terms: 'cheat', 'liar', 'coward', 'fraud', which involve other meanings that things have for us. We cannot escape from these terms into an objectivist account, because in fact shame is about an aspect of the life of the subject *qua* subject.” (1985, at p.55)

As mentioned above, Taylor acknowledges the massive contribution of culture, but he believes that identity is not simply objective. As well as finding out a person's cultural background, it is essential to ask how that person understands him/herself:

“What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me. And as has been widely discussed, these things have significance for me, and the issue of identity is worked out, only through a language of interpretation which I have come to accept as a valid articulation of these issues. To ask what a person is, in abstraction from his or her self-interpretations is to ask a fundamentally misguided question, one to which there couldn't in principle be an answer.” (1989, at p. 34)

The use of language to interpret ourselves is one of Taylor's main arguments for the claim that humans are possessors of personhood while animals are not. The language and concepts used could very well be supplied by the culture, but each person has a self-interpretation that is, at least in part, subjective. He also admits that a person's self-interpretation may not be true (they may, for example, exaggerate their strengths, or dismiss negative attributes) but he claims that a self-understanding doesn't need to be valid in order to be significant in the make-up of identity, even referring to “our self-(mis)understandings” which he claims shape our feelings. (1985, p. 65)

Self-understandings can change. Culture can inform this. Abbey uses an example of how feminism gives a new language that can change a woman's self-interpretation. A female subordinate receives compliments on her hair, her clothes or her appearance from a male superior. In the past she would have blushed, the object of sexual attraction. Now, she has learnt the language of sexual discrimination, she no longer blushes, she is a combatant in a professional struggle. The culture informs the language. Here, the language (culture) informs the understanding of the self. This, in turn, informs the self. And so the self is changed. (2000, p. 60)

Taylor believes that change is part of identity, that we are all on a journey of moral progress, so it is natural that our self-understandings change as time goes by. He believes that the self is a narrative, writing "Life has to be lived as a story". (1989, p. 289)

3.2.4 Dialogical selves

Taylor also believes that the self is formed dialogically, that we negotiate and construct our identities in conversation with others and with our culture. "I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors." (1989, p. 36) Language must be used in an expressivist way for this purpose. Abbey claims:

"While humans might be physically individuated ... Taylor contends that psychologically we are not. Our inner life is a series or polyphony (or cacophony) of conversations with other people or beings, so that who I am always points beyond me as an individual to my relationships with significant others, to my partners in the dialogues who help to constitute my identity." (2000 at p. 68)

For Taylor, it is not just that language is expressive, but that conversation is constructive of reality and reflective of the subject, "language is made and remade in conversation, but [...] the very nature of a conversation requires a recognition of individual speakers and their different perspectives." (1989, p. 525) Given that language, the ability to understand and interpret the self and the facility to make moral choices is what marks us out as humans, regardless of our culture, time or place, then what of humans who cannot do this? Taylor is very wary of labelling any human as not possessing personhood. The person with severe intellectual disabilities has the potential for some language, and even though the person on a life-support

machine may not, they both come into the category of person by virtue of their membership of social network, a web of relationships which forms part of the conversation that forms selves. A person with severe Alzheimer's was still at one stage a person, and a moral narrative for that person can still be looked back on. (1985, p. 103)

3.2.5 The Self and the Good

A discussion of Taylor's view of the self would be worth little without some analysis of his views on morality. For Taylor, it could be claimed that identity is morality. Knowing who you are is knowing where you stand in the world. "Identity is...the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand." (1989, p. 27)

This is facilitated by Taylor's very broad definition of morality. Morality is not simply how we behave. Taylor wants to shift the focus from "what it is right to do" to "what it is good to be" (1989, p. 3). It is not only the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. For Taylor, morality is a knowledge of what we value. What is good, or valuable, or significant for us is part of our moral make-up. It includes "questions about what makes our lives meaningful" (1989, p. 4) With this understanding, many of our decisions are moral ones.

Abbey describes Taylor's morality as a pluralist one. The modern person is faced with a variety of goods, all of which are valuable, between which we sometimes must choose. The Christian sacrifice of the crucifixion is a major example of this, sacrificing a good (the life of Jesus) for another good (the salvation of humanity). Moral choices can be difficult as they can involve the sacrifice of one good for another. (2000, p. 12)

Having said that, Taylor does not believe that all goods are equal, and so his pluralism is not relativist. A functioning self has a moral orientation and knows this. He is also not a subjectivist, not subscribing to the belief that whatever I want is a good (as Hobbes did), or that the world is meaningless and it is up to me to give life meaning (as Nietzsche did). Finally, he is not a formalist. As mentioned above he does not subscribe to the tendency of applying things to human sciences that are

applied to the natural sciences and so resists the attempts at reducing morality to a single principle, like liberalism's guiding rule of choosing whichever good we like so long as it does no harm to others or Kant's maxim to choose a good which is universally affirmable. (2000, p. 15)

An important element of Taylor's morality, and one which is essential for understanding his view of self is the concept of strong evaluation. Animals make choices based on desires. Humans go further than this. They can have desires about desires. They can make choices about competing equal desires or goods. Strong evaluation is the process of choosing between two valued goods. (1985, p. 16) It is not an injunction to act in accordance with your most strongly-valued good, a formalist proposition. Sometimes the goods are perceived to be of equal value. For instance, the choice between spending time with your family and working longer hours to earn money to provide for your family is one where both "sides" may be equally deserving. For Taylor, this is very much bound up with one's sense of self. Failing to exercise strong evaluation well, and failure to act in accordance with your strongly-valued goods will leave a person feeling bad, feeling that they have "failed themselves". (1989, p. 63)

Strong evaluation can challenge subjectivism. When we experience some goods as inherently better than others, we are responding to a sense that what is good is valuable independent of our choice. We can think about what we ought to desire, not just what we desire. Things that have intrinsic value make calls/demands on individuals, and are not necessarily desired by them.

Realism is the belief that there is a world that is independent of human interpretation; that there are facts and interpretations and that the best interpretations are those that come nearest to describing facts, and thus are "true" (opposite to Nietzsche, who believed that there are no facts, only interpretations). Abbey (2000, p. 29) presents two alternative readings of Taylor's stance on realism, before presenting her own stance. The first of these is that Taylor espouses a weak realism, that he believes that people feel that there are things/actions that are inherently good outside of themselves, but that he is making no comment on the

reality of these inherently valuable goods himself. The other is that he is a strong moral realist – that he believes that these things are valuable, in and of themselves: humans' perception that these goods exist independently is a true depiction of the world. Abbey chooses a third reading of Taylor's realism: "falsifiable realism". Realism in the natural sciences involves examining the world as if humans did not exist – gravity would still pull without human intervention. The natural sciences have been very successful, but Taylor dismisses the idea that humans can be studied in the same way. Human life must be studied in the light of human experience. So, falsifiable realism takes the fact of human moral experience seriously and imputes ontological significance to it, unlike either weak or strong realism. Ordinary moral experience is key, but if it can be convincingly disproved, then it is not the truth. (Abbey, 2000, p. 29)

Besides the capacity for and the exercise of strong evaluation, the other main link Taylor draws between self and morality is what he labels "inescapable frameworks". These frameworks are the limits of our moral potential. A framework is the series of beliefs that we live by. They allow us to orient ourselves in the moral sphere. If a framework fails or is found wanting (e.g. when we "lose our religion") we feel lost and experience a feeling of crisis. (1989, p. 17) Frameworks are not necessarily religious, secular frameworks include environmentalism and Marxism.

A framework may or may not include a hypergood. Abbey uses the example of an environmentalist, living in a tree defending a forest, to portray this. This person may believe that world peace is hugely important, and doesn't deny this by living in a tree making no contribution to peace. However, they do prioritise deforestation as a "hypergood". (2000, p. 35) Taylor does not say whether every framework has a hypergood, but if they do, his arguments on pluralism are weakened.

Another major aspect of Taylor's understanding of morality is his belief in the importance of articulation. By articulation, he means expressing what is good. Abbey outlines six functions that Taylor ascribes to articulation. The first is to deepen understanding of moral values and what underpins them, thereby promoting understanding of the self. Another is to show the plurality of goods by which humans

live, reducing the appeal of simplistic normative theories. Thirdly we articulate what we see to be good to increase debate, fostering rational evaluation of goods, whereby others may be convinced and change or two goods which appear irreconcilable may find common ground. He also claims articulation provides a corrective to the inarticulacy of modern moral philosophy which he says is incapable of discrimination. Fifthly, to strengthen commitment to the good being expounded. Failure to articulate it can mean the death of the ethic. Finally, he claims articulation provides an immanent critique, asking if the good in question has become warped or is still necessary or relevant. (2000, p. 41 - 47)

3.3 The Modern Self

For Taylor, there is a distinctively modern Western self. *Sources of the Self* is, in the main, a history of these aspects of identity. Here six of these aspects will be outlined: 1. the modern self is disengaged from a presumed and all-pervasive moral order (3.3.1); 2. the modern self has inner depths (looking inwards more than in the past) (3.3.2); 3. the modern self is embedded in the natural world (3.3.3); 4. the modern self desires authenticity, and expresses this (3.3.4); 5. the activities of ordinary life are valuable to the modern self (3.3.5); 6. the ideal of universal practical benevolence is practised by the modern self (3.3.6).

3.3.1 Disengaged Freedom

A medieval European saw him/herself as part of a greater cosmic order. As humans, we were located above the animals, but below the angels, all part of a grand scheme of existence. This “grand scheme” is no longer seen to exist. (1989, p. 395) The world is now a disenchanted place, and as Nietzsche said has no intrinsic moral meaning at all.

Now, we humans do not see ourselves as part of a great moral order. In fact, we can seek to understand ourselves without seeking to understand our role in the world around us. This is disengagement. Some individuals continue to believe in a great moral scheme, but this belief no longer has the utility it once had, as it does not provide an overarching sense of meaning that could once be universally taken for granted. “Even in societies where a majority of people profess some belief in God or

in a divine principle, no one sees it as *obvious* that there is a God.” (1989, p. 312)

All societies have an idea of reflexivity i.e. that there are some things that only relate to me. The modern West has a radical reflexivity, focusing on the self qua self, as discussed above, asking what sort of self it is that is experiencing knowing and experiencing feeling. Taylor traces this back to St. Augustine, who “shifts the focus from the field of objects known to the activity itself of knowing; God is to be found here.” (1989, p. 130)

The scientific revolution and rationalism have led humans to think that we can master the world around us, that we can understand, and therefore control the physical world, or as Taylor quotes Descartes as saying, 'the new science...which will make us “masters and possessors” of the earth'. (1989, p. 161) There has long been an emphasis on rationality in intellectual culture. Taylor traces it back to Plato, for whom “the good man is master of himself”, meaning that the “higher part” of the soul (reason) must rule over the “lower part” (desires). (1989, p. 115) However, with our (relatively) new-found scientific power, we now construe rationality in a different way. Being rational now means creating a distance from our bodily selves and finding meaning outside of (“above”) our bodies and the mundane world.

The modern self sees itself as having clearly demarcated boundaries from the world around it. Rationalism makes us feel as if we had power and freedom to re-form the self. The idea that we can re-create our habits and our minds is what Taylor calls a new form of objectification. (1989, p. 171)

Taylor is as positive about this as he is about the self generally. He sees this disengaged freedom as being a product of the belief in human dignity. For him, freedom is the capacity to make strong evaluations and the ability to make moral judgements. (1989, p. 175)

3.3.2 Inner depths

This is linked to the idea of radical reflexivity, discussed above. We can explore our mysterious inner depths. The inside/outside divide is very salient in our culture, but

the modern emphasis on turning inward to find meaning is not universal. (1989, p. 111)

For St. Augustine, turning inward was a prelude to turning upwards to God, because if the truth is within, and God is truth, then when we turn inwards, we will find God. (1989, p. 132) Now we turn inward to find “ourselves”, closely related to the “voice of nature” as a moral source, discussed below. So, for the modern self, the “who am I?” question has us turn within.

3.3.3 The Voice of Nature

This is related to the idea that we have hidden depths, and Taylor draws extensively from Rousseau’s ideas on nature. For Rousseau, nature was a source of good and our natural sensitivities were toward nature and that which was good. He claimed that a good life was led by being true to our sensitivities and setting aside the habits and prejudices which culture, education and society can impose on us, as these hinder and warp our natural tendencies toward the Good (Rousseau, 1762, p. 16). Rousseau claimed that we should not listen to the advice of others, of culture and of educators; we should turn inwards and listen to the voice of nature.

“Rousseau immensely enlarged the scope of the inner voice. We now can know from within us, from the impulses of our own being, what nature marks as significant. And our ultimate happiness is to live in conformity with this voice, that is, to be entirely ourselves.” (Taylor, 1989 at p. 362)

Taylor also references two minor figures here. The Earl of Shaftesbury and Frances Hutcheson, who claimed that the world was a harmonious whole and that we need to recognise our role as part of this natural scheme (different from the idea of the world as a grand moral scheme mentioned above). “The good person loves the whole order of things.” (1989, p. 254)

The modern self believes in the value of the voice of nature. Contact with nature is seen to be good and the natural world is frequently seen as a source of moral renewal.

3.3.4 Expressions of Authenticity

Because we have inner depths, and we can hear the voice of nature speak within ourselves, we can access goodness from within. This means that “being true to ourselves” becomes a moral injunction.

We each now have our own way of being, which should come from within, and we are responsible for being true to this. Differences in tastes, preferences, abilities and inclinations have always been recognised but they now have a moral dimension that they didn't have before. (1991, p. 28) We are not looking for a universal nature like Plato, instead we are looking for our own unique way of being, like Montaigne.

As was mentioned above, Taylor believes in expressivism, and therefore that we can create ourselves and express our own creation in our own way. These expressions are not simply made up of pre-existing formulae. We act as interpreters of our identity, and our interpretation contributes to our identity. No one else can know who I am or who I am called to be.

Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own. This is the background understanding to the modern ideal of authenticity, and to the goals of self-fulfilment and self-realization in which it is usually couched. This is the background that gives moral force to the culture of authenticity, including its most degraded, absurd, or trivialized forms. It is what gives sense to the idea of “doing your own thing” or “finding your own fulfilment”. (Taylor, 1991 at p. 29)

This analysis of being authentic can be read as selfishness, but the call to authenticity is a moral code. (1991, p. 16)

This expressive individuation is such a cornerstone of modern identity that we struggle to imagine life without, but Taylor claims that it is new. He says that Martin Luther didn't have an identity crisis when he started doubting Catholicism, as a modern person would in similar circumstances. Rather, he feared for the world – a concern for the overarching moral order, which we now struggle to understand. Taylor clarifies this cultural shift by alluding to Romanticism's contribution to our current understanding of individual differences (as discussed above in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2) and to “the importance we now give to expression in each person's

discovery of his or her own moral horizon”, which would have been neither necessary nor possible in a time when morality was not perceived as a matter for individual discovery (1989, p. 28).

3.3.5 Ordinary Life

In Ancient Greece, political life and philosophical contemplation were seen as higher orders. Agriculture and family life (production and reproduction) were earthier, lower activities, carried out in part to sustain these higher orders. (1989, p. 211)

Protestantism rejected the traditional downgrading of particular types of work. Any work can be done for the glory of God. Taylor refers to the aphorism that God loveth adverbs. What matters most is not what you do, it is the way that you do it.

“And so we can appreciate the full seriousness of the Puritan idea of the calling. In addition to the general calling to be a believing Christian, everyone had a particular calling, the specific form of labour to which God summoned him or her. Whereas in Catholic cultures, the term 'vocation' usually arises in connection with the priesthood or monastic life, the meanest employment was a calling for the Puritans, provided it was useful to mankind and imputed to use by God. In this sense, all callings were equal, whatever their place in the social hierarchy, or in what we think of as the hierarchy of human capacities.” (Taylor, 1989 at p 223)

This new ethic challenged the aristocracy, but it also challenged the Catholic treatment of clergy as a higher way of being, and of their rigid cultural separation of sacred and profane. (1989, p. 216 - 218) This change was not a universal one, and the clerical role maintained a centrality in Protestant, as well as Catholic, Europe for centuries after the Reformation. MacCulloch (2003, p. 596) describes not a direct shift from a clerical culture to a lay culture, but rather a culture where power was vested in consistories of elders, a new class of both laymen and clerics. The overall trend he identifies, however, matches the one identified by Taylor, as in the consistory “the minister’s voice was never guaranteed to carry the day” (p. 596).

The change was a gradual one and over time, Taylor argues that the religious connotations of the glorification of ordinary life became obscured and now both family and work life are seen as valuable in and of themselves, making life worthwhile.

Social developments like industrialisation, urbanisation, the separation of work from home and the rise of the nuclear family have cemented this, as have consequent political movements like Marxism (focusing on production) and feminism (focusing more on reproduction).

3.3.6 Practical Benevolence

The idea of benevolence and the desire to reduce suffering is a feature of many societies and civilisations. The Stoics advocated a universal duty of care and Christianity has long promoted ideas of love and charity. The focus in the modern age has become much more practical. Now, rather than an onus to love, there is an onus to act as swiftly as possible to relieve suffering. This ethic has a practical bent, not necessarily present in earlier times. This is partly a result of the progress made in the natural sciences. We can minimise pain, we can control our world and do take many different actions to minimise the suffering present in the world. (1991, p. 103)

We campaign and raise money for the victims of war, and speak of moral responsibility to end the cruelty of wars. What is uniquely modern is that we do the same for the victims of hurricanes and earthquakes, thinking of these victims as if they are suffering from “curable or preventable evils”. (1991, p. 104) The modern impulse to practical benevolence means that we can be rendered uncomprehending by such disasters.

3.4 A note on religion

Taylor is a self-professed Catholic. For him, God is the source of goodness. He fights anthropocentrism. For example, Heidegger claims that nature is a standing reserve for the use of humans, while Taylor believes that nature has an intrinsic value besides its service to humans, “a deep ecology”. He rejects subjectivism, that you can't exclude all non-human/trans-human sources of goodness. Taylor tries to create a moral theory that is acceptable to both theists and non-theists. This is a contested claim, that theists find an adequate moral source in their religion. It is disputed by those who say, for example, that the problem of evil has long plagued Christianity. (Abbey, 2000, at p. 31-33)

Chapter 4

Methodology I: Data Generation

4.1 Introduction

In attempting to gather rich data around masculinities, and to see how Connell and her peers' work can be seen through the lens provided by Taylor, I decided to examine the narrated and documented lives of a young man. By allowing this man to tell his own story and by telling (or re-telling) it myself, I aim to provide a canvas on which the "masculinities" in one young life can be viewed in a linear or narrative fashion.

The research questions are explored in section 4.2 below. These helped me to formulate the instruments through which I elicited this auto/biography. First, I will address why a life history technique is appropriate to answering these questions (4.3). Then I will look at the research design itself (4.4), where I will first give the background details that pertain to Jack, the research participant (4.4.1), then outline the design of the research instruments (semi-structured interviews, supported by documentary and visual data) and justify this selection with reference to the research questions in 4.4.2; then I will give the researcher's own background and positionality, including a section on researcher reflexivity (4.4.3) and then I will describe the ethical and procedural precautions taken on the project (4.4.4).

4.2 The Research Questions

1. How does the social and moral space in modern Ireland relate to the constitution of this young man's masculine identity?

This first question is derived from Taylor's work on identity. Taylor holds that an identity claim is a moral claim; to say who you are is to say what is important to you, what you value. This study seeks to discover how this young man identifies himself throughout the course of his life. How does he see his masculinity? What does he believe the "good" to be? Are his ideas of his own masculine identity tied to his morality? How? How does he interpret himself? What significant others does he conduct dialogue with? Is membership of a group (the Irish, men) an important element of his identity? What are the implications of this for his view of the "good"? Does religious belief form a basis for his notion of the "good"? Taylor also asks us to

look within. What does this man consider the “authentic self” to be? Does he believe it can be “discovered” by looking within? Does he believe that he must be true to this authentic self? Is everyday life (of labour and of sex, of the body) an important element of his identity? How?

2. How can the work of Charles Taylor on identity contribute to our understanding of this young man’s masculinities?

This question allows us to stand back and view the life examined from a more remote standpoint. Can looking at this young man’s life through the lens provided by Taylor provide us with any new possible perspectives on, theories of, or approaches to masculinities and their study?

4.3 Methodological framework: Biographical/life history approaches

Kohli (2005) is one of many to credit Thomas and Znaniecki with having created that seminal work which popularised the biographical approach, when they took the life histories of Polish peasants in Europe and America in the early twentieth century. They produced a massive work in five volumes claiming that personal life-records constituted “the *perfect* type of sociological material”. The “Chicago School” of sociology applied the approach in prisons, in factories, in decaying societies in Europe and emerging ones in Latin America. Interest in the approach declined in the 1960s and Bryman (2008) notes a “turn to biographical methods” since the 1990s, which he puts down to a “growth in the interest in the significance of agency in social life” (p. 441). However, the tendency in more recent autobiographical studies is to look at a group of lives, rather than in-depth studies of individual lives as is the case in this study.

Faraday and Plummer (2005) note three advantages that the life history technique has over other forms of sociological research. The first of these is that life history enables the researcher to see “the subjective reality of the individual...[It] documents the inner experiences of individuals, how they interpret, understand and define the world around them...it comes to lay bare the ‘world taken-for-granted’ of people – their assumptions and what it is that they find problematic about life and their lives in particular” (pp. 252-253). Charles Taylor’s view is that identity is

subjective. Subjectivity is an essential part of this study. The second advantage they note is that the life history technique focuses on process and ambiguity. Much social scientific research is searching for “generalizability [and] imposes order and rationality upon experiences and worlds that are more ambiguous” (p. 253). Ambiguity is a key element in Connell’s view of gender. For Connell, gender is a conflict-ridden, shifting, unstable construct that changes over time. To investigate the inconsistencies within gender identity, a technique that recognises process and that allows for ambiguity is ideal. The third advantage noted is the focus on totality. Faraday and Plummer claim that psychology cuts off attitude or personality from the totality of life experience, while sociologists separate culture or structures from daily lived experience. Life history allows us to view both the individual and the culture (p. 253).

Connell uses life histories as the source of her data in her seminal work *Masculinities* (2005). She claims that they allow her to see “the relation between the social conditions that determine practice and the future social world that practice brings into being... [It] always concerns the making of social life through time.” (2005, p. 89) A narrative life story should allow us to see a person in their social world, and this is essential both to a modern sociological understanding of masculinity (as social), but also to the thinking of Taylor (that the “good life” is a social understanding, that the quest for belonging is a search for a moral identity).

The subject of this study is “identity”. For Riessman (2008), individuals “construct identities through storytelling” (p. 8). The auto/biography that this study elicited could be viewed as essential to an inquiry into identity. If identity is separated from narrative, if it has no temporality, no plot, no characters, no crises, no climaxes, it could be claimed that it would be difficult, if not impossible to call it identity.

Narratives of various types jostle in the field of social scientific research, falling in and out of favour over time. Riessman (2008) reviews a continuum of narrative types, from a single uninterrupted story, to a complete life history cobbled together from diaries, interviews, observations and visual artefacts. Most psychological and sociological narratives, she claims, come somewhere in the middle. This study is a

single auto/biography, principally made up of a narrative told from the subjective perspective of the research subject himself through a series of interviews, but will also look at the social and cultural world in which he finds himself, addressed in the interviews and supported by documentary and visual data, including the participant's Facebook account.

Stanley (1992) examines auto/biography as a subset of narrative study, applying a postmodernist feminist's lens to the discourse type. She claims that feminist auto/biography presents a challenge to traditional biography, that it jettisons a "realist version of 'truth' as something single and unseamed" (p. 14). Her theory of auto/biography places a representation of perspective, rather than a representation of "truth" at the centre of the project of the auto/biographer. The issues of perspective and subjectivity in the auto/biography constructed in this study are examined in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 below.

Stanley expands on her theory by looking at the idea of "romance" in the auto/biography. The auto/biographer recognises that s/he is creating "moments", assembling significant and impressive details and attempting to artfully compose a story and compose a person, rather than merely to report a life (p. 51-52). An acknowledgement of the romance (and therefore, Stanley argues, of the fiction created in a representation of a life) is at the heart of the presentation of the data, as will be discussed in detail in section 5.3.2c and throughout the analysis sections of chapters 6 and 7.

For Stanley, a postmodernist feminist auto/biography does not fall victim to the traps mentioned above (of seeking to represent a single truth or of failing to recognise its own composition and "romance"); a further element to this type of auto/biography is the avoidance of a claim to authority by appealing to the narrative forms of contiguity and of substitution (p. 129). The narrative form of contiguity draws different sources together into a single thread of chronological biography, not acknowledging that the different sources, although they may occur at the same time, may also represent different aspects of the self, or even different selves, or they may not follow logically from one to another, or they may have significantly different

social or cultural meanings. A narrative of substitution uses metaphor to highlight narrative phases and changes of interest to the author, using literary technique to present the truth of a life. Stanley argues for a feminist auto/biography that avoids these traps through a resistance of the temptation to paint complete and perfectly chronological life stories, through the recognition of the perspective of the author in the production and in the poetics of the auto/biography (p. 136). This study aims to produce such an auto/biography, as described in below in 4.4.3 and 5.3.

A narrative by itself can be viewed as purely textual. It is a discourse-type and is ready-interpreted, by the teller. Goodson and Sikes (2001) draw a line from the narrative, to the life story, to the life history. A life story is a narrative of a life, as related by an informant, whereas a life history is constructed from a range of interviews and documentary data, put in a historical and social context (p. 17). This study falls between the two. It will be composed of an auto/biography, consisting of extended spoken narratives, supplemented by (a) short narrative texts, (b) summary pieces relating to participant's opinions on issues and experiences relevant to the study and (c) visual and written data in the form of excerpts from the participant's Facebook account.

Other types of narratives were considered in this research design, which may have allowed for a greater number of research participants. However, only life histories gave the depth that the research questions demand. These questions require the ability to look at individual experience. Taylor demands an examination of the ins and outs of ordinary life as it is subjectively experienced. The questions that spring from Taylor requires data that has depth, that is extended over time, that allows for repeated examination and that allows for the boring, the ordinary and the trivial.

4.4 Research Design

The data was generated from a series of seven themed meetings which took place in spring and summer of 2012. The collation of this auto/biography involved the participant, whose background information is listed in section 4.4.1 and me, the researcher, who I describe in section 4.4.3. The format of the themed meetings is outlined in section 4.4.2, where a justification for the instruments used can also be

found. These meetings used pre-prepared documentary and/or visual prompts to support semi-structured interviewing.

4.4.1. Research Participant(s)

Initially, the research participants were four young Irish male undergraduates, and all four participated for the full period of data generation. I had chosen to use the stories of a group of four men, rather than one, for a number of reasons. On a practical level, the main period of data collection was quite narrow and clashed with the participants' first year university exams. I wanted to insure that in the event of one or two of the participants withdrawing from the process that there would be sufficient data still to be generated and analysed. Given the short lives that these men have lived, it is important that data can be drawn out under each of these themes. It is expected that each participant's story will have different aspects to contribute, at different depths, about each theme and about each research question. As it happened, none of the participants withdrew and I had four auto/biographies which all had the potential for use.

In the end, I decided to use only Jack's story, as it had depth in all the areas of inquiry and as he was at a particular juncture in his life and at a time of transition that I found both personally compelling and that spoke to Taylor's views about the call to authenticity and the power of articulation in the construction of the "good". A single auto/biography allows for even more depth than three or four would, and thus allows for an exploration of the subject as subject and "ordinary life" as experienced and as required by the research questions as outlined above.

At the time the compilation of life stories commenced, Jack was in his first year of university study at Trinity College, Dublin. He was aged nineteen and was living in the same student halls as the other three early participants in the study. All four were living outside their family home for the first time in their lives.

They were chosen partly because they were easily accessible to me. I lived in halls with them. I asked a number of the young men living in my apartment in halls to participate and, once the details of the study were made clear, these four informants

self-selected to participate in the study.

As well as the opportunistic decision to choose participants who were easily accessible to the researcher, it allowed for an element of participant observation. I describe my relationship with the research subjects below in section 4.4.3a, but because I lived with them, I was privy to some details of their day-to-day lives, which allows for a greater depth in the building of their auto/biographies.

The fact that the participants were all the same age and all lived together was also useful as it allows for some form of horizontal comparison between them, given that some similarities in life experience could be expected.

Undergraduate years are often seen as a key time of change in young people's lives, a time when they "grow up". These young men are living outside of home for the first time and are being treated as "adults" by the law and by institutions, but not necessarily by their families and social networks. It is an interesting time of change and development. Proponents of the "liberal university" claim that the education received at a liberal university, aids in the formation of the individual, their criticality, conscience and character. According to Trinity College, Dublin's own mission statement, it is such an institution, "a liberal environment...[where] students are nurtured as individuals and encouraged to achieve their full potential". (2008, p. 1) This time of change and new experiences provides fertile ground for the biographer to document.

All four of the original research participants could be described as "middle class". All entered university through the conventional route, none making use of access programmes. Although their parents came from very varied backgrounds, the research participants themselves all grew up with the expectation of attending university. Like the research subjects, I am from a middle-class background and I am university-educated. In qualitative research, according to Nicolson (2003, p. 144), meanings are negotiated dependent on social context. This similarity in background and social context means that meanings were often held in common between the researcher and the researched, allowing for greater depth in data collection and

greater clarity in data analysis, and as Coffey (1999) argues, the “essence of the ethnographic enterprise is predicated on shared understandings” (p. 47). It could also be argued that the research instruments in question are most suited to subjects who have a relatively high level of articulacy. The participants all have the articulacy required for third-level study, and the use of both semi-structured interviews and Facebook data could be said to require articulate research subjects.

4.4.1a “Jack”

Jack is the subject of the auto/biography that follows. At the time of the data generation, he was a first year Social Work student from a small rural community. He comes from a less well-off background than his flatmates; his father is a taxi-driver and poet and his mother lives on disability benefits. He realised he was gay at the age of eleven and had not yet had any sexual experiences at the time of the interviews, but he came out as gay to his family (and to me) during the first week of the data generation. He is very sociable, has a very large circle of friends and drinks and smokes heavily. He suffered from a number of phobias during his teenage years. He is very active in charitable and welfare-oriented organisations.

4.4.2 Research instruments and research events: building an auto/biography

This auto/biography were initially built over the course of seven meetings. At each meeting Jack was asked to bring a piece of writing (sometimes pieces of prose in response to questions or prompts, sometimes a simple timeline) or selections from online social media. These form part of the data, but also played the role of a prompt, or springboard for the interviews, which are intended to make up the bulk of the data.

These meetings all took place in March, April and May of 2012, as Jack was coming to the end of his first academic year at university. Each meeting had a different “title” and the visual or written prompt that Jack brought with him to the meeting helped to guide the conversation around this theme. Each meeting was scheduled for an hour and a half, which Elliot (2005), suggests is the “optimum length for a qualitative

research interview” (p. 32), and most lasted about that length, although a few were only about an hour. Initially, they were scheduled with two weeks between them, but as end-of-year exams came, the interviews came closer together.

These interviews were *semi-structured*. Bryman (2008) lists the features of a semi-structured interview, as opposed to the more structured interviewing that is a feature of some quantitative research. Qualitative semi-structured interviewing allows for more flexibility, responding to the direction in which the interviewee wants to take the interview. A semi-structured interview can lead to topics and conclusions being negotiated between the interviewer and the interviewee, as the outline of a semi-structured interview allows for rambling off the topic, for deeper questioning on topics of interest and for variety in the depth of responses. (p. 437)

As well as this, it was important that the interviews for this study be semi-structured, rather than completely open or unstructured, because the theoretical frame requires some structure in the data collection. In order to answer the research questions, it is necessary to look at certain aspects of Jack’s life in detail. For instance, in order to answer the first research question, it was important to ask him about his views on the “good” and what he believed the “good life” to be.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) hold that the interviewer in qualitative interviews is an active participant, with the possibility of following up on interviewees’ answers, asking for justifications, clarifications and extensions of earlier statements. More will be said about researcher position and reflexivity below in 4.4.3.

4.4.2a. Between Meetings

In the two-week period between meetings, I collated the information. I maintained a timeline of Jack’s life, outlining the life events covered in each interview. At each succeeding interview, Jack was asked to correct anything that needs to be amended by deletion, adaptation or explanation. This timeline was organic and served as the spinal column of the data as it was generated and analysed.

4.4.2b. The First Meeting: “A Timeline of your Life”

According to Goodson and Sikes (2001), a “useful way to start life history research is by inviting respondents to construct a time-line of key events in their life” (p. 30). The informants were asked to prepare this timeline in advance, with at least eight major events marked out. The conversation centred on this, on fleshing out the details and on creating a clear narrative “line” on which to hang the results of future meetings. Riessman (2008), too, recommends starting generally (in her case with a grid) and then “the gaps are filled in over the course of subsequent conversations.” (p. 25)

4.4.2c. The Second Meeting: “My Family”

Family details *are* biographical, and so a clear picture of the informant’s family life and relationships is essential. This aids in filling in the gaps from the first conversation. It is also an essential element in looking at the participants’ masculine identities through the lens of Taylor. For Taylor, the life of the family, “ordinary life”, is a feature unique to modern selfhood and constitutes a large part of what is valued, and therefore part of the “good”. The conversation at this meeting was prompted by a family tree that the participant prepared in advance.

4.4.2d. The Third Meeting: “My Social Life”

Friendships, romantic relationships and social circles generally, are important for the same reasons as the family is. This will further fill in the gaps in the life story. It will also reveal more about the groups the person chooses to associate with, a choice that Taylor sees as a moral evaluation. The conversation was prompted by selections from the participants’ online social networks. Online social networks are now a key element of people’s social lives and attempting to answer the research questions without looking at this element of life would be remiss. Lists of friends from Facebook were utilised as a prompt to encourage participants to outline social circles. This information was then fleshed out by looking at the participant’s Facebook Timeline or Wall and choosing significant events in the participant’s social life, as documented online.

4.4.2e. The Fourth Meeting: “The Real Me”

At this stage, the participants were asked to step back. In advance of the meeting, they were asked to write between one and two pages on “The Real Me”, using the following questions as prompts: 1. Are you a good person? To what extent do you like/dislike yourself? Can you think of specific times when you liked/disliked yourself? 2. Is there a “real” you? How would you describe him? 3. What does being authentic mean to you? 4. Can you define a “good life”? Do you think you live a good life? Can you think of times when you would say that you were living a good life? 5. What kind of life do you intend to live as an adult? Why? 6. Describe two or three times when you realised or discovered something or someone was important to you. 7. How do you know what’s right and what’s wrong? What is the source of your morality? The conversation at the meeting would draw out these themes. The main aim here is to look at these men’s lives as Charles Taylor would, asking what the “good” is for them. “Authenticity” and its articulation are also key (related) concepts for Taylor. The ideal of the good life could also be examined as part of the practices that Foucault labels as “care of the self” in his later work.

4.4.2f. The Fifth Meeting: “Me, the man”

This meeting is again focused on the participants’ own opinions. Here, the participants were asked to say what being a man means to them. In advance of the meeting, they would be asked to write another two-page piece about their views on what a man is physically, sexually and emotionally, how a man should and does behave, and how they feel they “measure up” as men. This allows them to view their masculinities from a sociological perspective, but also gives the opportunity to see what language they use when describing their gender identity. Language is a key vehicle of expressive identity in Taylor, and the language I use to describe my gender, can make my gender what it is. This meeting will also enable the researcher to look at the participants from a Taylolean perspective, as the participants will be looking at how they “belong” to the group that is “men”, and at how they “live up to” the moral requirements of membership of this group.

4.4.2g. The Sixth Meeting: “My Body”

The content of this meeting is unavoidable in any modern study of gender. Gender is bound up in bodies, and as Judith Butler, among others, has insisted, “bodies matter”.

So, the respondents were asked to put together another timeline, this time one of their bodies, featuring any changes that have occurred in their bodies, times when they particularly liked or disliked their bodies, changes in their relationships with their bodies, scars, injuries medical procedures, tattoos, piercings, occasions of violence or tenderness, weight gain or loss and occasions of self-harm. This will help to see these men in the light of the work of Taylor, for whom the “ordinary life” of sex and toil is central to the modern self.

4.4.2h. The Seventh Meeting: “My Life in University”

Entry to university can be a major turning-point in these men’s lives. In this meeting, a narrative of the informants’ first year in university was constructed, once again using a timeline. This will provide the opportunity to look at these men’s lives, at a time when many young people take the opportunity to “re-define” themselves and see if the participants have experienced any “shifts” in identity.

4.4.2i. Timeline of the Meetings

Title	Date
Meeting 1: “A timeline of my life”	Wednesday, 7 th March 2012
Meeting 2: “My family”	Friday, 23 rd March 2012
Meeting 3: “My social life”	Wednesday, 4 th April 2012
Meeting 4: “The Real Me”	Monday, 16 th April 2012
Meeting 5: “Me, the man”	Monday, 23 rd April 2012
Meeting 6: “My body”	Monday, 14 th May 2012
Meeting 7: “My life in university”	Monday, 21 st May 2012

4.4.2j Other data sources

The other main sources of data, besides the interviews themselves, are the prompts used in the interviews – the written pieces and timelines produced by the Jack (which are all quite short) and his Facebook page. Jack had a Facebook page that he and/or his friends updated daily, from mid-2009 and this yielded three years of visual and written data for analysis.

Given the international saturation of online social networks, of which Facebook is by far the biggest among those of school and university-going age (Anderson et al., 2012) it is, perhaps, surprising that this has received little attention before.

This is not to say that academia has taken no interest in Facebook. A scoping of the literature in the area reveals at least three different types of studies into Facebook. One use identified for Facebook is its utilisation as a means of identifying or sourcing research participants for particular projects (Baltar and Brunet, 2012). Another group of studies has looked at particular phenomena as they occur on Facebook, such as the process of “friending” or “unfriending” (Courtois et al., 2012), or the use of the network for bullying (Kwon & Skoric, 2013). Thirdly, some studies have looked at the differences in usage of Facebook among different social groups, for instance homeless youth in San Francisco in a recent issue of *Computers and Human Behaviour* (Lim et al., 2013).

Life history data is usually generated by means of tools such as interviews, diaries, documents and photograph albums. A review of the literature reveals nothing on the use of Facebook in the generation of this type of data. While there have been studies looking at narrative biographical information provided via blogging services like Blogger and Wordpress, or so-called micro-blogging services, like Twitter (Ressler et al., 2012), the use of Facebook as a tool in the collection of auto/biographical data has yet to receive academic attention.

4.4.2j.1. Advantages of using Facebook

4.4.2j.1A Ubiquity

Facebook is a ubiquitous presence in the lives of young people today. A 2012 survey

showed that 85% of those aged between 15 and 24 use Facebook (Ipsos/MRBI, 2012) and another survey, conducted by UPC, claimed that 96% of Irish third-level students use Facebook (Digital Times, 2011). The same survey claims that 58% of Irish third-level students use social networking sites for over five hours a week.

Facebook permeates its users' lives in many ways. Jack and I lived in an apartment of fourteen young men. We were all members of one Facebook group, and in this online forum arrangements for cleaning of the communal kitchen were made. This Facebook group was also where it was agreed whose turn it was to pay for soap in the bathrooms, and where complaints about noise in other people's bedrooms were posted. On one occasion one flatmate wanted to find out who owned a cake that was in the fridge, and asked via this Facebook group, and on another, one flatmate left his cigarettes behind when he went to lectures and he asked if someone would get them from his bedroom and bring them in.

A young person's entire night out can be regulated and recorded on Facebook. The night will typically start with "pre-drinks" in someone's flat, which will be organised when someone creates a "Facebook event" and invites others. They might also post a general message on their Timeline, inviting all of their "friends", or they could post a message to a Facebook group, containing a specific set of friends (like the apartment-wide group mentioned above). While at the pre-drinks, one of the group present will often "tag" the entire group of friends at the party, and then any other Facebook "friends" of any of the people who were tagged can see, via Facebook's location-based GPS service, where these people are. If the group wants to go on to a nightclub, they will often find the Facebook page for that particular club, and in order to get on the "cheaplist" for the club they will be asked to "like" the club's page and to "share" it on their own Timeline. Other friends can then see where their friends are planning to go and can join them, often by liking and sharing the club's page again. Once at the club, the group might again be tagged, or they might take photos of each other, which they can automatically post from their smartphones to Facebook. Once a photo is posted to Facebook, any person in the photo can be "tagged", so that this photo will be shown on that person's Timeline, regardless of who has taken it. Nightclubs often hire official photographers, who will

take photos and post them on the nightclub's Facebook page. The partygoers will then be invited to check the page and tag themselves and their friends.

Of course, not all of these things happen every time a young person goes out, but Facebook can, and often does, play a significant role in both the organisation and the recording of social occasions among young people. This researcher was a Facebook friend of the research participants and witnessed all of these interaction-types on a regular basis. While this set of research participants were sitting down around the kitchen table, having dinner, or chatting, they would often have their laptops open and Facebook would form an integral part of their conversation, as they commented on photos and posts on the site and as they sent each other videos and links via Facebook across the table. As well as this, many young people, including some of those in this study, have linked their Facebook accounts to other online activity. For instance, they could link it to their Spotify account, and so when they listen to a song on Spotify, all their Facebook friends can see it, or they might link to their Netflix account, so that when they watch a movie, all their Facebook friends are notified of this.

Facebook is so integral to the lives of young people in Ireland that it would have been negligent for it not to play a role in the construction of one of their auto/biographies.

4.4.2j. IB View of the social

Facebook is known as a *social* network, and much of the data it provides is social in nature. It is frequently argued that *identity* is a social phenomenon. As already explored, Taylor claims that a statement of identity is an alignment to a social group, that in order to “belong” in the world, I need to be able to say that I am “Irish” or that I am a “man”, and that this allows me and others to draw inferences about commonalities and differences between me and those around me. He further claims that identity is formed in dialogue with the “other”, and that we “create” our selves by conducting a dialogue with the world around us (1989, p. 36). Many thinkers do not agree with Taylor in his subjective view of identity, but they too see identity as social. Post-structuralists, such as Foucault, argue that identity is something that is

imposed from the outside, from the powers operating through, among other things the institutions and social life that make up the world we inhabit (1982, p. 331).

If identity is social, then Facebook could be said to be the ideal lens through which to examine the identities of young people. Facebook is a social phenomenon, as demonstrated above by features like Facebook groups, Facebook events and invitations and practices like geographical and photographic tagging. These tools help to constitute the social life of the individual and they also record it.

Another feature of Facebook that is essential to considering its social aspect is the idea of “friends”. Jack has over 900 Facebook “friends”. Although the access various friends have to your information is becoming increasingly easy to limit, many Facebook friends will have full access to your Timeline, and will be able to see all text posts, web links, photos, tags, pages liked and pages shared. Jack did not make a lot of use of Facebook’s privacy settings and so the information that Facebook provides is not only built socially (as described in the previous section), but is also maintained on a semi-public, social platform.

Facebook data is social data and lends itself well to the examination of identity as a result.

4.4.2j.1C. Access to the mundane

As outlined in Chapter 3, Taylor argues that, over the past five hundred years, we have elevated “ordinary life” to being a central feature of identity. The “self” that is important is no longer the detached philosopher king or sacred priest, rather it is the ordinary man, with his days of toil and his familial evenings. For Taylor, an examination of identity must include the day-to-day, the life of work and study, the chores, the pursuit of passive pleasures, the relationships with close family, friends and colleagues (1989, p. 223).

It can be easy for many auto/biographical data generation tools to exclude the mundane. A life history interview or a written memoir is likely to focus on the “high points” (or low points) in life, on the exceptional, on the things that stand out in the

research participant's memory.

A Facebook timeline will also record the exceptional events in a life. However, it records the everyday too. As already outlined, Jack's Facebook account included practical discussions with flatmates (arranging to buy soap or to clean the kitchen) and many, many photographs of nights out. Other "mundane" data found in these accounts includes: trips to the cinema, finishing essays, votes in student union elections, table quizzes, hangovers, pop songs liked, lists of people who wished the account holder a happy birthday and news articles read.

4.4.2j.1D. Documentary nature

Biographical researchers have often relied on diaries and photograph albums, both as a source of data, in and of themselves, but also as scaffolding for life history interviews, to prompt research participants or to form a central spine for the data, that other data can then be "hung" from.

Facebook is the modern equivalent of a photograph album, with photos that can be viewed by date, or by the person who posted them, or by the people who are tagged in them, or by the "album" that the person who posted created to group them manually. These photographs can then serve the same function that they would serve in a traditional life history study.

Facebook also has diary-like documentary features. Posts, photos, events and comments are all logged by date and an entire Facebook Timeline reads something like a very commercial, very visual diary. It could be said that the timeline feature in Facebook acts as a ready-made diary.

4.4.2j.1E. Narrative nature

The importance of the Timeline feature on Facebook lies in its ability to lay out a life as a narrative. The Facebook Timeline outlines all the information one person posts, or has posted about them, in a linear, date-bound format, that can be printed out as a book.

Life events, such as moving house, starting college or getting married are given prominence and other information arranged in between these, so you can see what romantic relationships were established in each year, what commercial pages were “liked” in each month, how many people were “friended” each month and who these people were, photos are ordered chronologically, as are text updates, posts, web links and comments.

This leads to the creation of a narrative. As outlined above, many argue that our identity is narrative, that who we are is the story we (and others) tell about ourselves (see, for example, Riessman, 2008, p. 8). Facebook Timeline is ready-made narrative, which allows for a narrative analysis of biography.

4.4.2j.2. Challenges of using Facebook

4.4.2j.2A. Access

Although some Facebook account holders allow for completely public access to the information in their accounts, this was not the case with any of the participants in this research project and was not common among their friends. They restricted access to their friends.

This means that in order to access the data on the participants’ Facebook accounts, the researcher must become the Facebook friend of the researched. This has implications for the personal information that the researcher shares with the researched, as well as the information that the research participant shares with the researcher. There are a number of choices here. Firstly, the researcher could create an account especially for this purpose, and so would not need to share any personal information. Secondly, the researcher could use their own Facebook account, but limit the access the research participant has to their information. Finally, the researcher could use their own Facebook account and allow full access to the research participant as a Facebook friend.

In this study, the final approach was chosen. I was already Jack’s friend on Facebook before the data generation started. I also feel that it allowed for the building and maintenance of a trusting relationship between the researcher and researched.

4.4.2j.2B. Ethics

When a Facebook user makes a Facebook friend and does not make use of any of the privacy features on the site, then the “friend” has access to all the information that this user has posted on their Timeline and to the information that others have posted on that person’s Timeline. It could be argued that by agreeing to be their friend that the Facebook user is giving permission for access to the data found on their Timeline and that any Facebook user could print out and analyse all their friends’ Timelines.

However, given the volume of information available on Facebook, much of which may have been forgotten by the account holder, it constitutes a significant instance of personal revelation. Because of this, written consent was sought from Jack to allow me to print out and make use of (appropriately anonymised) data from Facebook in the course of this project. The use of the consent form also gave me the opportunity to discuss the amount and nature of the information to be found on the Jack’s Facebook Timeline with him, so that the consent obtained could be described as *informed*.

4.4.2j.2B. Deliberate nature of the presentation/version of self

Data gathered from Facebook is a representation of life and can be tailored by the account owner to portray a certain type of self, or to play up or downplay life events or aspects of personality. Nadkarni and Hoffman (2011) claim that Facebook “leaves itself open to the possibility that its users display their idealized, rather than accurate, selves through their profiles” (p. 246).

According to Jack in his third interview, Facebook can portray only the positive aspects of someone’s character and life. Jack did not tend to share bad news on the site. He tended to post when they passed their exams, but not when they failed exams or had to repeat them.

4.4.2j.2D. Partial/Fragmentary nature of the representation of self

While there is a lot of information to be found on a Facebook Timeline, it could be described as a very fragmentary record of life. As mentioned already, positive life

experiences and events are more likely to be recorded than negative ones (or at least that was the experience in this study).

On Jack's Facebook, family played a very minor role, and friends were given more prominence both in the information recorded and in the interactions visible on the Timeline, in spite of the very significant role Jack's relationships with his family played in his life as revealed in the interviews.

When reviewing groups of Facebook friends, Jack commented on the unbalanced view their Facebook account gave of his friendships. He had good friends who rarely used Facebook for social interactions, while he had acquaintances who frequently commented on their posts and photos, giving an incorrect impression of the relative closeness of different relationships.

There are a number of instances on Jack's Timeline of low levels of Facebook activity, and periods which are recorded in more or less detail than others. The narrative provided by Facebook could be described as fragmentary and uneven. One of the most significant events of the period of data generation, Jack's coming out as gay, is never mentioned on his Facebook in that period.

4.4.2j.3 Use of Facebook in this study

Facebook was used both as a data generation tool, as described in Interview Three above, and to a lesser extent as a tool in the analysis of the data. Cross-checking the interview data with the Facebook data aided the validity of Jack's auto/biography, particularly as it related to his social life, as research by Courtois et al. (2012) has "demonstrated a significant overlap between offline and online social networks" (p. 290).

The use of Facebook data was discussed with Jack in detail in the third meeting (see 4.4.2d above), when he gave permission for anonymised extracts from Facebook to be used in this study. At that meeting, Jack and I discussed how he used Facebook and the extent to which it portrayed him truthfully. Data from Facebook served as the prompt in that interview for discussion on the Jack's social life, and this was the

most significant role that Facebook played in this study. Once Facebook had been discussed with him, I did not use any Facebook data that post-dated that interview, to guard against the danger that Jack would edit himself for (or against!) me.

4.4.3. The Researcher

4.4.3a Relationship with the Research Participant

At the time the data generation for this research project took place, I was a thirty-one-year-old homosexual man, who was pursuing a full-time PhD. For financial reasons, I lived in a large apartment in university accommodation, sharing with the four initial research participants (including Jack) and nine other young male undergraduates. The apartment was made up of fourteen bedrooms spread across two stories, two bathrooms and one shared living area, consisting of a kitchen, a dining area and seating, which we generally referred to as the kitchen.

In the semester before the project began, we built up a cautious friendship that reflects the difference in age and life experience between us. Initially, I only saw them about once a week and we had brief conversations in the shared living room. I did not eat with them or use the shared kitchen and we never socialised together outside of Hall. Towards the end of the first college semester, in December 2011, we became Facebook friends. We got to know a lot more about each other's lives. They also began reading my blog, which gives a fairly detailed account of my life, and included long passages on my flatmates themselves. As 2012 began, I began to see some of them more often, including Jack. As the year went on, and around the time interviews started, I began to see them even more, and helped on a student election campaign that Jack was running in. Over time, Jack and I began to advise each other on relationship and college issues and built up a stock of shared experiences, and so a real friendship began to be formed between us.

While a friendship certainly existed between Jack and me by the time the data collection had finished, boundaries were kept to, through which a "research relationship" was maintained that ran parallel to our day-to-day friendship. Interviews never took place in our apartment, and I made efforts to ensure that participants were not aware of, for example, each other's pseudonyms or the timing

of interviews. I never sent group emails or messages when arranging meetings or requesting written work, although I often needed to send exactly the same message to more than one person. Although the research participants themselves sometimes brought up the interviews in our shared apartment, I always tried to ensure that these conversations were kept short and factual. I do regularly maintain a public blog, which Jack read, as mentioned above, and though I would have mentioned him in his capacity as a friend, I never mentioned that he was involved in interviews with me and, although I mentioned the interviews on the blog, I never said who they were with or what they were about.

The friendships that we established had limits that mitigate the danger to the research posed by our relationship. I was never drunk in the presence Jack, though I did occasionally have one or two drinks in their company. I was never in his bedroom and there was never any potential danger of our relationship ever being anything more than platonic.

The interviews were kept separate from our social life. I made sure that we arrived at interview locations separately, that I would always let them leave before I did, so as to maintain the barrier between the “research relationship” and the social one. Every interview involved paperwork, and I would regularly refer to the goals of the research during interviews. I also asked Jack to review the process as we went along. All this helped to maintain a “work-like” atmosphere during interviews. The interviews covered some very personal topics, and there was a danger that a faux-counsellor type relationship would arise. There was an element of this in the interviews and Jack said that he found the interviews therapeutic. As mentioned earlier, I would often refer to the research goals and keep referring back to the PhD process for this reason. Jack never directly asked me for advice during the interviews and I never offered it.

The research became part of a relationship, and that relationship will therefore be part of the data as presented. I, as the researcher, have a role, not just in eliciting, collating and analysing these narratives but in the narratives themselves. Further, Jack was aware of the impact that these narratives were having on me, and that I was

more than a mere note-taker, but a participant in his life. As outlined in the next chapter, at all times in data collection and presentation, I must be conscious of my voice as the researcher eliciting and collating these narratives. This voice will be acknowledged.

As a researcher, I am (and was) aware of the dangers that my relationship with the research subjects presents. It is possible that when a friendship exists, research subjects might tailor their contributions, either out of a wish to appear in a positive light for a friend, or out of a wish to give a friend data that is more usable or appropriate for the study than their actual experiences (“to help me get my PhD”). There is also a danger that I, as a friend, become too kind and forgiving in my collation and analysis of the data. At all times, I was cognisant of these dangers, and I acknowledge their possible impact on this study, though this acknowledgement should mitigate their impact. This led me to ask questions about my own reflexivity, a model for which is outlined in Chapter 5.

4.4.3b. Position

At the beginning of this project, I would position myself on the objective end of the spectrum, in terms of a belief that “identity” and the “self” are products of outside, social and cultural forces. This belief grew as the research continued, alongside a growing awareness of the changing and changeable nature of self.

I would have viewed gender identity, and masculinity as relatively fixed concepts in advance of the study, but the research has brought about an awareness of the instability and the motility in the notion of any one person’s masculinity.

While I was frustrated by the inescapability of social and cultural powers and their imposition of identity, this research did lead me to have a deeper belief in the flexibility of gender identity and in the potential therein for self-formation.

4.4.4 Ethics

The ethics procedure laid out in the School of Education (Trinity College Dublin) Handbook was followed and the nature of the project, the information given to the

participants and the consent asked of them was cleared by the School's Director of Research. See above in section 4.4.3a. for the ethical precautions taken in the relationship between the researcher and the research participants.

4.4.4a Informed consent

At the time of the data generation, Jack was over eighteen, and was thus treated as an adult for the purposes of consent to participation in the project. He was aware of the general nature of the project from conversations with me from four or five months before the data collection began. I sent out a general message on Facebook to various possible participants and four responded showing an interest, including Jack.

At this stage, I gave each of them three documents. One is a letter, outlining the nature of the research project, the research questions and the general thinking behind the project. It also outlined the confidentiality arrangements, whereby they would be anonymous (as would any other people or places mentioned) but that what they said would not be confidential. This letter stressed the time commitment and the level of trust they needed to place in me, and urged them to consider the agreement carefully. The second is a timeline for the project, describing what topics would be discussed at each meeting, what preparation they would need to do and suggesting a time when each meeting could take place. Thirdly, they each received a consent form, which again outlined the commitment involved in the project, asking the participants to confirm that they had been informed of the nature of the research and that they understood the roles and responsibilities of the parties to the research. When the participants signed the consent form, these documents were sent to them again in a soft copy format and I asked them if they had any questions before the project began. At the time of the third meeting, they were asked to sign a supplementary consent document, giving their permission for suitably anonymised excerpts from their online social networks to be used (all of these are included as Appendix A).

4.4.4b. Confidentiality

Jack is a pseudonym and the name of every person, place and school or organisation

(other than Dublin and Trinity College) mentioned in their interviews was anonymised. The transcripts were anonymised during the transcription process, and no transcripts exist that have original names. Although I was living with the participants, at no stage did I discuss the content of interviews outside the rooms where interviews were taking place. Interviews always took place in a locked room outside the house where we lived with no-one else present.

Audio files of the recordings were kept in an unlabelled file on my computer, which was password-protected and the back-up digital record was stored in a locked office in Trinity College. Contemporaneous written notes from the interviews were kept in the same locked office.

Chapter 5

Methodology 2: Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodology for data analysis. The end product of the data is an auto/biography, generated from a series of seven themed semi-structured interviews and from related short written and visual pieces and the research participant's Facebook account. The framework for the data analysis (a narrative approach) is set out in section 5.2, which is followed by notes on researcher reflexivity in 5.3.

5.2 Data Analysis Framework

In order to answer the research questions, and in keeping with the design of the project as a whole, based on the research questions, I have selected a narrative mode of analysis. Polkinghorne famously describes narrative as “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful” (1998, p.1) and that belief informs this project. According to Carol Grbich (2007), narrative analysis gives insight into how individuals “construct meaning from life experiences” (p. 125). And as Rice and Ezzy put it, “telling a story about oneself involves telling a story about choice and action, which have integrally moral and ethical dimensions” (1999, p. 126). This implies that in the actual *telling* of a life story, we reveal actions, which in turn reveal morality. Taking this as a basis allows us to construct an almost ideal meeting point between the data and the thought of Taylor. If stories are made up of actions, these actions will allow conclusions to be drawn on morality. For Taylor, identity is a moral standpoint, and so an analysis of actions in a life story allows us to draw conclusions about morality, which in turn allow us to draw conclusions about identity.

5.2.1 Narrative framework

Narrative methods dominated from the research design, throughout the collection phase and into the analysis. Data was generated in a narrative fashion and not, for example, a themed fashion. Although the interviews were themed, they were conducted in a time-related way, so that all the data could be fitted into and around the detailed timelines constructed during the first interview. For example, rather

than discussing a person of significance, or an example of his own masculinity, Jack was asked to think of “a time when he realised someone was of importance to him” or a “time when he had felt particularly manly”. Because of this, the data as generated lends itself very well to a chronological narrative analysis, rather than a thematic one. Thus the research design acts as a framework both for generating and for analysing data. It could also be argued that a thematic presentation of narratively generated data may divorce the data from its intended meaning and add an unnecessary and artificial layer of new and possibly unintended meaning between the co-authors of the data (Jack and I) and the reader, compelling the reader to view the data through the lens of the themes, in addition to the lenses of their own lives, understandings and experiences. A narrative presentation of narrative data means that the reader her/himself is the lens through which the data is initially viewed.

This narrative will be presented and analysed following the model of a classic, Wolcott’s much-cited 1983 life history of the so-called “Sneaky Kid”. This model allows for the presentation of an entire life history, generated over a period of time, in a co-constructed manner, using the words of the researcher and the researched. The presentation of the events and actions of the life story is intertwined with analysis, in Wolcott’s case, the questions posed by 1980s sociology of education, and in the case of this project, the questions posed by masculinities and by Taylor’s theories on identity. These questions are outlined below. This “intertwining” of narrative and analysis continues to be practised in contemporary UK auto/biographical studies, e.g. Aldous, Sparkes & Browne (2014) and Tamboukou (2013).

The first phase of this will be the “pure” or straightforward narrative generated in this study: that of the entire life story, from Jack’s birth to the end of his first year of university, as told in the initial interview, which provides a basis for what follows it, and is thus the longest section in the presentation of the data.

Having dealt with the straightforward narratives, the themes of the individual research events will be examined. Five interviews took place, called “My Family”, “My Social Life”, “The Real Me”, “Me, The Man” and “My Body”, and each of these

will be taken in turn, to see what they add to the narrative as a whole. The data ends with the narrative of the first year in university, as related in the final interview. This second, more detailed narrative, allows us to examine one period of life in depth. This provides the opportunity to look at Jack’s life at a time when many young people take the opportunity to “re-define” themselves, and see if he has experienced any “shifts” in identity in that time.

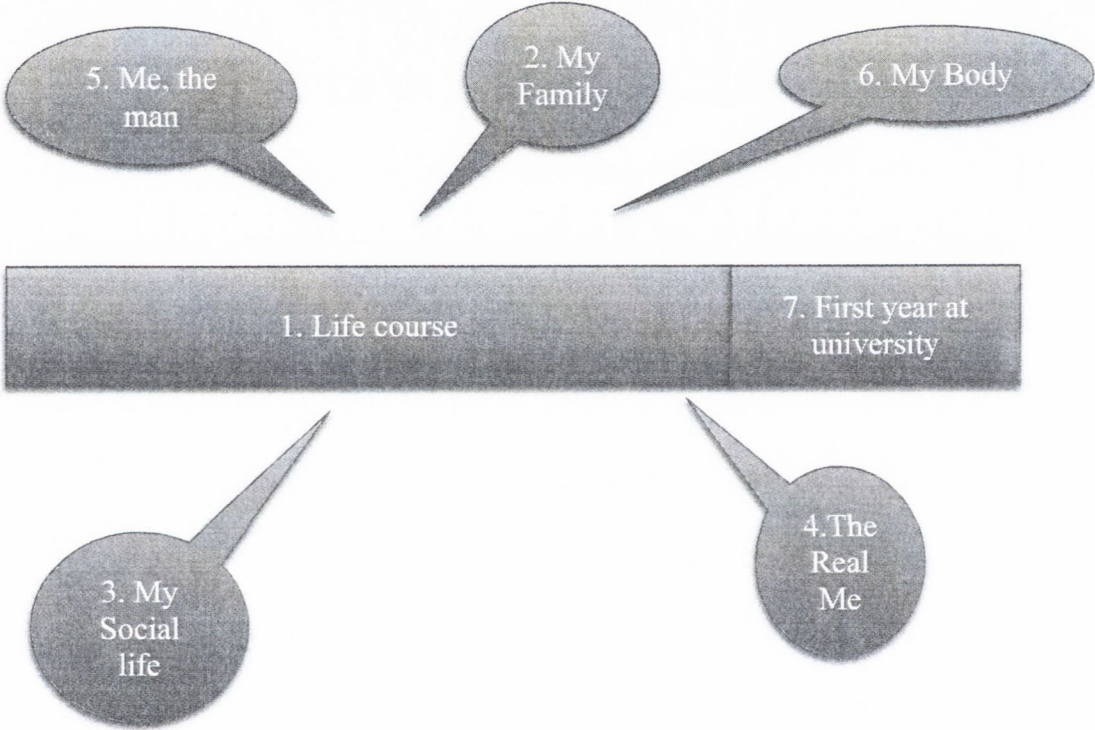


Figure 5.1: The narrative and the illuminating themes

As well as taking Wolcott’s approach to analysing life stories as a whole, each of the seven interviews undertaken by each participant can be seen as a narrative event, or as Catherine Kohler Riessman, one of the leading voices in narrative research has it, a “performance”. She uses the technique of performance analysis, looking at the way stories are told as well as the stories themselves. She does this by looking at features of the performance of the narrative like how the teller contextualizes one event in another, gives relative weighting to different events, the tone of voice used, the paralinguistic features (body language, pauses, laughter, crying, hesitation). She claims that meanings are “encoded in the form of the talk” (1993, p. 61) and that a narrative interview can be analysed from the inside out in this way.

The analysis will therefore consist of a number of steps. Firstly, a “grand narrative” of Jack’s life story will be mapped out, interspersed with commentary based on the research questions. Then each of the five “illuminating themes” will be dealt with individually, using some performance analysis of the interview events, but principally using the model used by Aldous, Sparkes & Browne (2014), of co-constructed narrative presentation, accompanied by comments springing from the research questions. These will also be accompanied by notes on reflexivity as outlined in the next section. Then the events of the narrative of the Jack’s first year in university will be outlined, again with commentary based on masculinities theory and on Taylor.

It is important that there is an element of co-production in these narratives. This is Jack’s life, and his input is vital. In fact, the validity of the auto/biography produced in this research would be in serious doubt if their input was not requested at this stage. Finlay (2003) gives an account of research as a co-constituted account, recognising that “research participants also have the capacity to be reflexive beings” and that the researcher and the researched engage in “cycles of mutual reflection and experience” (p. 11). For this reason, Jack continued to be involved in the process after the data generation phase and some of his brief comments on the auto/biography are included at the end of the data.

5.2.2. Questions used in the Analysis

The data as presented in the narrative will be accompanied by commentary. This commentary follows the framework suggested by the research questions.

The narrative will be interrogated using the following three questions for guidance, drawn from the literature and the research questions:

1. Connell on Masculinities: How does the narrative speak to understandings of masculinities drawn from (a) psychoanalysis, (b) functionalist and structuralist sociology and (c) feminism?
2. Taylor on Identity: How does the narrative speak to agency and subjectivity in relation to (a) moral orientations and the “good”, (b) the value of

“ordinary life”, (c) authenticity and recognition, and (d) independence and expression?

3. Masculinities *and* Taylor: How does the narrative speak to masculinities and to Taylor’s thought on identity? Do these two strands speak to each other?

5.3 Researcher Reflexivity

As a researcher who lived with and befriended my research participant, I have a relationship with both the research participant (Jack) and the data (his auto/biography).

In the first research event, the initial life story interview with Jack, I was shaken by the process of hearing in such detail about someone else’s life. I had thought that I would need to work hard to gain the trust of the participants, but in fact there was no hesitation in telling me the details of his life, to a surprisingly intimate level.

I finished interviews feeling “burdened” with the life stories of others. When very “personal” information was revealed, I felt a great level of responsibility toward it, feeling “unworthy” of the trust I had been invested with. Stories that particularly moved me included Jack’s descriptions of his phobias and his description of the coming out process. I was also struck by anything that any of the participants said about their relationships with their bodies, and with their descriptions of life in the apartment we all shared.

I found parts of the interviews going round and round in my mind throughout the process of data generation. As the interviews were recorded on my phone, I listened to most of them at least twice, while walking to college, while on the bus or in bed. Although there were initially four participants in this study, I found myself listening more to Jack’s. I found the final interviews particular difficult and I broke down crying after all four final interviews.

One particular research event resonated with me: Jack’s first interview. During this first interview, Jack came out to me as gay. Thirty-six hours before this he had told his parents, and he was in the process of telling his friends, including our flatmates.

As a gay man, who had never come out to my own family, this resonated with me. In the same interview, Jack related a sudden and severe onset of a fear of public speaking when he was seventeen. He had been a lead actor in the local adult drama group and now he could not read something out in front of his class in school. The change was so sudden and so severe that his parents sent him for counselling in the local big town. Over the next two weeks, citing the experience of the interview with me and the experience of coming out, Jack ran in a student election, which involved giving a speech in front of a large group of people. I was involved in the election campaign, which Jack won in spite of strong opposition. I was moved by the combination of the coming out tale and the overcoming of fear and I came out as gay to my own evangelical and traditional Catholic family a week later at the age of thirty-one.

I had a strong and instinctual reaction to the data, both in parts and as a whole. I found the process of transcribing it emotionally wearing and it took a lot longer than was expected. One friend of mine even called my untranscribed interviews “a pack of unopened love letters”. Time and practice has rendered the data less moving for me, but the data will be accompanied by my own notes and my own reactions to portions of it, mitigating the dangers of presenting myself as an all-knowing, unfeeling researcher, and reflecting on how the research has changed and/or affected me.

In order to lay out my own approach to researcher reflexivity, which occupies a large portion of both the findings and the analysis that follows, it is important to give some background on the model(s) for reflexivity I chose to use.

5.3.1. Reflexivity: some background

Insulating the research process from the self, from perspectives coloured by experience, by relationships and by attitudes may be the professed goal of empiricism, but Bourdieu would dismiss this as “the illusion of absolute knowledge”(1992, p. 250), as no researcher can claim not to have “tainted” their research with their “selves”. Even purely quantitative surveys, where the researcher may see themselves as simply adding up verifiable, objective facts, are impacted by the researcher’s experiences, relationships and attitudes. A questionnaire on youth

mental health that asks about the respondent's sexual orientation, but not about their race suggests that the researcher has already decided that sexual orientation is more likely to be a significant factor in the mental health of the respondents than their race is.

Dauphinée, in her work on the ethics of researching war, (2007) agrees. For her, the distance between the observer and the observed is “delusional” (p. 75). It could further be argued that divorcing the self from the research process creates a methodological power imbalance between researcher and researched, as it excludes the voice of all the participants in the research, and, potentially, wrongly conveys the message that the findings are unquestionable. There is no such thing as researcher-free research, and of course no findings can be completely insured against questioning.

I argue, from the work of Van Maanen, Behar and Wolcott that a balanced and “honest” presentation of data is a realistic and achievable goal that can still result in data from which we can learn.

5.3.2a Van Maanen and the Confessional Tale

Anthropologists conducting ethnographies were among the first academics who had to find a way to be “reflexive”. Those white men and women who went to live among tribal people in the South Pacific Islands, in Africa and in South America faced many challenges to the objectivity of their work. The questions they were forced to answer included: “To what extent did you ‘go native?’”, “How did your presence affect the lives of those who you were studying?”, “How do your colonial values and Western moral framework shape your perception of what you report?”

John Van Maanen (1988) writes that ethnographers have long realised that they cannot present their work on the basis of an “assumed Doctrine of Immaculate Perception”. The writing up of an ethnography is complex and depends on “an uncountable number of strategic choices and active constructions” (p. 73). One of the principal solutions that the ethnographic community has to this issue is to write what Van Maanen terms a “confessional tale”, an attempt to impose some form of

academic discipline on ethnographic stories that were in danger of being viewed as “mere journalism”.

He goes on to list three conventions of the confessional tale:

1. *The personalised author*: The author of the confessional tale is not the “ubiquitous, disembodied voice of the culture”. Instead, the author is an “I”, who writes in the first person, about what they have seen, heard and done. A first person narrative accompanies the ethnographic narrative, describing the role of the researcher in full, how they came to have the knowledge that they are reporting and how they have put it together, how they have reached decisions about what to include and what to exclude.
2. *The fieldworker’s point of view*: A confessional tale usually describes the researcher as researcher. It attempts to address questions like: How did the group being studied respond to the researcher? In what ways and at what points did the researcher “go native”? Was the researcher ever excluded or rejected by the groups they studied? Did the researcher make any errors in the generation of data?
3. *Naturalness*: A confessional tale will also directly address concerns that others may have about the scientific nature of the ethnography presented. It will show how any errors of judgment or poor decisions made in the research process were mitigated.

Van Maanen sees these three conventions, in one form or another, in many “confessional tales”, a large genre within ethnography, and he sees it as pro forma to now include such a confessional tale in the “methodology” section of any ethnographic article, book or dissertation (p. 81).

When I apply Van Maanen to my own work, I need to need to describe my experiences of life in our shared apartment, the frequency with which I saw Jack outside the interviews, and the nature of those interactions. I need to account for the process I used to recruit these research participants, and to note what I did when practical problems arose in the course of the research. I need to acknowledge the times when I glossed over information that the Jack thought was important, or

when I asked questions that Jack was surprised by, or that he did not answer.

5.3.2b Behar and the Vulnerable Observer

Behar (also an anthropologist) describes situations where objectivity, distance and abstraction are called into doubt as core values in social scientific research.

“But if you’re an African American scholar writing about the history of contract law and you discover, as Patricia Williams recounts in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, the deed of sale of your own great-great-grandmother to a white lawyer that bitter knowledge certainly gives “the facts” another twist of urgency and poignancy. It undercuts the notion of a contract as an abstract, impersonal legal document.” (1996, p. 13)

She calls for the voice of the “vulnerable observer”. If abstraction and distance are an impossibility, then position must be stated. She explicitly says that vulnerability is not the same as “anything personal goes” and that the “exposure of self...has to take us somewhere we wouldn’t otherwise get to.” (p. 14) Vulnerable writing should help us to an understanding of social realities and situations.

This goes further than the “confessional tales” described by Van Maanen. This is not simply a description of the observer’s position and the process of generating data, with all its flaws and failings.

The vulnerable observer asks her/himself how their own position, their own life history, their experiences and emotions coloured the research, and then asks how the research affected their lives and their emotions in turn. If research brings the researcher new experiences and they experience strong emotions as a result, this can easily impact the analysis of any data generated in this process and in turn any conclusions drawn. It will also presumably affect any future research. The vulnerable observer engages in a perpetual cycle, whereby the “self-who-observes” is at the core of any research project and the reporting of it.

For Behar, vulnerable observation is far from a passing or minor trend. The feminist claim that “the personal is political” aligned to a growth in so-called native anthropology, and the increasing numbers of autobiographies in narrative research all mean that the model for reflexivity described by Behar is one that is increasingly popular.

When I apply Behar to my own work I must ask what my own position and life experience is, how this impacted the research and how the research in turn affected me. She asks what emotions I experienced, and how and whether my relationship with Jack mattered.

I need to give an account of my position as an experienced teacher and single, 31-year-old gay man, from a suburban, middle-class, evangelical Christian background living among a group of young rural men. I need to give a description of my feelings on having these young men reveal themselves and their stories to me. Hearing tales of Jack's experiences of family life, of mental and physical health and illness, of fears and perceived flaws, of sexual feelings and experiences had a profound effect on me, and this needs to be given space in my presentation of the auto/biographical data.

5.3.2c Wolcott and the Sneaky Kid

In the early 1980s, anthropologist Harry Wolcott discovered a homeless 19-year-old man living in the forest in which Wolcott's own home was located. He befriended the young man, "Brad" or "the Sneaky Kid" and helped him, giving him money in return for jobs, and allowing him to stay on the land without reporting him to the authorities. He also conducted life history interviews with the young man and published the results in an academic journal with commentary on the failures of "the system" to provide him with an adequate education. Wolcott's relationship with Brad deepened to include sexual intercourse for a time. After a few months, it became clear that Brad was becoming increasingly mentally unwell, and he left the forest, and was treated. Two years later, Brad returned and burned down Wolcott's house, attempting to murder him.

The relationship between Brad and Wolcott had clearly changed Brad. Research does not only have an effect on the researcher and on the data, so the need here is greater than the need that the "vulnerable observer" discussed above has. Not only does the researcher have to speak to how their position, experiences and emotion impact the data, and how the data affects them, Wolcott's story is a call for an account of how the researcher creates the data, and even how the researcher

creates the research participant. Wolcott had a hand in Brad's actions and in his experience of the world, and Brad had a hand in Wolcott's experience of the world. A researcher can constitute and be constituted by the process and results of research. The case of Brad and Wolcott is an extreme example, but the elicitation of a detailed life history can have a profound impact on both the researcher and the researched, and can be formative of life itself, as well as of feelings and opinions.

Wolcott's story calls for a deeper examination of how I "created" the data, and how it "created" me.

Jack was aware of the impact that these interviews were having on me, and that I was more than a "mere note-taker", but a participant in his life. He claimed that the life history interviews had a therapeutic effect on him, and even that this had an effect on his decisions and helped him think through certain choices. Although I was careful to keep the research relationship separate from the social relationship, it would be futile to claim that they had no effect on each other. It is also important for me to acknowledge the ways in which my own relationship with my body, my sexuality and my gender identity shifted over the course of the study and to give an account of this.

5.3.3 Conclusions on Reflexivity

The three models proposed by the authors accounted for above make for a progressively deeper and more searching framework for reflexivity in auto/biographical research. Van Maanen's "confessional tale" is a call for a descriptive methodology, including the role of the researcher and the first person "I" voice. Behar's "vulnerable observer" is a call for a full account of researcher position and the emotional and experiential impact of the research on the researcher and vice versa. Finally, Wolcott's *Sneaky Kid* is a call to answer questions relating to the constitution of the subject (both the researcher-subject and the researched-subject) as a result of the research.

The three-part framework proposed above has the potential to provide data that is genuinely reflexive. It has potential to enrich the data on masculinities, as the lens of

my own masculine identity is examined to the same extent as Jack's, by means of the progressive model outlined above. This allowed for the Bourdieuvian ideal of the reflexive researcher, making themselves and their worlds an object of their own study, and turning the instruments of research inward. As Deer claims, "For Bourdieu, this *objectivation* of the investigating subject is the *sine qua non* condition of any scientific attempt at making sense of the social world." (2008, p. 197) Thus I, as the "investigating subject" become the object as well as the instigator of the research.

As Van Maanen acknowledges, "confessional tales" are common practice in the social sciences. The model for reflexivity I am using acknowledges the value in an account of process, but argues for the need to go further and include an interrogation of position, on impact and on authorship. I feel that the interrogation of researcher as creator of data and creator of research participant (from Wolcott) is just as important as an acknowledgement of procedural facts (from Van Maanen).

It does not, however, as May and Perry counsel against, entirely deconstruct the data so that nothing meaningful remains to analyse (2010, p. 15). What follows is hopefully a piece of auto/biographical research that has deep, three-layered reflexivity, asking questions about the authorship of data and of the authorship of the research participant, and still allows for analysis of both the process and the product of the research.

Chapter 6

Data Analysis I

6.1 Background

I met Jack on my first day living in student accommodation. He seemed a friendly young man, his smiling face making up for his height, which I might otherwise have found intimidating. Of all the young men I lived with that year, he was probably the friendliest toward me. In my first few months living in the flat, Jack would ask me about myself more than many of our other housemates, and he showed what seemed to me a real interest in both myself and my PhD project.

In the first term in the house, I generally avoided the kitchen, which was the only communal space in the house. However, I would try to go in there at least once a week to be sociable. One of the times I would often pop in was Sunday evenings. Jack would spend many of his Sunday evenings in the kitchen too. He used to return home to the rural Gaeltacht village where he lived in a remote part of the West of Ireland every weekend and work there in a golf club. He would come back to university with a week's worth of dinners from his mother. His giant suitcase would sit outside the kitchen, broadcasting his return to the house until he hauled it upstairs later that night.

Sunday was a quiet evening in the house, but Jack and two or three others generally chatted in the kitchen for a few hours. When I joined them, the conversations would vary, and I learned the following about Jack: Jack drank and smoked a lot, he went out partying frequently, he studied social work, he was very proud of his home area and still had many friends from home, he didn't think his family were as well-off as those of his housemates, he told a lot of jokes, he liked going to the cinema, he loved Harry Potter, he didn't like being mocked about his accent, he wasn't religious, and he thought abortion was wrong. He clearly got on with the other housemates well, inviting a group of them to come to the west coast and spend his birthday with him in his village, early in the first term.

In Connell's terms, Jack could be said to be a bearer of the hegemonic masculine existing in the flat. Connell defines the "hegemonic masculine" as the "configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of the patriarchy" (2005, p. 77) i.e. the hegemonic masculine is a way

of describing the culturally, socially and historically situated practices which are taken to typify powerful ways of being a man at the expense of other, weaker ways of being a man. Recent scholarship, as well as popular social commentary and journalism has identified a university “lad culture”, the primary attributes of which Phipps and Young list as “Sport and heavy alcohol consumption, group or ‘pack’ mentalities, and ‘banter’”, which could be applied to my initial impressions of Jack and which Phipps and Young identify as hegemonic (though they quibble with the use of the term) in UK university gender culture. (2012, p. 35).

Jack engaged with me as an equal in a way most of the other housemates did not. When I “friended” the housemates around Christmastime on Facebook, many of them began reading my blog, and they made general comments to me, telling me they enjoyed it, or that it was funny. Jack was the only one to reference specific parts on the blog in our conversations. He would ask me detailed questions about my PhD and volunteered to be a research participant, long before I decided that I would ask my housemates to participate in my research.

I found his personality compelling before I knew him well, as there was a certain “cheekiness” to him. He was clearly a bit wild when he drank. I heard stories of him urinating in a sink in a nightclub from the other housemates. Our kitchen was adorned with a large floormat that he had stolen from a chippers’ shop on another drunken night. One day I met him in the corridor of our house, covered in baby powder, and looking excited. He led me upstairs, saying that I’d like it up there, because it was like Christmas. It was. Every available surface was white with baby powder. And the whole place, in his words, “smelled of baby”. He was lying in wait to attack some of our other flatmates. This incident was typical of Jack as I experienced him in those early months. Again, this “wild” side is characteristic of a member of the “lad culture” and exemplar of the hegemonic masculine.

In the lead-up to the start of the interviews that make up the core of this life story, all the residents of our house were called to a disciplinary meeting because of a problem with noise. Jack didn’t attend this meeting. Another flatmate told me that this was because he was having “family issues”. Around this time, Jack seemed gloomy to me and had a nasty cough.

6.2 Interview One: “A Timeline of My Life”, Room 3098, Arts Block, Wednesday, 7th March 2012

Jack arrived early for his first interview, taking me by surprise and making me nervous. He seemed eager to get going and started by saying he trusted me. I wasn't sure what I'd done to earn this trust, but I felt unprepared as the interview got started.

We started with the details of his childhood, born and raised in rural West of Ireland, with married parents and two sisters.

Jack: “Mum can't work. Mum has a, eh, artificial hip since she was about 16, so she's unable to work and, em, Dad, Dad was a taxi man. He was really busy. He had quite a big firm in our younger years, so we used to barely see him in and out of the house constantly, but then, eh, I don't know, kinda realised things were more important and it's gone down to just him. One car.”

He lived near many of his relatives and mentioned a female cousin of his own age, Brianna, and his granny as particularly large presences in his life as a child. Freudian psychoanalysis, which has fed into masculinity theory, would see the dominance of female influences in Jack's early life as formative of his gender identity (see, for example, Freud's discussion of the Wolfman case: Freud, 2002, p. 217) and would see the strong maternal and female influences as contributing to an “unstable” masculinity, even imputing castration anxiety on someone like Jack who lacks significant male influences in childhood. While ideas like castration anxiety have not received a lot of recent academic attention, the idea of gendered (and sexual) “identification” with peers, parents and carers and the impact this can have is still current in masculinities theory, and I think it is plausible that Jack's mainly female childhood milieu had an impact on his own masculinity and the development of his own sexual identity. This resulted in what Connell would think of as a late “moment of engagement” with the hegemonic masculine (2005, p. 122). Connell incorporates psychoanalysis into her analysis of gender relations through this instrument of the “moment of engagement”, when a young person first engages with the hegemony existing in the gender regime of his (or her) family and society (usually through the father and older brothers) and takes on the project of patriarchy as his own. I think

there is evidence to say that Jack's moment of engagement with a masculine hegemony was a late one. The family dynamic and relative power of his mother and father in the family are significant and will be discussed below.

He went to a big primary school, and had plenty of friends there, but he saw very few people outside school, other than his family. He does describe one childhood friend: "I had friends when I was at school and stuff, but em, I had one friend over the road from me, who was like just beside me and we were best friends for a long time, but I don't know, just as we got older, we were completely different people...And eh like he was like he came from quite a tough home. Both his parents were alcoholics. And em, he had a lot of problems. And I don't know. My mother wasn't always happy with me hanging about with him. And he was, he wasn't a great person to start off with so I don't know. By about nine I'd say that relationship had properly run its course. Yeah." Connor: "Right. Eh. And do you still know him?" Jack: "Pfff. I know of him. I hear about him...basically what he does. Stuff like that. But I don't know him personally." In successfully separating Jack from this friend, it could be argued that Jack's parents were practising what Connell calls "marginalisation", authorising the gentler, and arguably more middle-class, family dynamic they had, while marginalising his friend's tougher reality, and by extension marginalising his identity, and authorising an alternative way of being a man that existed in their own family. Marginalisation is the mechanism by which Connell accommodates intersectionality in her theory of gender relations (2005, p. 80). Class, race and membership of social and religious groups intersect with gender, and even if a man's gender identity aligns with the hegemonic masculine, he is not granted the patriarchal privileges he would be if he belongs to a different social tier from the class, or race, or religious group that is dominant in that social group. Jack's friend's identity was a rougher, more deprived one than Jack's gentler, more middle class one and thus his friend's identity was marginalised, while Jack's own was authorised.

Overall, Jack's description of his childhood struck me as quiet, family-centred, and relatively typical of the childhood of someone growing up in rural Ireland in the 1990s. Among other details he mentions about his time in primary school are the

death of his grandfather, rows with his mum about homework, a lack of interest in football (the main sport among his male contemporaries) and his interest in watching films, both at home and in the cinema. The use of an extensive auto/biographical data generation method allowed for a focus on the details of ordinary life, which Taylor sees as a crucial element of post-reformation Western identity, and which are often absent in other social scientific research methods. Jack spent a lot of time on films and very little on football and these mundane features are part of what he sees as making him Jack. Only by taking an auto/biographical approach can we see the centrality of these features, both of which are turned out to be crucial in the formation of Jack's masculine identity.

The arguments with his mother are a sharp contrast to the peaceful childhood he described.

Jack: You see I was really bad at home, but I was really good on the streets, not on the streets but in public. I think Mum called it, what do you call it, street angel, home devil syndrome. And I used to just, I got in trouble all the time at home. I used to bite my sisters. I did just everything I could have done to be bold at home, but then when it came to being in school, meeting people, being on the streets, I was just, butter wouldn't melt kinda thing.

Connor: [...] When you were making trouble at home, how did your mother punish you?

Jack: Oh, right. Well no, I was never hit.

Connor: No, no, were there big long fights?

Jack: Aha. It would literally be me screaming from my room wanting to be let out, stuff like that, I was always sent to my room, or shouted at, or something taken away or something like that."

I asked a few more questions about Jack's social life in his primary school years. He played both basketball and handball, and did well at both, winning contests and establishing friendships with the other players on the teams. "So it wasn't that I wasn't sporty. I just didn't like football, and football was the main thing of my area."

This is one of a number of examples of Jack setting himself apart from his peers. For Connell, holders of subordinated masculinities and feminities often notice that they are “different” early in life, what social psychologists might call a preparatory phase for a homosexual identity. For Connell, this is an oversimplification of the more complex array of masculinities and sexualities available to the child and adolescent, but she does acknowledge a noticing of difference and an alternative form of a moment of encounter with hegemonic masculinity (2005, p. 151).

When Jack says “it wasn’t that I wasn’t sporty”, and goes on to list sports he participated in, he is reading his character as *masculine in spite of not liking football*, and I see this as a Taylorean call for recognition of his masculinity. Taylor reflects that recognition is tied to identity and that misrecognition by others can lead to a “real distortion”, leading to a demeaning picture of the self (1994, p. 25). Jack is clear here that he does not want to be misrecognised as not sporty.

Connor: And by the end of primary school, eh, had people started having boyfriends and girlfriends and that kind of thing?

Jack: Em. I suppose, yeah, they did. Yeah, like the whole thing of you know, you’re my boyfriend I’m your girlfriend let’s never see each other again. You know that kind of thing.

Connor: Did you have a girlfriend then?

Jack: Fff. I did for about two months, but just coz it was what everyone else was doing, it’s not coz I wanted to.

Connor: Right. Em. And what was that like, or was it like anything?

Jack (in a fairly dogmatic tone): It wasn’t like anything, barely spoke, it was just a name, it was nothing else.

I asked Jack about growing up in the Gaeltacht.

Connor: And your family was Irish-speaking?

Jack: In name only.[...] My mum is fluent in Irish and my sister, but I'm not and my Dad's not, and my other sister's not. [...]That was a gaelscoil, but everyone spoke English.

Connor: [...]But would you say that the fact that you're from a Gaeltacht or that you went to a gaelscoil, that, did it have an effect on your life as a child or as a...?

Jack: Yeah. I suppose it did to a certain degree. There was always a bit of competition between us and the ones who really could speak Irish. [...] There was always a bit of resentment that we couldn't speak Irish because we were at the border of the Gaeltacht. And it was sort of dying away. And my mum's side of the family were very, they were completely Irish-speaking. And I suppose there was always a bit, you know. We always used to get digs about not being able to speak Irish when we'd go and visit them and stuff like that. But that was like mainly it I'd say. It wouldn't have been much other effect.

Connor: You'd never have been proud to be going to a gaelscoil or proud to be from a Gaeltacht?

Jack: No

Jack's upbringing in the Gaeltacht could be seen as contributing another intersecting line in his gender identity, along with his family's middle class aspirations. Although he claims it had no effect, he grew up in an area undergoing language shift, which Fishman (1991) claims leads to instability in identity development (p.4).

We moved on from there to secondary school. The first story Jack told me was about the results of his entrance exam for secondary school. At the time, I passed over the story quite quickly, not realising the significance he placed on it in his own narrative of his self.

Jack: I'd gone in with quite a low entrance exam and it was quite a shock, because I had been getting, I was one of the top of the class and I don't know I guess Mum had put a lot of pressure on me in the months before and I just didn't want to do it. I didn't want to study and then I was, em, because Mum had put so much pressure on me and I hadn't done work then I was, I was, I guess I got nervous I missed a whole complete page of my English paper. I just didn't turn over my sheet. And then...

Connor: And were the results public? Did everyone know?

Jack: Yeah.

Connor: Right.

Jack: Mm-hm. And I guess that was quite tough at the time. And then I had - people who I had beaten my entire life were getting higher than me. And it was kind of a bit of a knock.

Connor: Right. So it wasn't a great way to start secondary school.

Jack: And I think it fundamentally affected how I...I was slightly more uncomfortable, more unsure of myself going in because previously I had been one of the smarter people and all of a sudden maybe I wasn't.

Connor: Right. Em. OK. And how did you react when you heard your result? Was it something expected or..?

Jack: Cried

Connor: Cried

Jack: Yes, I cried. In front of everyone. It was awful.

Connor: Why? Did they announce the results in school or something?

Jack: Yeah

Connor: Yeah, so in your primary school they announced your entrance exam results..

Jack: No they didn't like announce it over an intercom, but they give them out and like you have to say. Everyone says. They'd rip it out of your hand as quick.

Connor: Right. OK. Alright. Em, so. First day in secondary school? Do you remember it?

Jack returned to this story later in the interview. He clearly sees that "being smart" was an important factor in his identity as a child. In his own narrative of self, Jack holds this experience and the shame he experienced as a reason for being

“inauthentic” in the following years. For Taylor, shame is an example of a self-reflexive experience, one where a person measures him/herself against internal standards, evidence of a subjective strand in a person’s identity. (1985, p. 55)

Jack’s description of his first years in secondary school were not particularly happy ones: “Extremely awkward. Extremely nervous. I don’t know. I didn’t like my first year at all. It was just everyone was trying to prove something and I don’t know. I don’t know. It was just this ego thing and I was just one of these guys who just clapped on to a group of people. Do you know what I mean? I was one of these sheep who just followed on. That wouldn’t necessarily be me at all I wouldn’t say but I don’t know I just did it ‘cause I felt so uncomfortable my first year there... I don’t know. I never felt like I belonged with the group of lads as much as maybe they felt like they belonged there. I don’t know. I never felt like I was as tight in with them as they were with each other or something like that...And I don’t know. I just didn’t feel that secure.”

When Jack says “That wouldn’t necessarily be me at all” he is referencing an idea he returns to again and again, that being “true to yourself” is a key to happiness. Jack is a clear example of Taylor’s *modern self* who believes that there is a true self within, and that authenticity demands fidelity to that self. Taylor refers to “being true to yourself” as an example of what he calls “the articulation of authenticity”, and that this is a description of our own “ethical choices, leanings, intuitions” (1989, p. 87). Taylor claims that we are not “offering an external reason” when we make these articulations, rather we are looking within and discerning what is good or valuable and acting in accordance with this, no matter how murky or unclear the motivations. Jack’s refusal to be a “sheep” is an articulation of his *intuition* that this is not a valuable, or ethical, way for him to act, and part of what makes Jack *Jack*.

“Before the late eighteenth century, no one thought that the differences between human beings had this kind of moral significance. There is a certain way of being human that is *my way*. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for *me*.” (Taylor, 1994, p. 30)

This is a repeated theme in Jack’s auto/biography and I hold that it is impossible to analyse the constitution of his masculine identity without reference to Jack’s

understanding of his inner intuitions of what it is good for him to be.

The discussion of Jack's early years in secondary school continued on this negative note. When prompted, he described his first year exams as "awful" and "not very impressive" for his mother. He said that his mother "coaxed" him to get better results in later exams. "I was very unsure of how, I was very underconfident about my academic thing anyway, maybe part of me was thinking why bother trying, you know I'm not as smart as I thought I was [...]it was because I was scared of failing. Because I had failed. Not, like I, I done good. I got to the top class but I didn't...I felt I'd failed because I just wasn't good enough."

The written timeline that Jack had brought with him to the interview jumped away from school at this point, to his older sister's departure for college in Dublin, which he says didn't really affect him. He talked about his relationships with his sisters and his mother, his mother in particular:

Jack: me and my mum always used to just row about stuff like that. I don't know me and mum are quite similar personalities[...]it was literally like clash of the titans sometimes because we'd both go off our nut at each other.

Connor: And did, did your mum row with your sisters as well?

Jack: Not nearly as much as she rowed with me. Me and her always used to row significantly.

Connor: Right. OK. Right. Em, and did that affect your relationship with your sisters? The fact that you...I mean did you feel that you'd get into more trouble for doing the same kind of things they do?

Jack: Yeah, I definitely felt like Oh God, you know, but then again like I don't know, like me and mum used to have these massive rows and I always felt it was my fault. But now like me and my sister are both older now. Not that, God I love me mum and stuff but she is a bit crazy. She is like a bit you know. Just a bit you know, so I don't know like, I always felt like it was kind of my fault. And I always felt by myself because no one would ever back me up. Obviously, dad would take her side and then my sisters would basically I was picking on one of my sisters you know and then she'd stay out of it so I'd always feel quite alone in that regard."

Identity, at its most basic level, is the way in which we are different from (or similar to) others. Taylor argues that in today's society, in the "culture of authenticity", the relationships we have or do not have carry a special significance as the "crucibles of inwardly-generated identity" (1994, p. 36). We are who we are as reflected in the eyes of those close to us. A feeling of separateness from those around us leads to a crisis. This crisis of difference leads to a fracture in identity for Jack.

Of course, Jack is also exhibiting a very typical pattern, exhibited by all young people as they grow up. Feminist psychoanalysis sees young boys' identities being formed in the breaking of the maternal relationship. One influential theory, as outlined by Chodorow, (1978) is that, as the bulk of early parenting is done by women, very young boys and girls identify with females and feminine things. As they grow up, boys are encouraged to break from their mother in a more emphatic way than girls. Girls can continue to hug and kiss their mothers and to imitate them. Boys, on the other hand, experience a much more painful rejection, causing them to create their own identity from all that is different to their mothers, and so have fewer "relationship skills", repress their emotions and create their own worlds where active behaviour and analytical thinking dominate, as opposed to the passive, intuitive world of women (p. 140). This is a persuasive analysis at some levels, but its generalising nature does not really fit Jack's story. Jack certainly grew more independent as he grew older, but rather than retreating from feminine things and establishing a traditional non-masculinity, defined by its opposition to femininity, Jack continued to develop strong relationship skills with others, and became more interested in hobbies like watching films. He did not develop a stable conforming gender identity as a young teenager.

Jack did then tell a story of when his older sister got in serious trouble with his parents, for getting drunk and breaking into a primary school and getting caught by the Gardaí. The aggravation this caused in the family lasted for a matter of months. He claims that he never did anything that caused so much trouble, but that his fights with his mother were constant and short.

Jack's timeline suggested another change of topic here, to his first experiences with alcohol in 2008, which he described as "quite significant". He was 15 when he started drinking, and by the time he was in Transition Year, he was drinking regularly

with his classmates and friends. He started out drinking in fields, drinking vodka or beer that a friend would get him, then going to underage discos, and getting very drunk beforehand. He says he would regularly get very drunk. "I, like when I went to Transition year I kinda got into this habit, let's say of eh I used to drink until I got sick and then I'd know I was drunk enough." He says his parents didn't know until he was seventeen, and he would have been in big trouble if they did. And he says most of his friends' situations were the same.

This is an example of what Taylor refers to as "strong evaluation" (1989, p. 4), whereby humans can choose between competing "goods", while recognising the value in both. Here, Jack chooses the social good of drinking in secret and to the point of sickness, over the good of a harmonious relationship with his parents. Again, this can be seen as a natural part of growing up and becoming independent of parents, and is typical of young men in Ireland. I believe that drinking is important for Jack in establishing his identity, in gaining recognition (as discussed above) from his peers for his sameness (the other side of the *difference* coin, and the other basic constituent of identity).

He moved from a mainly male group of friends, to a more mixed, but mainly female, group of friends at the age of 16. He said that girls generally started drinking younger than boys, but that he was an exception to this. This is one of many examples of Jack aligning himself with girls, rather than boys, as he gets older.

I asked where Jack got the money for alcohol, which led to us discussing his part-time jobs. He was very clear that any money he spent was his own and that he'd had a job consistently from the time he was fourteen. The first job he got was in a garage, which he describes as "horrendous". He says he didn't like cars and that the men working there were "dull". Here, Jack is clearly contrasting his masculinity to that of the mechanics.

He then moved to a job in a hotel that he says he was "too young" for. He says he was nervous, he had a tremor in his hand, which made waiting tables difficult and a lot of the staff were older than him. Eventually, he moved to a job in another hotel, which he preferred because the staff were more his own age and he was more

mature. Even though he really enjoyed this, after a year, he moved to a job in his local golf club, which was very close to his own house, where he was still working at weekends during the time of the interviews.

As well as alcohol, Jack spent his money on school trips abroad, on sweets and on films. He talked about the trips first. He went on a ski trip when he was sixteen, and his closest friends didn't go; "at that stage of my life I was kinda more independent like I didn't care who wasn't going. Like I was very much like that. And I just wanted to go coz I really wanted to go skiing and I had the money so I was like yeah and it was great."

During the trip, his roommate was discovered with alcohol, as were a number of other students. His teachers asked him if he had any alcohol. Jack had started drinking, but had taken no alcohol with him on the trip and hadn't planned to drink while abroad. He told the teachers that he didn't drink. They came back the following day and said, "we know you drink 'coz we hear about the town". Jack was offended at the injustice of the accusations when he had genuinely had no intention of drinking.

I was intrigued at the idea of his teachers having heard gossip about him around the town. I went to an urban school and our teachers may have been able to give an educated guess as to who drank and who didn't, they certainly wouldn't have known who started drinking when. I asked Jack about gossip in his small town. I asked him if it was hard for a teenager.

Jack: "I think it's really, a lot of people complain about it. It's hard for anyone. It's hard for parents of teenagers...Just constant people gossiping. And you know, if your month comes, at the end of the year it'll probably be a month when you are the talk of the town or your child is the talk of the town. It could be quite upsetting. Small towns can be quite poisonous like that.

Connor: "[...] And were you ever aware of people talking about you?

Jack: "No. Not until that point."

This account is a clear example of social policing of Jack's behaviour that extended

beyond the normal school day. Jack's identity was forged in a small community where actions and identities (being someone who drinks as opposed to someone who doesn't drink) were observed and people labeled and categorised as a result. In later interviews, Jack discusses leaving small-town life behind and I believe the rigidity of the labelling that comes with a rural childhood led him to this declaration of difference.

He moved on to talk about a second ski trip he had gone on with his class. "We went skiing and we had a great time. I didn't drink again. I had no intentions of drinking, em, we just had loads of fun. It was really good. There was other schools there and they were kinda like, you know when two school go away together, they kinda like, boys be chatting and stuff to the other girls in that school. I don't know, I was never really interested in that, I just didn't want to speak to them, I just. That was the only thing. That was a downside to that trip, because the previous trip that hadn't happened to us. But then there were certain people who wanted to go over chatting to them and they'll basically try to make themselves look cool or whatever, but that was probably the only downside because that really was a great ski trip." This struck a chord with me. I remember having the same experience. I went to a boys' school and when we went away for trips, or did things with other schools, I was always put out when the boys in my class chose to talk to (invariably) girls from other schools when I wanted to have fun with my friends. There was a gendered element to this. Jack's masculinity did not include performing to impress girls, unlike his male friends.

When discussing money, Jack said that everyone on the trips abroad would have had part-time jobs to pay for them. "But, unless your parents were teachers. They were the kind of, I know it's very different now when I'm in college, when your parent was a teacher, you were the richer kid. "

Connor: " [...] did people, did you talk about money a lot? Were people aware of how much money other people had?

Jack: "I didn't realise how much people talked about money till I came here."

Besides alcohol and movies, Jack spent his money on sweets and on DVDs.

Connor: "Were you ever fat?"

Jack: "Yes. Em. I was fat from say about eleven to, that, that transgression period, from say when I was 11 to I was 14."

Connor: "OK. This was when you were hanging around with a big group of lads you didn't get along with?"

[...]

Jack: "I was heavier than the norm and I guess I kinda ignored it for a long, for a good while and then there was always comments, you know. You know there was slight things, but nothing ever really substantial against me but I don't know, I just used to eat a lot. The whole movie thing sorta, "Oh I'll watch a movie and then I'll eat this and then I'll eat that and have this with it as well." I don't know I just, I guess when I was hanging around with that big group in first year I did it felt quite lonely. I'd sorta lost connection with my cousin Brianna during that year as well because she had kinda gone on to this other group. She kinda, they smoked and stuff like that, they thought they were very cool, she didn't really speak to me then for a lot of that year. [...] And I don't know I was kind of in that big group as well, where I didn't feel secure so I don't know I'd say that was probably one of the worst years."

I found this part of the conversation very difficult, as I have a serious weight problem, and Jack knew from reading my blog that this was something that made me unhappy.

When asked how he lost the weight, his answer was short. "I started going running then [...] I basically just got happier." Here Jack's physicality and his social life are intertwined. Mary Douglas (1996) is one many sociologists who notes the existence of "two bodies", a social body and a physical body. These interact with each other and "bodily control is an expression of social control" (p. 79). This is how Jack is interpreting his own life in his narrative. Changing his social group led to changes in his body.

He hadn't mentioned spending money on cigarettes and I knew he smoked, so I moved the conversation on to that, relieved to be finished with the topic of weight. I asked if he spent money on drugs or cigarettes. "Drugs aren't my thing at all," he

said. Jack had his first cigarette when he was 12, but he and his friends would only ever have one or two. It wasn't until he was in fifth year that he started what he called "proper drunken smoking", which he defined as smoking about eight cigarettes on a night out. He expressed concern about the fact that he felt he was becoming "a sober smoker" and hoped to knock that on the head.

I was interested in the social aspect of smoking and asked if he'd tried cigarettes in order to get into a group of friends. He had mentioned that he stopped spending as much time with his cousin Brianna when he started secondary school as she was hanging out with a different gang and smoking. I asked if he started smoking in an attempt to "get in with" her gang. He replied, "Well, they were a gang of girls, so no, not really. No." This is a rare case of Jack aligning himself with boys rather than girls.

This led to a conversation about how Jack had moved on from the large gang of boys he'd hung out with in first year. He said that the original group had split in two and that four or five of his closest friends from the group had moved with him into Transition Year. I asked if any one person had been instrumental in breaking the larger group up. "Well, to be honest, I was ... "Oh no, I'm not walking down that way." I kind of pushed it a bit more than the rest of them. I'd say the rest of them could have been a lot more tolerant of the others than I was."

I believe this is an example of Jack attempting to create his own social world, within which to express his identity. As noted above, Taylor believes that we live in a "culture of articulation" (1994, p. 36) and that we build an identity through articulating ourselves to others in dialogue. "We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. Even after we outgrow some of these others – our parents for instance – and they disappear from our lives, the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live." (1994, p. 33) Following this argument, Jack is working to constitute a new self when he decides to change his social circle or, to put it in Taylorean terms, his "significant others".

Transition Year was a great time for Jack, "one of the best years ever". He got very involved and won "Boy of the Year". He enjoyed the various sports activities,

outings and social occasions that Transition Year facilitated. He was also beginning to socialise more at the weekends and drinking more alcohol. His group of friends solidified and the group of friends he had in Transition Year were the same as the main group of friends he had at the time of the interviews, including his best friend, Jess.

One of the activities he took part in during Transition Year was the play, in which he played the lead role. Jack had been in a drama group (that his mother was the leader of) since he was in primary school. He had been the only child in an adult drama group. He says he was good with adults and that adult women in particular liked him. "I made them laugh and stuff." He thinks he was better with adults than his friends would have been. By the time he was in Transition Year, he was getting big roles in the adult drama group. He was occasionally teased by friends for his involvement with the drama group.

Jack's masculinity was substantially different from what my experience of rural Irish youth masculinities is here. His ease with adult women, and his involvement with the drama group must have set him apart from many boys his age. I believe that these are traits that Connell would describe as a type of subordinated masculinity, i.e. a masculinity which is "expelled from the circle of legitimacy" that sustains the form of the patriarchy dominant in a particular society. These are masculinities described as wimpish, where the subordinated traits are equated to feminine ones. (2005, p. 79).

The next episode that Jack related is one which he attaches a high value to. In the December after Transition Year, his second last year in school, he was asked to read out an answer in class. Some other students were laughing, and Jack became self-conscious, his voice started shaking and he stammered. For the last year and a half in school, this didn't leave him and he developed a phobia of public speaking, a big change for someone who had played leading roles on stage. Jack gave up acting and started to feel more uncomfortable in class. "I used to be literally sweating because I'd be afraid the teacher was about to ask me to read." He said it might have been related to the fact that Transition Year was a small group and now he was in a much bigger class, but thought that there was probably more to it than that. "And everyone was quite shocked, as I was shocked, as you would be coz I was that person who'd been the leader, in the drama club but, and I don't know, I still don't

really know how it happened or why it happened but it just did.”

“I never told my sisters, I told my mum and dad and ... they were fine. They sent me to a kinda like a therapist in [the local big town], just to see if I could, coz it was really detrimental to my Leaving Cert... coz I was couldn’t concentrate in class as well and stuff like that.” He went to about five sessions with this therapist. “Coz I felt this happened so quickly that it should be fixed just as quickly. He was all like “No, well take this and this and this”. I don’t know we never really seen eye to eye... He said I had an irrational fear of being imperfect. Of not being good enough. And stuff like that, that I was terrified of that and you know he’s probably right because that showed from that entrance exam that happened, that showed that when I didn’t get the top mark it was just the end of the world.” Eventually, Jack decided to stop seeing this therapist. “I kinda said, “Oh no I think I’m OK now”. I wasn’t really OK. I kind of fooled myself as well thinking I was OK, but I just, I knew, like, they were spending so much money and I felt guilty of that at the same time because it’s not like we had loads.”

At the time of this interview, this phobia was still an issue for Jack. He said it had got a little better, and that he’d managed to read out a paragraph during an economics class in university. “I was so nervous, but I still did it.”

One positive impact of the onset of this phobia was that Jack was no longer as scared of exams as he had been since his entrance exam, although Jack and his mum would have been the only people to remember this incident in later years. He saw it as one fear replacing another one. Jack did well in his Junior Cert exams and was in the top class in most subjects. This anecdote was one which Jack clearly found important and the problem was one he wanted an “answer” for. He saw it as a lack, a moral failing. This perception of “failing yourself” is one which Taylor sees as fundamental to the modern self. We look within and we evaluate what we see against what we judge to have value (not against a universal set of values) and our identity draws from this process (1989, p. 63).

At this stage in the interview, I had built a picture of Jack in my mind which was quite different from the Jack I knew from the kitchen of our flat. Open-minded as I like to think I am, I was confused. My own knowledge of the features of Irish youth

masculinity led me to question whether Jack was an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity as I had previously thought. The tall smiling “lads’ lad” who I thought I knew had turned out to be a sensitive boy who hated football and cars, who acted in dramas, who was burdened with many fears and whose best friends were girls.

And I asked Jack why he hadn’t mentioned girlfriends. He pointed to the timeline he’d brought with him. I’d looked at it a number of times, but hadn’t noticed the last item on it, which was “Coming out”. I couldn’t think what to say.

At the time, I was a gay man who was “out” socially, but had never come out to my own family, and had a very small number of gay friends. I had never been present for someone else’s coming out, and Jack was coming out to me. I was struck by a number of things. He didn’t say he was gay, but he pointed at the words “coming out” on the page. This was something that was still new for him to talk about. I was annoyed at myself, for not having guessed, especially given what had already been said in the interview – the “social clues” were there. I was also feeling generally overwhelmed by the trust Jack was placing in me: first there was the story of the public speaking phobia and the therapist, and now the coming out story.

I found myself floundering at this stage, and Jack more or less “took over” the interview at this stage.

Connor: Ah!

Jack: Yes

Connor: Right.

Jack: That’s just recently happened. I’m literally in the middle of it. Parents were told last weekend

Connor: Well done!

Jack: So if you thought I was looking sick for the last few days that was probably why.

Connor: Right

Jack: But, em, no. It’s been a really positive experience so far. Em. I don’t know.

Connor: OK.

Jack: We can talk about it when we get there.

Connor: Eh, no. But I mean that's a thing. That's a thing that starts earlier.

Jack: That's true. That's true.

Connor: OK

Jack: You see I wasn't sure if you wanted me to mention it earlier or not.

Connor: Em, I don't know.

Eventually, I took back the reins and asked Jack when he'd realised he was gay. "Eleven...As far as I was concerned, I was born gay. I just. I always knew it." I asked when he'd first said the word. "Oh, you mean said it aloud? November just gone. I always kept it to myself, I just – a really unhealthy thing for me to do, I really do feel like it probably was harming me at the time but I don't know I was just never in a place where I could say it. And I know, especially like, up until third year, which is kind of like not sayable, you would never say it then. "Oh my god" But then, in transition year, I was so happy and I was just getting on so well that I was kinda like, you know "Why would I say it? I'm really happy where I am right now. I don't feel like I necessarily need to be starting a relationship with eh, with someone who I like. I don't feel, like I could be there, but I'm OK to wait another while, while I'm happy, having fun with my friends." So it was only when I came to college then that I started pushing towards, you know having to start growing up and realising that, you know, the way I am, so I was basically my own therapist, I just sort of dealt with it in my own head."

I believe that Taylor would identify the idea of being "born gay" that Jack subscribes to as an example of the modern self's belief in an "inner nature", something that is both individual and natural. He identifies it as "that sense of self which gives off the illusion of being anchored in our very being, perennial and independent of interpretation" (1989, p. 185). This modern notion of self is unshakeable in Jack's self-conception. For Jack, his homosexuality is both natural and within him, and it exists independently of the interpretation of the world in which he lives. It is also part of his identity.

Taylor further describes a pre-Reformation world, where issues like sex and the body were not necessarily ones which were central to identity. With the rise of Protestantism came an affirmation of ordinary life. It was not acts of pilgrimage or explicit piety that made someone moral. Having a family and working the land became holy. These could be done for the glory of God. Ordinary behaviours and lifestyles, such as rearing a family were elevated, and thus sexuality and the body had the potential to be central to our identity (1989, p. 216). Jack is an example of this modern world which Taylor describes. He, like many others, sees his sexual interests as being at the core of his being, and so sexual interests can become an “orientation”, or an identity.

I asked if he knew any older gay people, or had had gay role models. He had a gay cousin and there were some gay people living in his area, but he said none of them played the part of a role model.

Connor: So, do you think this affected your relationship with your male friends?

Jack: Yes, I think in my head it did. I think I never got as close to them as I probably woulda, but at the same time, when I came to college, I don't know, I guess it always feels like, it probably has a bit, but I really, I've always tried for it not to. Because you know I've always been of the opinion that just because you're gay you know you only hang around, I don't think I fit the stereotype and I never will, but I want to have as many male friends as possible, you know because, just because I like their company and I like just having the craic, I like what they bring to conversation, you know you can talk to them about stuff that girls necessarily aren't very good at talking about. But at the end of the day I do feel like perhaps I didn't I didn't get as close to as friendly with them as they would if I had, I were straight, we probably would have got a bit closer. That's coz that's probably because I didn't talk about sex and stuff with them, because deep down I knew that wasn't me. So you know, boys bond over that, at the end of the day, so that's probably where the fault lay.

Connor: Right. So you never just talked about sex?

Jack: No. I always just no, no.

As with many other gay men, Jack's sexuality meant that his masculinity had different

features from his male friends. Even if his masculine identity was not necessarily subordinated by his social group, he certainly altered it in his social relations.

Connor: Right. And did you get any hassle for that or did people take any notice or...did people ask you?

Jack: Was I gay?

Connor: Yeah

Jack: No. I was always my own person. I think they presume, "Oh that's just the way Jack is". And stuff like that. My friends would have started to cop on that I was gay but that was not until like from talking to them now not until say fifth year maybe if even. Maybe even summer, I started coming to college. But I was always very my own person. If I didn't want to talk about something, I'd say, you know, if they want to talk to me about something I'd just go you know I don't want to talk about that so, sorry.

Connor: Right. OK

Jack: And that's why I probably came across as quite cold and mean sometimes, but not much only in personal very personal situations.

Connor: OK, eh, and did you ever want or try to change?

Jack: Toward being straight?

Connor: Yeah

Jack: Yeah when I was in that rougher point I was always used to be like just, "Oh why me? Why of all the people here do I have to be gay?" But you know I guess I did. I said "Oh you know what I'll get married, it'll be fine. I'll be grand. I won't feel like that at all." And you know I don't know you quickly snap out of that I guess when you start realising what the world really is like.

Jack is returning to the idea of being his own person here. Even in the process of hiding his sexuality, Jack still expressed difference, still established an individual identity in the face of a hegemony he did not benefit from, returning to a theme of

Taylor's and the importance of articulating an identity, possibly in spite of conflict, because in the modern world, identity "requires recognition" to be realised. (1994, p. 34)

At this stage, I brought the interview back to the main narrative and asked about Jack's transition from secondary school to university. "I was quite nervous about coming to Trinity because I had the notion that it was full of snobs." He said he had chosen the course (Social Work), rather than the university, and would probably have gone to university elsewhere if the course had been available there. Asked about the best part of the experience, he said that it was the opportunities available to him, through his course and through societies. "Being in an environment where you know being yourself is paramount and being comfortable is paramount and everyone here is themselves. I think if I didn't come to Trinity I wouldn't've come out as soon as I did...because I don't think I would have been as comfortable in some, in another college. I don't think I think Trinity's a lot more accepting than other colleges."

Jack recognises the social composition of identity and how social realities impact our behaviours and thus our identities. He is even using Taylolean language: "being yourself is paramount and being comfortable is paramount and everyone here is themselves." Here, he aligns his identity with a group, and this involves a moral alignment (an acknowledgement of what is paramount).

This led us back to the coming out story, and this time I was more prepared for the topic.

Jack: It's been fine. I don't know. You always expect like this big, literally as soon as you say it one lifts this barrier off your shoulder, but it's not like that, it's a mix of emotions. Em, I told my cousin Brianna first, who I mentioned earlier, and that was good, I was stociously drunk. But I had planned to tell her... it wasn't like I just said it. And then week by week I told another friend and then another and then I told my [older] sister on Saturday night and she told my parents Sunday.

Connor: Did you ask her to?

Jack: No, but she felt it was for the best because...there would have been, it was going around.

Connor: Had she already heard it?

Jack: No she hadn't I told her, but I only told her because one of her friends came up and said it to me that she'd heard it in the nightclub that night so I was like "right I have to tell Máirín" and Máirín was so afraid because there had been an incident in September which I didn't know about. In September, I'd sent my mum a "call me", and my little sis, eh mum went "Oh Jack wants me to call him" and my little sister, who's very perceptive and just said "Oh he's probably going to come out." And mum went "huh?", pulled over the car, and was "wha?"... And they had thought that I'd come out to everyone apart from them... They weren't sure if I was or not at all. They didn't really think about it. I don't think. Until this year. So then, and then they rang my sister and then obviously it turned out I hadn't Bríd had just said that but, em, and then since

Connor: And did you know that, did you know that Máirín had said that?

Jack: Not until I, until I actually came out.

Connor: Right so it was just the day before yesterday.

Jack: Yes it was.

Connor: Wow!

Jack: ... Máirín had seen that incident happening and had Dad calling her up saying "I can't believe this that he he has told everyone and not us." And she had seen that happen and thought what if they hear from someone else, they could never properly forgive me...So I had to

Connor: Right. OK. And it went OK?

Jack: Well, I haven't seen them yet, but no, dad phoned me yesterday, he says it's fine, nothing has changed, which is exactly what I needed to hear, but you know I feel so, I just feel so deflated. I spent all day yesterday in bed, smoked 20 cigarettes on Monday, you know I just, I just, I'm very tired and I'm just it's quite just emotional

basically but I, I know everything's going to be fine and that they, and I think they love me no matter what they have to, but no it's, it's good, very positive, I'd say I've had one of the very positive probably I had a very good coming out experience.

Connor: OK. Right. Have you talked to your Mum?

Jack: No I haven't spoken to her yet, but literally my sister's been the sorta go-between coz they both need time just to kinda sit back and think about everything and yes so that Friday will be interesting, Friday night.

Connor: Would you have any experience of your parents saying anything about gay people in the past?

Jack: Not really, no. Eh, not really to be honest, no, they're quite, no they wouldn't talk about it but they wouldn't say anything negative either.

Connor: Is there anyone else that you feel you have to tell?

Jack: Well I have to tell my Auntie Christine now who I'm very close to and that's really it. To be honest, I've got to the point where now that my parents are told, I'm just like you know what, people aren't coming up to me telling me they're straight all the time. I don't owe anyone anything. ...I told ... some of my flatmates so... I haven't told Sebastian. He's the only one I'm close to who I haven't told. Sebastian's a bit more I don't know ... it's not that he's not obviously he's very accepting of gay people and stuff but I don't know I feel like Sebastian would judge me slightly more than the rest would...You didn't know all this was going on upstairs?

Connor: No I didn't...that's life.

It is telling about Jack's view of the accepted forms of masculinity even within his own social group at university (where it is "paramount to be yourself") that he still feared judgement. Overall, Jack's coming out story is one of an attempt to be "authentic", and his sisters' and friends' reactions are ones that support this attempt. Taylor attributes the call to authenticity to enlightenment thinking. Conscience became an issue of nature. "Our moral salvation comes from recovering authentic moral contact with ourselves" (1994, p. 29). Like Jack, the modern self fears for its place in the world when it loses touch with the voice of nature speaking from within,

and so the call to be authentic, to come out as gay is a moral decision.

At this stage, we had been sitting together for over an hour and a half. I was feeling emotionally drained, especially from the final part of the interview. There was a lecture starting in the room where we were sitting. I asked Jack if he had any final comments on the year in university. He talked about how he loved his group of friends from Hall and from his course equally, but that his Hall friends were more serious.

As we stood up to leave, he asked if I was shocked. I pretended that I wasn't.

6.3 After the first interview

After one interview, we have a picture of Jack as a young man who displays a hotchpotch of behaviours and attitudes, some of which are typically "masculine" and others which are not. His narrative arc was one of protection within a relatively middle-class world and a rural life where hiding was difficult, a childhood dominated by female influences and a feeling of loneliness and being adrift in his early adolescence. Two events of failure in the public eye played significant roles in his own view of his teenage years. However, he was also confident about many elements of his social self. His coming out story and his secret gay identity as a teenager were important issues which hadn't been fully dealt with.

In succeeding interviews, areas of inquiry arising from the first interview included: more detail on the gendered influences in his early life, specifically the presence or absence of male and/or masculine influences; more information on his transition from life in rural Ireland to Trinity (where he saw being himself as a paramount value); more information on his life as a gay teenager and on the coming out process, which was still in its nascent stages at this point in the interview process; more on Jack's relationship with his body, which was clearly significant from our discussion about weight gain and loss, but which had been dealt with very quickly in the interview; and more details on his interactions with male and female friends and the gendered natures of these interactions.

In the aftermath of this interview, and the next two "first" interviews with my other research participants, I was very emotional. I was excited by the amount of detail

that these young men had revealed to me. I felt unworthy of these men's stories. And having been at the receiving end of revelation, I inevitably felt closer to these young men. I was excitable over the next few weeks, occasionally bursting into tears and telling both friends and new acquaintances about how much I loved my PhD. My emotions in general were magnified during this time.

Two days after this interview, Jack announced that he was running for election to a student body in the university, for a student welfare role. It had been an idea that I had heard mentioned before, but one that he had always laughed off.

This election was one that became important for me personally. One of the other young men in our flat was running as well as Jack, and I did what I could to get involved in the campaigns. Between my flatmates reading my blog and me starting the interviews, the barriers that I had erected between myself and my flatmates were coming down. I began to spend more time in the communal area of the flat.

Two different things happened in this election period that had a real impact on me. The first was that I really began to feel accepted and included by the young men I was living with. I felt comfortable spending more and more time with them and found this to be a transformational experience. It had been a long time since I had spent any time with a large group of men, and no male group had ever made me feel so welcome. The fact that this was a group of popular and attractive young men twelve years younger than me made this even more special. As part of this process, I also began (in a very minor way) to become involved in their broader social lives. One evening, I arrived home into the middle of a campaign meeting and sat with about thirty nineteen-year-olds, which I'd never done before. I was also a frequent poster to the campaign Facebook groups, interacting with my flatmates' friends, both male and female, which I'd never done before. The night of the election itself was the only night I went to the pub with my flatmates, when I also spoke to and spent time socialising with some of their other friends, and eventually drove one of my flatmates home after he had overindulged in alcohol.

The second aspect of this time that particularly struck me was Jack's own "journey". Although I don't think most people knew the details I knew, Jack made no secret of the fact that he had a fear of public speaking and this made him doubt his capacity to

run for election where he'd have to speak at hustings in front of a large group of people as part of the campaign. Another, bizarre, element of this election was a public "strip auction" where candidates for the election would do a stripping routine for charity. Jack knew that I had been a university debater when I had been an undergraduate and he asked me for help with his speech for hustings. I agreed. It was unusual for me to do anything with any one of my flatmates alone. It was even unusual for me to go to the floor on which Jack's bedroom was. His bedroom was too messy and I invited him into my bedroom. My bedroom would probably have been the only room in the flat that Jack had never seen the inside of. He took a minute to look around and to mock my One Direction poster and my huge collection of stationery. Then he nervously practised his speech, asking for my feedback. This was a moment of "rawness" for me. I felt Jack's vulnerability, his phobia of public speaking compounding the fear that anyone would feel in advance of such an occasion. I felt my own vulnerability at having one of my flatmates in my bedroom for the first time since I'd moved in six months previously. I also felt vulnerable because I knew he expected counsel from the former debater and I couldn't think of a single piece of useful advice. I decided to practise in as realistic a way possible. So I had Jack recite his speech again and again while standing on my bedroom desk, mimicking the stage on which he would have to deliver his speech at hustings, while I timed him.

On election day, one of the other flatmates told me that Jack was unlikely to win as he had a lot of competition and he wasn't as well-known as some other candidates in the election. I found this news upsetting. That evening, I broke my pattern of relating to my flatmates only in our kitchen and drove (with some of Jack's female friends) to the pub where the votes were being counted and the result was being announced. About three hundred eighteen and nineteen-year-olds were in attendance, and I felt out of place. My flatmates kept an eye out for me and one in particular made sure to spend time with me. He started discussing the interviews I was conducting with Jack and his flatmates here. He said he was jealous of them for getting the opportunity to participate in these "psychological tests". (I hadn't asked him to participate in my research as he was English, rather than Irish.) He also told me that Jack had said that talking to me in our first interview had helped him to make the decision to run.

One of my other flatmates collapsed from having taken too much drink and I was asked to give him a lift home. I refused to go until I had heard the result of Jack's election, in spite of my preferred "motherly" persona around my flatmates. I wanted to be "there" to hear it. Jack won the election. I took my drunk flatmate home, and texted my congratulations to Jack. Afterwards, I couldn't sleep. I found the whole experience very emotional, for both of the reasons outlined above, i.e. that I had experienced true inclusion/closeness with this group of younger/more masculine men, and that I was touched by Jack's journey, from fear to victory. In the middle of the night that night, I went for a run in the neighbourhood (still hours before my flatmates came home from the celebrations), and I cried as I ran from all the emotions I was experiencing.

6.4 Interview Two: "My Family", Room 4044, Arts Block, Friday, 23rd March 2012

My next interview with Jack was in the afternoon of the day after his victory in the election. I knew that he had been out late drinking, as the kitchen showed evidence of a late-night party. I didn't expect him to come to college for his interview that afternoon, but when I texted him he confirmed that he'd be there.

Possibly because of his hangover, Jack seemed a bit more distant in this interview than he had been in the previous one. His answers were shorter and he seemed more guarded than he had before. I took this quite personally, and felt a little rejected.

We started the conversation with the events of the previous night.

Jack: I'm very happy, yeah. But I don't know. I can't really remember getting it, but no I do, I was just, I was in the smoking room, I wish I was there for it sort of thing. Because it was only like when

Connor: Oh, you heard it from the smoking room?

Jack: No I didn't, because people were telling me, "No. Jack, you have to go now" "What?" I kinda heard them say it but I didn't get the full, never mind, it's fine.

Speaking about the campaign, Jack started: "I've had the flu, so that's been a

deterrent, or not a deterrent, but like a really bad thing, because I can't really get drunk properly on nights out.

Connor: Right. And why is it important to get drunk properly?

Jack: Ha? Because it's having fun. I ended up sober and just chatting about the campaign and stuff, so boring.

Connor: Right.

Jack: And I kinda did get a good bit drunk last night, but I'm still quite fluey so I don't feel as good when I'm drunk.

Connor: Right.

Jack: Unfortunately, alcohol doesn't taste the same.

Connor: OK.

Jack: So, yeah, the perils of youth.

Statistical data would suggest that Jack is conforming to standard behaviour patterns for Irish men of his age with regards to drinking alcohol. The World Health Organisation report that 53% of Irish men over the age of 15 (as opposed to 25.5% of Irish women) engage in heavy episodic drinking (WHO, 2014) and Morgan et al. (2009) report that 48% of Irish men between the ages of 18 and 29 (as opposed to 32% of women in the same age group) binge drink at least once a week (2009, p. 16). Phipps and Young (2012) are among the commentators who list binge drinking as both a cause and a characteristic of the "lad culture" that is hegemonic in UK university gender regimes. I believe that alcohol is a "normalising factor" in Jack's life, whether his drinking habits are regarded as a ritual of young Irish manhood, or as a defining characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, which Jack does not feel fully part of, this drinking behaviour is social and allows for belonging and normality.

I then asked Jack about coming out. At our last interview, his sister had told his parents, and he had spoken to his father about it on the phone, but not his mother. He didn't remember this, thinking that he'd spoken to them both before the last interview took place. I pressed him on his parents' reaction to his coming out.

Jack: Well I went home both weekends and it was grand like.

Connor: Right.

Jack: No big deal.

Connor: OK.

Jack: No big reaction.

I was devastated. I'd listened to Jack's first interview a number of times, and been swept away by it every time. I'd built up his coming out story in my mind and the idea that the climax of it was "no big reaction" left a bad taste in my mouth. At this stage of the interview, it was also clear from Jack's body language that he didn't want to spend any more time speaking about his coming out. I hadn't been ready for it in the previous interview and so we hadn't discussed it in detail. This time I had thought about it and Jack wasn't interested.

We moved on to what was going on in his life at that moment, as he was planning to start studying for his end-of-year exams. He didn't seem too worried. He said, "I'm not an intensive course, I'm not pharmacy or anything like that so it's fine." He said he was certain he'd pass, even though he hadn't done any studying since he started university.

The other current issue he spoke about was the work he was beginning on the committee he'd been elected to. He was worried that the man who'd been elected as the committee's president would be "a bit of a Nazi". "I'm just, well, not like properly worried but just thinking like Oh God, you'd better not, I'm not the type of person to be controlled... If you'd seen my strip last night, you'd understand."

This is the kind of statement of independence I am given to making myself and it is an example of a disengaged individualism that Taylor sees in the modern self that is disengaged from a greater moral order, or from any external moral order, since the time of Descartes (1989, p. 146). This gives rise to a contemporary moral injunction of independence in conflict with authority, and Jack's "I'm not the type of person to be controlled" is a statement of the modern individual, looking inward for moral authority.

Connor: Tell me about it.

Jack: Oh, it was great. I went up, I had my white shirt, dicky bow, braces, trousers and then I went off, Tom Jones Sex Bomb and I just got up and did my thing, dun, dun, dun and then poured water all over myself, em, took off all my clothes, threw them off, had to show my ass to everyone, which was awful, em, but it had to be done and then I fell.

Connor: Did it have to be done?

Jack: Yes. Jean Jacobs made me. And then I fell coming off the stage. I slipped in the water and fell off, which was grand, it was actually so funny. I actually don't know how it didn't, like, how it wasn't, how I'm not more embarrassed, cause like in my boxers, soaking wet, I fell off the stage in front of 200 people, but yeah, I just think it was so funny...Literally, just landed, smack down

Connor: And were you drunk?

Jack: Em, I'd say so, but I, like, was completely in control if you get me. Like I was definitely not myself, if you get me, I wasn't just completely sober. I was, I had good drink in me, yeah.

Connor: Right.

Jack: Which was good.

Connor: OK. Alright.

Jack's choice of attire for the strip gives some insight into his perception of what is sexual – a dicky bow and braces are very much the clothing of an upper-class successful man, and indeed he does return to this idea later.

Jack's comfort with his body and with displaying it (in spite of his need to drink beforehand) is an interesting contrast to how he had described his body in the previous interview. A strip is an unusual example of what Connell calls body-reflexive practices, whereby our gender identity is formed partly as a response to our practices around our bodies and our bodies' responses to them, for example, a weightlifting regime might increase a man's confidence in and consciousness of his

role as a strong man, or physical response to a certain form of pornography may lead a man to question his sexual identity (2005, p. 61). I see the strip as a step on a road to life as “a sexual being” for Jack, who had previously consciously kept sex out of his life.

Jack: Oh and I'd hustings as well.

Connor: Yes you did. How did that go?

Jack: We spoke about the speech thing.

Connor: Yeah, we did.

Jack: It went really well, it went so well. Before I was shitting the brick. I just got up there and do it like, my hands were grand, my legs were shaking but no one even noticed and it was just a really positive experience.

Connor: Right. Do you think it'll change how you'll be in the future?

Jack: Oh, definitely. I think it was a bit of a milestone. I think the whole elections have been a milestone, confidence wise.

Both the strip and the speech at hustings represent a change in how Jack sees himself and how he relates to the world around him. Jack is now identifying himself as someone who is confident.

We moved on from that, and I showed Jack the file I'd started on him, showed him the pseudonyms I'd created for him and for his friends and family and the detailed timeline I'd made of his life, mentioning every event that he'd covered in his first interview. He was taken aback at how much work I'd put into this.

We then moved on to the theme for that interview – Jack's family, and we started with his younger sister. He started by comparing her to one of our flatmates.

“She's very hipster, she wears the big geek glasses...Really short, quite, hair...She's into tights. These like, really, really hipster-y stuff. She's just very alternative. She listens to music I've never heard of, or no one has. She goes around with massive earphones on her head all the time. She wears fingerless gloves...She's very alt.”

Jack was fairly non-committal when asked how well he got on with her. He said that

when he'd lived at home he'd fought with her, teasing her "as older brothers do". Now he only saw her at weekends and they were able to chat away and they got on fine. She was a part of his life to the extent that they were Facebook friends, but they never socialised together. He guessed that they would in the future as she was best friends with his best friend's sister. He said that he presumed that she would start drinking during the summer after her Junior Cert exams, as that was what people normally did. At the time of the interviews, she spent a lot of time on the internet, a lot of time listening to music and she was interested in skateboarding and in comics. Jack said that she went through "fads".

When asked about her social life, he said that she always seemed to have a boyfriend and that she had a lot of friends. "Well, not as many as I would have had...But like, that's just coz of the type of person I am. Was. She doesn't need that. She doesn't seem to care about having loads of friends...I'd say she has a normal amount...Less than I had."

Since Jack had left home, most of the conflict in the house was now between his mother and his younger sister often about studying. She also has a minor circulatory condition that her mother nags her about.

We then switched to talking about Jack's older sister, who is three years older than he is. She works as a primary school teacher in Dublin and had been living in Dublin (both as a trainee teacher and a teacher) for about five years. While Jack described his younger sister as "alt", he called Máirín, his older sister, "mainstream".

It would appear from these interviews that much of Jack's social world revolves around this distinction between mainstream and "alt". As Taylor argues, one purpose of "identity" is to allow for community and alignments (1994, p. 38). Jack bucks against this when he sets himself apart from both sisters. I believe that in some ways, Jack's attempts to establish identity relate to setting out his separateness and his difference from the social world in which he finds himself, rather than his membership of a group.

Jack: She's just a very normal person, just does her thing. She's very traditional. She'll do the whole, I can see her, she'll just go down the whole normal route, get married, have babies, settle down. A normal life. She's so normal....

Connor: Right. And, eh, is that a good thing or?

Jack: Yeah, no, it is. It's just quite different from, I suppose, me and Bríd. We probably won't do, well Bríd will to a certain extent, but she'll be all hippy-ish about it and stuff like that like. Here we see Jack defining a "social good" and evaluating it. The "good life" of getting married, having babies and settling down is something Jack sees as contestable, though he acknowledges that it is a norm.

Connor: Right

Jack: Whereas I probably won't do that at all.

Connor: You won't settle down?

Jack: I don't know. Maybe. Maybe not.

Connor: Right. What does that mean?

Jack: I don't know. I don't know what it means. I just don't wanna be tied down.

Jack said that Máirín had had a series of long-term boyfriends. He described them all as men that needed to be babied, and made it clear that he never got on very well with any of them. "None of them exceptionally impressive. They always seem to be below average intelligence." He went so far as to call one of them "such an idiot".

Jack said Máirín was great, someone he could confide in if he needed to and someone he spoke to a lot. They hadn't been that close when he was younger, but they started to spend time together once Jack had started drinking and they ended up in the same social scene. When I asked what they talked to each other about, Jack said, "Drinking. Just normal social stuff."

Again, alcohol here plays the role of social lubricant, allowing lines of age and gender to become blurred. In some ways, Jack's life seems dependent on alcohol for progress, and his membership of social groups, which in many ways is challenged (by phobias, by not talking about sex, cars or football with "lads", by not having the "mainstream" goals of his sister and many of his friends at home), is facilitated by drinking alcohol. Alcohol is an Irish social ritual that allows Jack to transcend difference.

Jack viewed Máirín as an independent adult, as she had her own job and was financially independent. However, he did see her as very much an equal in many ways. “I see her more as a college student to be honest. I see her just equal to me.” Máirín didn’t have a car. “She is independent, but you know when she comes home, she leans on them [Jack’s parents] I suppose. She wouldn’t be one of these people who are, you know, once they’re qualified that’s them away off to London, New York and just call once a month or something. She is always coming home and always coming back I suppose. And her and Mum ring all the time.”

Jack isn’t dismissive of Máirín’s version of independence, but it is clearly different from his own vision of independence. For Jack, unlike Máirín, independence means leaving home behind. I believe Jack sees himself as different from the mainstream and he rejects it, possibly rejecting a hegemonic masculinity along with it that sees the man’s role as heterosexual marriage and child-rearing and continuation of a family line.

I asked Jack about the similarities and differences between himself and his two sisters. He said that they were all very different. He himself was very involved and interested in extra-curriculars in a way that Máirín wasn’t. I asked which of their parents they took after. “I suppose Bríd takes after Dad really. They’re both quite calm, cool, relaxed people. Máirín is quite relaxed too, but she has a bit of Mum. I have a lot of, em, Mum. I suppose. In the way I stress about stuff, it’s not stress, I’m just louder. And I do stress, I do stress. I’m just not as chilled. I don’t take things as laid back and stuff.”

Here I brought Jack back to his sister’s role in his coming out. He was reluctant to say any more about it. I found it quite odd that she had told his parents. At the time I still thought of her as “telling them on him”, rather than “telling them for him” and I couldn’t understand his refusal to condemn her for it. At the time, I read this as Jack resisting me and wanting to control what he told me.

In hindsight, I view this resistance quite differently. Firstly, of course, there is the possibility that Jack found the coming out experience more painful to speak about than he acknowledges here. Secondly, he is in a period of transition and is attempting a new mode of self-presentation. He is now publicly gay, but he fears being overly

identified with this marker of self. This is possibly a fear of homophobia, stigmatisation etc. It is also possibly an example of some internalised homophobia, i.e. that “being” very “gay” is a bad thing. “Internalised homophobia” and the desire to “pass as straight” are features of gay life that have been noted by, among others, Owens (2013).

Jack’s parents were next on my list and we talked about his father first. “Dad’s quite similar to Bríd. He’s a taxi man. Bríd’s not a taxi man. Em, Dad’s really laid-back as opposed to Mum. He’s sorta a lot cooler about things. He, eh, he writes poetry.” Here I asked Jack about his dad writing poetry. It struck me as an unusual thing for a taxi driver in rural Ireland to do. Jack’s response was a shrug – it had never bothered him or anyone he knew. “I don’t think everyone’s dad writes poetry, but I genuinely don’t care.” Jack’s response to both the questions about what it was like to have a father who wrote poetry and what it was like to have your sister tell your parents you were gay was similar. He made it clear that these were no big deal and that I should move on.

I wasn’t sure how to feel about this at the time. While Jack did not seem to care about his father’s difference from a typical Irish father of the time, I believe that *difference* is a key theme in Jack’s own narrative of himself and as I have stated above, difference from others, along with sameness, are the two fundamental elements of identity.

Jack’s dad writes poetry that he submits to amateur magazines and occasionally gets published. He also goes to a poetry group. Jack described him as an intelligent person, who loves reading and English. “I think he’s just one of those people who just never got the chance because of his situation to use it or do anything with it [his intelligence].”

Jack’s father was born in 1967 and spent most of his childhood going back and forth between his home village in the northwest of Ireland and Glasgow, where his father found it easier to get work as “a roadbuilder or something”. The family’s base was firmly in Ireland from around the time he was 12, but they continued to spend summers in Glasgow and go there for short-term jobs.

While Jack’s father didn’t finish secondary school, he did go to night classes when he

was older and he did his A-levels in Glasgow. He became a taxi driver in his hometown and built up a firm, until 2004 when “he was always very busy around the house” and he cut the firm down to just his own taxi. Jack’s family background shows a progression in terms of educational attainment, with Jack and his sister attending third-level education, unlike their parents.

Jack said that he’d be well known, but that he is quiet. His main socialising would be with the poetry group and with the friends he exercises with. “He cycles, he runs, he swims, he hikes. He just constantly exercises.” Other than that, he doesn’t socialise a lot. “I find adult friendships are strange anyway. I don’t know. They seem to be friends and they don’t see each other that much and they just live close, but you know. Whatevs.”

I see Jack’s view of friendship as a key to his view of what is significant in life. For Jack, a friendship requires active behaviour and maintenance in order to sustain it. Taylor argues that “an original identity needs and is vulnerable to the recognition given or withheld by significant others” (1994, p. 36). For Jack, these “significant others” are his friends and I believe that the idea of his parents’ style of distant friendships is abhorrent to him, because such friendships don’t allow for the articulation of self and resulting recognition that is key to the maintenance of identity.

Jack described his parents as being very sensible with money. As well as the taxi, they have two houses that they rent out. The only other income in the house is Jack’s mother’s disability allowance.

This led us on to Jack’s mother, who had loomed larger than life in our first interview.

Connor: What kind of person is your mum?

Jack: Mum is a different kettle of fish. Em, she’s quite loud, erratic. Em, a little bit bipolar I think, sometimes. I’m not even joking.

Connor: Right. OK. What does that, like, how?

Jack: Oh God. She’s just so insane sometimes. I know all mothers are, but yeah, she’s

so insane. Em, she just shouts and stuff.

He went on to give some examples of when his mother would shout and roar, regardless of who could hear her. He also talked about how she could be quite negative. “For example when I rang her just there to tell her I had won the [election]... And I was like “Oh yeah, so hopefully it’ll be good” and she was like “Oh, will it though?” “OK. I’ll see you later, Mum.””

I expressed surprise that she hadn’t been more enthusiastic about Jack’s extra-curricular successes. After all, she was the one who had got him into a drama group when he was a child. He said that she’d changed and she was no longer interested in things like that for him. “She pushes me to have fun more as well, like instead of doing VdeP and stuff...She wants, she thinks Máirín is exactly how I should do it, if you get me. Máirín ... didn’t join one extra thing, just went to college, well didn’t even, did her degree...Didn’t take anything else from the place and she sort of, she just went out a lot and she feels like I should sort of, “oh that’s the normal college experience. You should do that too. It worked great for Máirín.” Here we return to Jack setting himself aside, seeing difference in the fact that he pursues extra-curricular activities, and seeing his sister’s choice as “normal”.

He went back over the ground of his mother’s frequent shouting and the loud and intense arguments she would have with all three children, but with Jack in particular.

Jack was similarly dismissive about his mother’s friendships as he was about his father’s. She plays golf with some friends, but mainly she spends her time at home, doing housework and gardening.

Talking about his parents together, Jack says, “Literally they balance each other out. Literally. Mum probably brings Dad out of his shell a wee bit. And Dad brings Mum back down to Earth... even though he’s quiet, he still has a big input...He’s the voice of reason.”

Jack’s parents play familiar roles. Functionalist psychologists, led by Parsons identified male roles as instrumental and female as expressive (1943). Jack’s father’s rationality fits into Parsons’ description of instrumental traits and similarly his mother’s emotional, passionate, communicative nature fit into his category of expressive traits.

We moved on to his mother's childhood. She was born in Scotland, but grew up in a village near Jack's own, in a family of seven, which Jack describes as being larger, poorer and more religious than his father's family. Jack thinks that her hip problem would have had a big impact on her growing up. She had to spend nine months in hospital in Dublin, as a twelve-year-old, away from her family. She still talks about it, though the disability isn't obvious now. She did finish school and was working in a factory when she met his father. I believe that Jack's mother's identity could easily have been impacted by her disability and by her separation from her family at a young age, and her emotional and angry persona could be said to draw from both of these.

I then asked Jack some questions about his parents as a couple and his relationship with them. He says that they get on well with each other. If he was to ask permission for something, it would be from "whoever's closest", though he moderated that by saying you might have to "pass it through Mum" if he was to ask his Dad for something. His mother also did most of the cooking and housework, though his father helped out. The gender roles at play here are again familiar from (among many others) Parsons' functionalist sociology. The domestic is very much Jack's mother's "domain", whether that means making decisions about the children or doing the housework.

Jack thinks it was his mother who taught him to cycle, but he wasn't sure. In his words, it wasn't a "Kramer vs Kramer" moment. I was amazed that someone born in 1992 could toss out a reference to what is now a fairly little-known 1979 film. A conversation I'd witnessed one night in our apartment showed that there were boys living with us who didn't even know who Meryl Streep was. Jack's interest in movies was clearly significant and deep. This interest is one that aligns with the view of Jack as someone who wanted to "escape" and who felt his home life was too narrow in scope for him. This is something we discussed this in later interviews.

Jack never had a "sex talk" with his parents, either when he was beginning puberty or when he was leaving home for university, and he was clearly disgusted at the thoughts of such a discussion. This is not unusual in Irish society where, from my own experience, sex education is minimal and teenagers are often discouraged from discussing sexual issues. A report in the Irish Examiner claimed that 55% of Irish 18-

year-olds got no formal sex education (Baker, 2012). Jack's sexual development and sexual identity could well have been a relatively furtive process regardless of his orientation.

When I asked which of his parents he felt he could talk to more easily, Jack took a minute to think. "I don't know. Sometimes it's easier to say it to Mum because I don't know. I don't know, sometimes it just is. Well it depends what it is I suppose, maybe. Em, yeah, definitely is. I don't know. Dad's quieter and sometimes, I don't know, maybe he won't have that much to say about it, whereas at least if you're saying something to Mum, you know you're going to get an earful. So...But that wouldn't necessarily mean that Mum's better. Like Mum could say such idiotic things sometimes, but it's just that you're guaranteed to get a lot of info."

Next, we spoke about Jack's extended family. He doesn't know his mother's side of the family as well as his father's and we talked about them first. His grandfather is dead and he never knew him. His grandmother is alive, but has Alzheimer's and no longer knows him. "I did know her well. She just, she sat in a corner and, she's nice, like, she was always a nice granny, you know nice, but she's a bit more crabby, she'd prefer that the kids were outside, stuff like that, you know. Not as loving as my Nana [his other grandmother]." She can't really communicate now, but when Jack was younger his mother would visit her once a week and speak to her in Irish.

Connor: Is part of the reason you wouldn't have known that side of the family as well was because they were speaking Irish to each other or?

Jack: No. Not necessarily. We live further away and I don't know, it's just, we just, we always got on better with the other side. They're more like us. They were just nicer people I think generally.

Jack's aunts and uncles on this side don't all speak to each other. Two brothers aren't speaking because of a row over a concrete mixer and two of the sisters don't speak because of a row over his grandmother's care. His oldest aunt speaks to everyone, and Jack sees her cancer as something that brought the whole family together briefly.

Because his mother was arguing with one of her sisters, Jack said he wouldn't be able

to call to her house, even though he was friendly with his cousin who lives there. He knows some of his other cousins well, although there are some cousins he doesn't know at all. He has an uncle who lives in England and is an alcoholic and had four children that he never told his Irish family about. They did come to Ireland looking for their roots, but Jack didn't meet them and claims he wouldn't be interested in meeting them, as he looked at their Facebook pages and "I don't think we'd get on".

Overall, Jack is very clear that he doesn't see this side of the family playing a role in his future. "Well, the only reason for us all to be together is because of our Granny when she does pass. But I'll just have to get over that. That'll be it, but as far as I'm concerned, once my granny does pass, em, maybe [my oldest aunt], but the rest of them I probably won't know at all, which is fine with me, you know, coz they're just dysfunctional."

When I asked if he would go to the weddings of the cousins on this side of the family, he paused and said, "I could see myself not RSVPing, if you get me." And when I asked if the arguments on this side of the family were known in his area, Jack replied, "it's not uncommon for families to be like that where I'm from though, where there is just huge dysfunction."

Jack's account of this side of the family leads to some conclusions about his values. He clearly doesn't value conflict, seeing it as "dysfunctional". The choice of the word "dysfunction" is interesting as it is a journalistic or even sociological one, rather than a personal word, like "stressful". I think Jack sees this side of the family as a group of people who he views from the outside and that he wishes to be considered separate from. He also doesn't see family ties (in the extended sense) as very important.

Jack's whole demeanour changed when he started to talk about his father's side of the family, although he didn't have as much to say about them. "This is my nice normal Dad's side of the family... Everyone gets on really well."

"Nana and Grandda are great. Nana doesn't drink. She doesn't smoke. She's very holy. She's absolutely lovely though and she's really a granny who just smothers and stuff like that. She made me fat. She gave me loads of chips when I was younger. So I have to stop going up there! No I don't. She literally, she's just that person, who just kills with kindness...Grandda's really quiet, just, it's actually similar to my dad and

Mum's relationship, now that I've thought about it. Nana's the loud one and Grandda's really quiet."

Jack emphasised how much time he and his sisters spent in his grandparents' house, both as a child and still when he was 19. They used to play there, were free to invite their friends up, they would gather together there for family occasions like Christmas and Patrick's Day, they could go there if they'd had an argument with their parents. It was a "haven". When he went home for the weekend from university, he would sometimes call in there before he went to his own home, and he wouldn't dream of not calling in there every weekend he was home.

Jack's childhood stability in the comfort of female-dominated houses is a theme that came up a number of times in the earlier interviews. It could imply a discomfort in male-dominated social groups, which there is some evidence for in his description of his social life as a teenager, though this is not the case in later years.

I asked Jack to describe his relationship to Brianna, a cousin he'd mentioned a lot in the previous interview. He agreed that he was close to her, and that they had spent a lot of time together when they were growing up. He also hesitantly pointed out some differences. "She's quite different to me in a lot of ways. She's very like [my older sister] in her lifestyle. She just does the college thing, goes out drinking, she wouldn't be into extra-curricular or anything like that either." They were still in regular contact, though Brianna was in college in a different city.

He said that quite a few of his cousins would be older than him, and that they were mainly interested in football, but that he was quite happy to chat away to them and he felt relaxed in their company. He went on to briefly describe this side of the family and their relationships. What Jack considered normal was very strange for me. He had a cousin who was a stepfather to a child from his wife's previous relationship. He had a cousin who was living with his girlfriend. He had a cousin who had had a baby with a former girlfriend. All of these relationships would have been relatively unknown to me, growing up twelve years earlier in an upper-middle class suburban home. I asked how this interacted with his grandmother's piety. He told me about when she found out that his cousin's girlfriend was pregnant. He said it was a big deal, but only "for a week. And then, Nana cried, oh God, but you know.

God, but we love that child now, like, so we all fawn over him.”

This portrait (of the differences in families as Jack experienced them growing up 12 years after me) is one of a changing Ireland, where sexual mores are changing and traditional family units are changing to accommodate this. The transitional nature of this family background could be said to impact on someone like Jack, whose own sexual identity conflicted with traditional notions of morality.

The only other relation he talked about in any depth was his Auntie Christine. She had been mentioned in the first interview as someone he wanted to come out to himself. Christine is older than Jack’s father and is single and has a room upstairs in his grandparents’ house. It was clear that Christine had doted on Jack and the other cousins and I was surprised to hear him tell me that he used to bring drink in to Christine’s room and they would drink together.

Connor: She’s a lot older than you.

Jack: Yeah. She’s forty-eight.

Connor: So, what kind of things do ye talk about it?

Jack: She’s not like that. Oh, everything. Eh, just drinking.

Connor: I’ll have to make a list of the questions that your answer is “drinking”.

Jack: I know. It sounds bad. Just, just the craic, she’s just my friend.

Connor: OK. Cool.

Jack: It’s hard to imagine I know, but if you met her, you’d understand.

We were coming to the end of the interview, and I couldn’t think of more to ask, but I was absolutely intrigued by this relationship.

I finished the second interview with a general question: “Anything else about this side of the family?” Jack: “Em, nah, that’s it. It’s just, it’s very run-of-the-mill. It’s very nice. Great family. Paradox to the other side, pretty much.”

Here, Jack’s view of the good is different from his frequently-expressed views on the importance of extra-curricular activities, travel and *different* experiences. Here, he

clearly states that “run-of-the-mill” is also a virtue. This is an example of Jack using Taylor’s “strong evaluation”, comparing two competing goods, while still choosing one (1989, p. 4).

Jack had made me laugh in the second interview, but I did continue to feel a distance during it that I hadn’t felt in the first interview.

6.5 After the second interview

At this stage in the interviews, we have a relatively complete picture of Jack’s young life and his relationship with his family, including the traditional gender roles that his parents played and the strength of the female influences in his youth. Among the emerging themes are Jack’s perception of his own difference from the mainstream, and his formation of his own identity around this difference, as well as his use of alcohol as a social tool.

Among the areas where information was lacking are a more complete description of Jack’s teenage life and the social world he inhabited outside his family, his life in Dublin, his life as a gay teenager and his relationship with his body and his growing understanding and negotiation of his own sexual identity throughout his adolescence.

6.6 Interview Three: “My Social Life”, Room 4044, Arts Block, Wednesday, 4th April 2012

The third interview was about Jack’s social life and it started cheerfully. Jack had applied for a place on an Irish-language residential scheme in the university and had had his interview for this just before we met. He had been practising the previous night on me and some of the other flatmates and I had been surprised at how hesitant his Irish was, considering he was from a Gaeltacht, his mother was a native speaker and he’d gone to all-Irish schools. When I asked how his interview had gone, he answered that it was probably a bad sign that he’d had to practise. “It’s meant to be in you”, he said.

Jack’s choice of words is interesting here. A language is “meant” to be in you. This turn of phrase has an evaluative, even moralistic tone. By not speaking Irish well enough, Jack is failing in a moral duty to his culture. I do not think that Jack sees it in quite such serious terms, but Jack is viewing language, an identity marker for many

cultural groups, with a judgemental eye and is finding himself wanting.

When asked what else he'd done since his previous interview, he said he still hadn't started preparing for his exams, which was the same answer he'd given at the previous interview. Jack procrastinated a lot about studying, but was a lot more relaxed about this than many of the other flatmates.

I said we'd talk about romance before friends. Jack's immediate answer was "Oh yes. Not much." He then followed this up with a joke about not being lonely. When asked if he'd had any relationships with other people, Jack's answer was "No. Not sex-wise." I asked him about how he saw things in the future and he answered that he was just out, but he was going to start doing things. "I shifted someone at Hall Ball [about a week before the interview], which was fine...he wasn't that attractive". I asked if it had been a first, and he said it was, and when I asked if it was exciting, he answered, "I was so drunk...you know when you're so drunk that it sort of numbs your sexual, you know. You know." Having talked down his first male-male experience, he went on to say that he intended to do more. "I will not be a chastity belt-wearing person." We left the romance talk there and moved on to friends.

We dealt with this issue in more detail in a later interview. His statement here is one which resonates with Connell's views that sexuality is not a stable entity, but rather something that shifts over time. Connell describes homosexuality as a "project" taken on by a man, in which he initially engages with the hegemonic masculine, then closes his sexuality around engagements with men and finally engages in collective practices of the gay community. (2005, p. 160). For Connell, many variations are possible here and many things can happen between these steps and they can happen at different stages of life. For her, sexual orientation is a journey and not a fixed state of being. She further writes are also that our gender and/or sexual identity can change in response to experiences of our body, that biology doesn't dictate social reality, but that the two interact with each other. Jack's lack of sexual response to his first male-male experience doesn't shake his conviction that he is gay, but it could contribute to an overall sexual identity as he grows older.

The prompt for the conversation on friendship circles was Facebook. I was familiar with Jack's Facebook account, having been his Facebook friend for about three

months at that stage. When I asked him, Jack said that his Facebook was an accurate representation of him and that he wasn't careful about what went up on his page. In my experience there were certainly a lot of drunken photos and Jack said he rarely untagged himself in photos or posts, so his Facebook wasn't a particularly calculated representation of himself. Jack was genuinely excited to see a printed out version of his Facebook, and this established a very good atmosphere for the rest of the interview.

We moved on to a printed list of Jack's Facebook friends, and discussed a few of his closer friends. One person we talked about in particular was his friend Marcus from his hometown. I was interested in Jack's male friendships as so many of the people he talked about from home were female. He said that they'd been best friends but they hadn't been in contact much since he came to Dublin. I asked him why that was and he said, "I think it happens to boys more than it happens to girls, they don't stay in contact that much." Jack claimed that he was a loyal person and that it wasn't very easy to drop in and out of his life in general and so Marcus was quite exceptional. Here we see the view that women are more able than men to communicate and to maintain friendships. Jack's strong relationships with female friends are fairly typical of some gay masculinities (see, for example, Connell, 2005, p. 162.)

I asked Jack how many of the people in his long list of over 500 Facebook friends he would consider to be "real friends". He took some time to count them, and then said "Fifty". I was surprised. I asked him how he maintained a real friendship with fifty people. He thought for a minute and defined a real friend. "Basically, it's someone that if you seen them in the street, you'd go and chat to them for a while...if something good happened to you...then you'd go and say it to them...that you're happy to see as well." Friendship based on communication is significant for Jack and it is something he sets great store by. He sees himself as a social creature and he sees communication as an essential part of what makes him Jack.

We moved on to Jack's various circles of friends. In total, he described six groups of friends, two at home (the friends who had done Transition Year with him and the friends who had been in primary school with him) and four in Dublin (his flatmates, the group of boys in the next flat, a group of girls in another flat in Hall and his friends from his course).

I asked him to describe the difference between the different groups. He said that conversation topics would be different. His friends at home mainly talk about drinking and nights out. While his flatmates would also talk about nights out, they would also talk about “what’s actually going on in the world”. The girls in Hall and the people on his course would have more “banter” and would talk about anything, but never current affairs or anything serious. The idea of having a group of friends who talk about current affairs, who are explicitly political, is something new for Jack, and it is something that he values.

I tried to explore the idea of friendship and I asked Jack how many of these friends could he confide in and who knew him best. He said that overall, the Transition Year group of friends would know him best, but that in each group he had close people and he would have one or two best friends in each circle.

At this stage, we went through each group one by one. He started with his flatmates. He talked about four who he was particularly close to, how he valued them because he could trust them, because they shared and could borrow anything from each other. He said that other people in college went to college and didn’t see their flatmates all day, whereas his flatmates were part of his life in college, that everyone he knew in college also knew who his flatmates were. He said that they had changed him. “I’d never be the kind of person who has a big idea of myself and they kind of push me, you know...they’re great encouragers”. He spoke about two in particular who encouraged him to go for the election. He compared them to his friends from home, who would have had the attitude “Do it if you want...because they don’t do anything, you see”. In university, Jack has found friends who have a different mode of living life, who are engaged with the political, both on the small scale and on the large scale.

I then asked about the other two groups of friends in Hall. Jack got a bit tongue-tied trying to describe the boys in the next apartment. “They’re very much though your typical lads, like our apartment’s not very, our apartment’s is a lads’ apartment, but it’s not, it’s not like [the other flat] is far more lads and stuff, which is great. That’s what a lot of my friends from home were like. It’s just good to go and chat to them.” Here, Jack is specifically identifying a hegemonic mode of masculinity, “typical lads” and it is one he appears to value, although he isn’t representative of it himself.

Jack described the girls' apartment that he was friendly with as fun and funny, and he said that it was there he got to sit down and watch movies, which he hadn't been able to do much since coming to college. He was confident that his relationship with three of these girls would last as they would be returning to Hall, like him, the following year. There is a gendered difference here. While his male flatmates talk about politics and push him to achieve things, he can sit and watch movies with his female friends. This is a clear example of a female/domestic sphere and a male/public sphere, where women are, as feminists such as Friedan (1963) would have it, are "trapped" in the domestic sphere (p. 276) and political and economic power is vested in the hands of men. Jack's social experiences are echoing this pattern in Dublin in 2012 and he is comfortable in both sectors.

Moving on to his friends from home, we talked about the group who had been in Transition Year with Jack first. He spoke about how close they had become in the final year at school, when everyone else they had started with had already left, so the Transition Year group became very tight, and acted as a support for each other through the Leaving Cert. He said that he keeps in regular touch with them on Facebook, even though they've all gone to different colleges now around the country. "They're very, em, different from my friends in Trinity in the sense, you know, none of them, they just go out and they'll go to college and they'll just pass and then they're going home for the summer and they're going to work at home. They just don't have any big ideas about what they'd like to do...so I think that's what separates them from my college friends." This led us to a conversation about how Jack saw himself as different from these friends.

Connor: What do you see yourself doing long-term?

Jack: Definitely leaving Ireland.

Connor: Why?

Jack: Because life is too short to spend it here. I don't know. Ireland can be slightly, I don't know. I just want to get out...I'm not saying I don't ever want to live in Ireland again, but I definitely want to go out and see what other places are like.

Connor: Right. And what other places?

Jack: Em, I definitely want to live in London for a while and then move to America, West Coast, and maybe New York, some place like that.

Connor: Alright. And what are you going to do: be a social worker?

Jack: Well, I don't know...I can do anything. I definitely want to work in the Third World for a year or two... I just want to get out there and experience things. That's really my thing. Hopefully I'll be comfortable later in my thirties and forties, but for my twenties I'll live off whatever.

Jack kept returning to the theme of being different, of wanting to go away, of wanting to experience more in university, in his summer holidays and in his adult life than his peers.

Connor: What do you think has made you like that? If everyone around you, as a child, is behaving more or less the same way and your sisters behave that way as well, why are you different?

Jack: I don't know. Maybe it's coz I always, I always felt a bit different. And then, I don't know, I suppose you could psychoanalyse it, but [pause]

Connor: Like how do you explain it to yourself?

Jack: I don't know. I just think it's in me. I've definitely always felt like I wanted to do this...I just find everyone at home can be just so monotonous sometimes, regularity, like coming up to Dublin has just been the best thing ever because it's been so busy and doing fun stuff and doing different stuff and meeting different people... that kind of regularity at home will be great some day when I'm old. Right now I just really want to get out of there and meet everyone...I'm sure there are other people in my town who are like this. I'm not the only one who wants to break free...

Connor: Do you see yourself wanting to break free?

Jack: No, well, maybe "break free" is the wrong word. Well, is it though? No...Because I think no matter how nice and accepting everyone will be of me now I came out...there's a bit of a mentality about it and I definitely think I need to be away from that. Like, I think it would be extremely strange in my town if I was to come back and settle, married with a husband or whatever, that would be extremely

weird...I need to be removed from that coz I've been there my whole life, I've been surrounded by these frames of mind. I just feel like I need to get out of there for the foreseeable future.

Two years after the interview, Jack said he still remembered this conversation. It was clearly a significant question for him. The issue of not staying in his home area was one of identity for him; he wasn't the *kind of person* who would stay at home all his life. He was different. This could be described as an example of Taylor's "taking a stance" (1989, p. 29) – a statement of identity that was also a statement of a moral viewpoint. His place in the world was not his hometown. He had, in Tayloreal terms, a moral calling to articulate his inner self to people other than the ones with whom he grew up.

However, the idea of escape also resonated for him. I believe that Jack feared for his potential to express his identity, perhaps not from fear of emasculation and intimidation, but rather from a fear of not being "affirmed", or in Connell's terms, "authorised". This is different from the gender regime Connell discusses whereby gay masculinities are subordinated to hegemonic masculinities, are equated with femininities and are deprived of the benefits accruing from the patriarchy (2005, p. 78). It is clear that this is not the kind of rejection that Jack expects. His identity, rather than being the subject of subordination, intimidation, fear and shame, is subject to sidelining, to marginalisation. Like working class masculinities, or black masculinities, Jack's gay masculinity is no longer subordinated, it is simply not authorised. Jack does not fear he will lose by staying in his home area, simply that he will not gain.

We moved on from that to comparing Jack's two groups of friends from home. He described his group of friends from primary school as less laidback and more judgemental than the other group. "It's fun in a different kind of way. When I go out with them I have to watch myself... that group do a lot of chit-chatting and stuff which isn't nice."

Jack didn't seem very motivated to talk about the people who had been his friends who he had stopped spending time with. I asked him if the reverse applied, if there were people who had stopped hanging out with him. He came back to Marcus, who

he had mentioned earlier. Jack said he had made more of an effort to keep in touch with Marcus than Marcus had with him. This was clearly something that annoyed Jack. “I think guys tend to just, are more likely to not keep in contact.”

At this stage, we had finished talking about Jack’s groups of friends and we moved on to his Facebook and started going through a few different events on his Facebook Timeline.

The first event we looked at was Jack’s plan to go on a placement in a summer camp for young people with special needs in America that summer as a placement option on his course. He was going out there with one other friend from his course and said that he was looking forward to it even though he wouldn’t be drinking much or anything there. He was excited that he was going to experience new things. He said he had no fears around working with people with special needs. He was a little less sure about how he would get on with people from other countries, mentioning some of the foreign students that shared our flat and how difficult he found one of them to get on with, in spite of how well the other flatmates got on with him. Jack’s openness to new experiences could be seen as a “quest” to find a place where he would fit in, in Connell’s terms (as discussed above), a search for authorisation of his identity rather than the marginalisation he feared at home.

Overall, though, Jack was feeling confident because he was good with people.

Connor: What do you think has made you so confident and sociable around people?

Jack: Em, let me think. [Long pause.] I think, what was it? I don’t know. I used to always, oh God. Let me think now. I have an answer for this. What has made me confident and social around people? I don’t know. I always felt that I had to, that I had to sort of be, sort of, come across as a perfect person, coz I always knew that inside, I always had this imperfection, so like I always sort of thought one imperfection, like, it’s not an imperfection. I know that now, but the whole time growing up, I always felt like, God, I already have one thing wrong with me, I need to make sure there’s nothing else wrong with me.

I confirmed that Jack was talking about being gay. Here we clearly see a moral argument. The younger Jack saw a “moral failing” within him and so he strove to be

more virtuous. We also see Connell's hierarchy of masculinities (2005, p. 78), with Jack viewing his homosexuality as subordinated to heterosexual masculinities.

We returned to Facebook and looked at the election he had won. He said it made him realise he had support within Hall, that he hadn't been sure of how many people liked him before he won. He said that he felt more comfortable since he won, combined with coming out. "I don't feel as much of a minor...I feel I can put more of myself there now...I just feel a lot better in myself...I think they're seeing the real me." I believe that Jack's identity is being socially constructed here, or at least socially bolstered. The positive reaction to his coming out and the fact of having won an election both confirm the validity of this aspect of his identity.

Asked about nights out with his friends from home, Jack said that he would also meet his friends during the day and do things besides drinking. The first example he mentioned of non-drinking activities was meeting up to discuss what had happened when they'd been clubbing the night before. He did say that people had less money since they had moved away to university, so they were less likely to go out drinking and would meet during the day instead sometimes.

Asked about the impact of growing up in such a poor, rural, nationalist, Catholic area and his decision to come to Trinity, a traditionally Protestant, Anglo-Irish institution, Jack was dismissive. For him, there was no conflict in 2012. He did say that it was very rare for someone from his area to come to Trinity, but that any mocking he got at home for this was very light. He said he had noticed that some of his flatmates were shocked by his anti-abortion stance, and that this stance might be the result of coming from a Catholic place, but that he was young and "none of my ideals are set in stone yet anyway."

Jack's view that his "ideals" could change would suggest a socially constructed morality with the potential for development according to social conditions. They also suggest that Jack's view of his own identity is that it is not fixed and has the potential to change. This is somewhat in opposition to previous statements he had made about knowing the right thing by responding to what was "within". Jack's sense of self and sense of how he knows what is right and wrong is still in a developmental stage here.

The next event featured on his Facebook was a reunion of his Transition Year group from home. He said it had been an amazing day and that he had spent a lot of time talking to Marcus, so he had probably overreacted about the fact that he wasn't keeping in touch. Marcus was a boy and boys are worse at keeping in touch with girls. Here he distinguished Marcus, and his male friends from home, with his male friends in college ("they're not girly guys, they're just more sensitive"), who he said would be better at communicating. I asked about his friends from home meeting his friends in Dublin. He said it wasn't a problem for the girls, but he thought his male friends from home wouldn't be comfortable with his college friends. For example, Marcus didn't do very well in school and was really into football and Jack thought he would feel intimidated by his friends from college. Jack said he would never be ashamed of any of his friends.

Here we see a differentiation of masculinities, the sensitive, communicative, intelligent masculinity of his male college friends, contrasted with Marcus' less communicative, football-loving masculinity. This is a clear intersection of class and masculinity. The masculinity that is valued in Jack's home area could be said to be a more traditional one, and the markers of the hegemonic masculine in that particular gender regime would relate more to things like football. However, the rural masculinity of Marcus is not authorised in the Trinity gender regime where a more communicative and articulate masculinity bound to interests in careers, in economic and in politics, occupies the hegemonic position.

On this particular day, Jack had been very drunk and had come out as gay to many of his friends. I pointed out to Jack that he socialised and drank a lot, and I asked him what kind of drunk he was. He claimed to be a "good drunk", very sociable, floating from group to group, never very aggressive or emotional. He did say he had been a grumpy drunk for a few weeks before coming out, but he was over that. He also said that he was a silly drunk, and that he would do stupid things like robbing stuff or jumping in the pond in Hall, but that there was never anything bad behind it.

The next event was a music festival that he went to where he got "atrociously drunk for four days...I missed Coldplay, I missed Beyonce, I got stuck in a portaloo, I passed out early, I smoked twenty cigarettes one after another, I got lifted out of the Bruno Mars pit." He felt it was natural for him to let his hair down to this degree as

he had worked very hard for his Leaving Cert and this was after his exams. He said he was proud of getting 495/600 points, but was a little put off by people he had met in university who had got higher points and claimed to have done very little work.

Next we talked about Jack's voluntary work with VdeP in college. He said that it was an important part of his life in college, but not part of his social life. He didn't tend to socialise with people who he knew from VdeP, that it wasn't very pro-drinking, and that they did go away for weekends sometimes but that didn't interest him, as they went to Mass, and he wasn't very interested in the religious side of charity organisations.

Here Jack is taking a nuanced perspective. He is a charitable person, but not a religious one. He sets himself aside from many of the other people who volunteer for charities by his drinking, partying and eschewal of religion. However, he also sets himself aside from many of his drinking friends by his volunteer work. Again, he has an identity that is marked by difference, by straddling different social groups and by not fully integrating into any of them.

We returned to Jack as a social being. He said he didn't like being alone. "I need to be with someone, especially when I'm hungover...It always makes me feel more secure if I'm with someone...Usually when I've a hangover I'm very self-doubting, I'm not as strong, a bit more vulnerable I'd say." We talked about Jack's drinking. He said that he was a student and it was the time for drinking and that even when he's hungover he doesn't regret drinking. "If I'm not that drunk, I just go and pretend that I am. It's just part of the fun. Going out, for me, is just letting yourself go, doing silly things. Now, I know a lot of people go out and try and have a presentation, you know 'This is me', coz obviously they have one thing on their mind. But before going out I never had that. I never wanted to get with anyone, because I was gay...I think I could always let myself go a bit more." Drinking alcohol played a role in the sexual lives of Jack's friends, but not his. Jack did lose inhibitions when he was drinking, but this played a purely social role. Jack's sexual life was simply not as advanced as the sexual lives of his heterosexual peers.

The third interview ended after about an hour and a quarter.

6.7 After the third interview

At this stage in the data generation, some of Jack's values were revealing themselves. He clearly placed a high value on "being himself", on friendship, on being confident socially, on an ability to straddle various social groups, on charitable and volunteer work. It was clear his friendships had a gendered nature and that he valued this (i.e. that he valued female company because it was female and male company because it was male).

The third interview also revealed instabilities in a sexual identity that was developing, and in a moral framework that was liable to change. There were uncertainties in Jack's social and sexual identities, and the theme of difference from those around him and uncertainty about the future led more insecurity to the picture of Jack's identity.

The time between the third and the fourth interview with Jack were among the most significant in my own adult life. I had been feeling good about myself and my life, for a number of reasons. As mentioned above, being at the receiving end of the revelation of the life stories of these young men gave my own life a feeling of significance, being accepted by the larger group of young men in the apartment made me feel more loved and accepted. As I was moving through the interviews, I was making genuine progress with my PhD. Other areas of my life were also going well. I was earning more money than I had been previously, my social life was improving, I was exercising and losing weight. I felt particularly inspired by Jack's story of coming out, but more so by his story of overcoming his own phobia of public speaking and winning an election, and by my own peripheral, but meaningful to me, role in it. The mix of all these factors inspired me to come out as gay to my own deeply and evangelically traditional Catholic missionary parents, priest brother and evangelical brother and sister too. I found this difficult and the support of my flatmates was very significant at this time. Buoyed by all these various factors, I did two things I had never done before. One of the young men who was living with me removed the hair from my back with depilatory cream in our shared kitchen, and later that week I went on a fairly successful date with a man who I had met via a phone application. This was my first romantic or sexual encounter in four years, and I shared my joy with everyone in my life, but primarily with my flatmates, including Jack. My own

masculinity was undergoing a process of change and this was a factor in the data generation process as it continued.

Chapter 7

Data Analysis 2

7.1 Interview Four: “The Real Me”, Room 4044, Arts Block, Wednesday, 16th April 2012 (Materials: Appendix B1)

The fourth interview was themed around morality and authenticity. I had sent Jack a list of questions in advance of the interview. We started by talking about Jack's exams, which were two weeks away at that stage. He was unworried and joking, even though he said he'd only done about four hours of study. It was fine, he said, because no one else was doing anything either. “We can't all fail.”

As we were halfway through the interview process, I asked Jack how he was feeling about the interviews. He said it was fine, and that he had no problem telling me anything that he'd told me. I asked how he felt about me taking such an interest in his life. “It's nice. It's like therapy.” He said this in a light-hearted way, but I felt that there was some truth in it too and I was unsure of how I should feel about this. In a way, I was proud to be having an impact and pleased at the acknowledgement that the rawness and exposure I had felt throughout the process was two-way, but I was also wary of the responsibility I had, both as a researcher and a friend, to Jack's story and to Jack as a person.

The first question Jack had prepared for me was “Are you a good person?”

“I think I'm a good person...I think I'm nice sometimes...I think I'm generally pleasant with people. You know, if I don't like someone I generally don't show it to them.” His example for this was a flatmate who he didn't like, who had been “blasting Indian music at 2:00 last night” and Jack didn't say anything to him.

Jack said he felt awkward about boasting because of “the whole Irish thing of being big-headed”.

Connor: You're a nice person. How?

Jack: Well, I think generally, to my friends and stuff I'm good to them. I listen to them when they have problems...like, with stuff, I'm very, you know, “you can have it”, not stingy. Having said that, though I'm nice and all, I definitely, as my mother

would put it, have a sting in my tail sometimes, slightly bitchy remarks and comments, but, you know, that's just me. Mostly I'm just joking. Sometimes I'm not.

Connor: Do you feel bad about that ever?

Jack: No, I don't. It's just fun, truthful.

...

Connor: Has there been a time when you've hurt someone?

Jack: I don't know. I don't think so.

Jack identifies generosity, kindness and friendliness as moral characteristics.

We started talking about Jack's interest in charity work and welfare. It was a big part of his life in college and I wanted to know the motivation behind it. His first answer was that he had to do it for his course.

"I wouldn't say it's completely selfless. I just really like getting involved and doing stuff like that. It feels, like, it feels good most of the time...I think sometimes it makes me a bit more interesting to people.

Jack feels that the motivation behind his "good deeds" is important, that the fact that they aren't "selfless" makes them less valuable. This could be informed by Christian teaching around the importance of sacrificing the self for others, which would have been passed on to Jack via his Roman Catholic schooling and through Irish culture generally. In fact, it could simply be an expression of a cultural narrative on the idea of selflessness and may not have deep significance for Jack. However, the motivation for his volunteering and charitable/welfare work was a concern for Jack and was something that he returned to later, so it is clear that he attached significance to it.

Jack said that the most rewarding, but also the most difficult thing he'd done that year, was job coaching for the intellectually disabled, helping a client with workplace skills, like writing. He had enjoyed spending time with the client and had been able to joke around with her, but he also felt good about it because "I could see that I genuinely helped her." He had found "visiting" more difficult and less rewarding. This was where he visited people in the inner-city who were "just down on their luck".

“That was more about getting the experience out of it and making myself comfortable with that kind of group.” He felt he made little impact while visiting.

Jack’s morality is pragmatic and result-focused. For him, it is important to say “I genuinely helped her”. Taylor talks about a modern morality that is informed by a desire to better the position of others and to ensure justice, as opposed to good for its own sake, an ethic of practical benevolence. The modern self practices good deeds, not in order to contribute to a greater moral order, but in order to better the lives of others (1989, p. 255). The result has become more important than the action. I believe that Jack sees the “good” as a measurement of achievement, rather than of intention or of action.

Jack: I generally am interested in helping people. I don’t know, now, the more I’ve done it though, like even though I really enjoyed the one-on-one and stuff, I can see myself moving into sort of managing helping people...I don’t know if I’m that suited to being down at the very front of it all. I think maybe moving up a bit would be where I’d want to be...

Connor: Do you think, so, you’d be just as happy doing a management job in business?

Jack: Oh, no. It would have to be with Concern, it would have to be with GOAL. If I’m ever in that type of situation it would have to be with Barnardo’s or something like that.

Connor: Why?

Jack: Because it’s just so fickle, it’s just money and stuff, selling, it’s just, it’s just not real to me...I just don’t feel like I want to spend my life, how’s the best way to put this into? Em, I just don’t feel like I want to spend my life managing numbers and putting out all these Tesco products and at the end of my life I’d much rather say, that, you know, I worked on this project in God knows, Rwanda or somewhere, as opposed to “Oh, I brought up the percentage sale of Tesco’s to 20%...I try to think, at the end of my life, what would I like to see? What would I like people to say about me when it’s all over?

For Jack, meaning is to be derived from what Taylor terms “the ethic of practical

benevolence", (1989, p. 255) as discussed above, and not necessarily simply from the ordinary life of work and family.

I asked Jack about his decision to study Social Work. He said that he had made the decision two years beforehand. He had also considered becoming a primary school teacher, on the grounds that it would be easy, but he said it would have bored him and he would have been "immensely unhappy".

The next question on the page was "To what extent do you like or dislike yourself?" This was, as I had expected it to be, a difficult question for Jack. "I like myself sometimes, but you know, just not all the time. I don't know. Very, I don't know. I think I like myself, but I think people think I like myself...I think I do exude that a lot, but I don't think it's as true as I'd like it to be....Since 13, I always had, you know, this hatred of being gay and stuff. That sort of chipped away at me a lot. I think it probably did a lot of damage, that whole self-loathing, but em, it was, I think I'm still trying to kick it, to be honest, because, you know, it's just, I carried that with me for so long. I don't know. I think I'm just, I'm sort of going through a thing now where, when I did come out, you know, I always had this idea in my head that it would, there was definitely going to be negativity going along with it and there hasn't been at all, and now I'm almost as if I'm grappling to replace something else, that, you know, that is wrong with me or something. I don't know where I am with that right now, but it's just like, I always felt I carried it, like this major flaw and stuff, but it's not a flaw and suddenly I don't have that any more and a huge part of my identity of that flaw and it's almost as if now, wherever I go, I'm trying to replace it with something, there must be something else wrong with me. I'm finding it really difficult just to be happy and know that there's nothing wrong with me and just be the way I am, and I think that's really at me at the moment. I don't know. Hopefully, it's just a huge transition process sort of moulding me again...It's very difficult to describe 'I hate myself' coz it's not like you go around saying that to yourself, but there was a time when I was like 'oh, this me, I don't like this me. I wish I was a different me, or I wish I was a bit different to this.' Well that is self-loathing, you wanting yourself to be completely changed...Even though I'm not self-loathing any more, I'm almost looking for an excuse to self-loathe because I did it so long, but now I just want, I need to re-affirm myself...I'm beginning to come round. There's nothing wrong with

me. I'm perfectly fine...I don't think I was ever completely happy with myself. I'm going towards it hopefully, but I don't know. Not right now anyway."

This is a new perspective on Jack's coming out. In Tayloreaan terms, Jack has listened to the voice of nature speaking from within, and taken a stand accordingly. Taylor would see this as fulfilling the need for authenticity, or as he sometimes frames it, the need for recognition (1994, p. 28). And yet there is still a lack or an emptiness in Jack. I think that at this stage, Jack's dialogue with the world around his new public identity was still very incomplete, and the affirmation he was seeking in his conversation with others (both actual conversation and the internal dialogue he was having with the world around him) was still unfinished.

The next question I had asked Jack to prepare was "Is there a real you?" Jack said that there was and when I asked him to describe the "real him" he said that he'd been studying Goffman's Presentation of Self that morning for his exams. "There definitely is some core values in there that are definitely mine...I definitely think, on the grounds of it all, I'm definitely a good person, who does care about my friends and likes doing little things for people, you know, I genuinely do think I care about the people who are in my life. I really appreciate them. I really do...I think I'll always be that person who wants to do something meaningful. I'll definitely always want to be that person who wants to travel and go out and grab life for what it is...That's the basis of me right now. That's things I've carried with me my entire life...It's kind of difficult coz I've never actually, people discover a lot about themselves when they go through the whole dating thing and romance thing. Do you know, I haven't gone through that yet, properly. I feel like, hopefully I'll do a bit of self-discovery there. And hopefully then that will allay my whole self-loathing thing and maybe a bit more acceptance. So, maybe ask me in a year."

Here Jack identifies values with the "real him", seeing morality as something that comes from within. He also sees his identity as something that could change through romantic (and sexual) experiences, that experiences are formative of the self, in this case dialogic experiences. As Taylor notes, "Love relationships are...crucial because they are crucibles of inwardly generated identity" (1994, p. 36).

I asked him if he was looking forward to dating and romance. He said he was, but

that nothing was likely to happen until after the summer. "Everyone's like 'I'm fine with it. I'm fine with the way you are.' But this will prove to me that they're fine with it. I need to start living that lifestyle and then I'll see if they're fine with it." The day-to-day dialogue he is conducting with the world is not enough of an affirmation for Jack. He wants proof of his social world's authorisation of his sexual identity.

I asked about the idea of self-acceptance and homosexuality. Jack talked about being a teenager. "It was just the way people were, like. You know, just the way people speak about it, you know, 'that's so gay' and 'you gay', you know it's always in a negative sense. It's almost as if you're conditioned...I think I was conditioned to see it as something negative...no one ever spoke about it in a good sense in my life...Now I know there's definitely nothing wrong with it, but it's just, you know, even though you say these things to yourself, it takes a long time for your subconscious, you know, to take it in...I feel like at the minute I'm constantly looking round for something else to be wrong with me...and, I don't know, hopefully, that'll go, once I get comfortable with myself a bit more, just being comfortable in your own skin a bit more." Jack's view here, that society "conditions" the subject and their attitudes, is descriptive of a socially constructivist understanding of a world as described by Connell, where homosexual masculinities are subordinated (2005, p. 78).

Connor: And is that part of the real you, that discomfort?

Jack: I don't know if it's the real me...I don't think it's something I manifested within myself. I think over the years it's other people, but I wouldn't call it the real me.

For Jack, those aspects which are socially produced are not part of the "real him" and are subject to change. Connell would disagree. For her, the social is real and not necessarily any more subject to change than the biological. (2005, p. 48)

Connor: Are there people who know the real you?

Jack: Yeah...I'd say my parents would know the real me now. They didn't before...And then one, maybe two of my close friends.

I got the impression that Jack didn't place all that much importance of the idea of "the real me". When I asked if it was important that there were people in his life

who knew the real him, he shrugged and said that he supposed so. This seeming apathy about the “real him” is interesting, considering Jack had recently come out, apparently an act that revolves around being the concept of being “true to yourself”.

The next question was about being authentic. Jack asked me what I mean by “authentic”, so I substituted it for “being true to yourself”. He said that he was honest with himself and that he didn’t try to mask things from himself, using the conversation we’d just had as an example. “I’m very authentic with myself even though I wouldn’t go shouting my deepest inner fears around...I’m definitely very capable of looking inside and being authentic with myself.”

Connor: And that’s where your real self is? It’s inside?

Jack: Yeah.

Taylor identifies this belief in an inner self and an inner voice of nature as one of the primary characteristics of the modern self. This inward-looking, naturally sourced self is “central to modern identity” and exists without need for outside interpretation (1989, p. 185). For Jack, it is clear that there is truth to be found by looking within, a truth that he sees as more fundamental than the socially-constructed elements of his identity.

We moved on to talking about Jack’s own assessment of himself and his flaws. He spoke again about his tendency to make bitchy comments, about his arguments with his mother and about his occasional feelings of jealousy. I asked about how he felt in confrontations and he said that he hated them. He loved banter and teasing people, but he hated serious arguments and tended to avoid confrontation. He did, however, say that he could stand up for himself, using an example of him drunkenly telling off a taxi-driver for a homophobic comment. He gave another example of an argument against two of his English flatmates, about abortion, when he took a pro-life position and he stood his ground.

My experience of living among my flatmates suggested that anger and conflict were valued by them. Jack sets himself aside from the other flatmates and from the masculine gender regime of the flat by avoiding conflict. However, he did see value in standing his ground, a moral action, the self communicating its standpoint to the

world around it.

He said that he was nervous about meeting new people, which I was surprised at, having seen him in action. He said that the nerves made him better with people. “I was always very self-conscious about people thinking I was gay before, so I’d always be watching myself...I don’t feel like it’s going to be like that any more.” I asked him what kind of things he used to modify and he talked about how he would be careful of how enthusiastic or excited he got.

Again, Jack is identifying the subordination of his own gay masculinity to the gender regime he perceived in his adolescent world. When Jack was “watching himself”, he was negotiating a place for himself in the hegemony that existed in the gender order of his social world.

The next question Jack had prepared was “Can you define a good life?”

“Having my friends, having my family, not being hungover...school or college going well enough, having fun, being involved, I don’t know. I always want to be in something...I love the buzz of being involved in stuff like that...It’s part of my personality I think. I like stuff like that. It’s meaningful...What I’m doing this summer will be very meaningful. I’ll be helping kids all day...I feel now like I’m preparing to be meaningful, once I have my proper job, once I’m working, overseeing projects, I feel like then I will really be meaningful.”

Jack’s good life is one that validates “ordinary life”, as he rates friends and family highly. However, he is looking for something aside from that, seeking meaning in “being involved” and doing “meaningful work”. He has a political view of life, that his role is a social one and that “good” is a social idea.

The next question on the sheet was “What kind of life do you intend to live as an adult?”

Jack: I don’t want kids or anything like that...it’s not in my make-up...I genuinely believe that not every human being is meant to reproduce...I think it’s almost dangerous that some people think ‘Anyone should have kids, everyone should have kids’...I think people feel obliged by society to have kids sometimes...I definitely want a partner, and I definitely want someone that I can share it with. We’ll get jobs,

we'll have money, we'll go on holidays, and you know, that'll just be nice...There's no point in having kids just to have someone to look after you when you're old. It's completely selfish.

Jack is setting himself aside from the norm here, when he says that people "feel obliged by society" to have children, he is marking himself out as someone who resists. Like the "lads" in Willis' early work on masculinity (1977, p. 12), Jack sees himself as forming his identity in resistance to the culture, rather than simply reproducing it.

Connor: What do you think having a partner will be like?

Jack: I'd say it'll be good...to have one person who's just tied to you. OK. Obviously, you have your family and obviously you have your friends, but I'd say with a partner, there'd just be a bigger level of trust, and it's just, coz you're just so close. I think it'll be really comforting, and of course there will come my whole self-acceptance thing. You know...I think that'd feel really great.

Jack is hoping to find acceptance through the affirmation of a partner.

Jack: I definitely want someone who earns lots of money. And I know you're probably thinking, oh, he just wants the money. It's not that though. It's someone who had the drive to, if someone's successful, has to be someone successful, has to be someone who's really classy, who wears really nice clothes. I don't want someone who's all colourful and coloured hair, just tacky. I hate tacky. I just want someone really classy, really cool, sophisticated....I shouldn't have said 'lots of money' coz that sounds bad. I mean someone who's successful in his job, who's smart, and you know, has the same sort of idea as me, you know, he doesn't want kids, stuff like that.

Jack is attracted to a masculinity that is professionally successful and well presented. He never discussed sexuality as a teenager and throughout the interviews he still never discussed issues of attraction in physical terms, even though, as a gay man, I would have made a sympathetic audience.

...

Connor: You said not very colourful, or tacky. Does that mean not very gay?

Jack: Yeah, no, well hold on. I'm just not very attracted to camp people. Like I can't help it. I'm sorry. I'm sure they're lovely...I know there's other people out there like me....I think there's two very different gay scenes out there, from what I can perceive so far. I'm sure you might agree. I don't know...

Connor: And you don't think that's, you don't think there's any internalised homophobia in that?

Jack: (laughing) You think I'm homophobic? No! I just think, if I wanted to be, if I wanted to be, right, OK, right, if I wanted to be, right, OK. This guy in my class. He's very, very gay. And they were like, 'do want him?' and my response was 'If I wanted to date a girl I'd be straight'...OK, there's the whole physical aspect, and there's a whole emotional thing. You want to make an emotional connection to a man and that's part of being gay, an emotional connection to someone that feminine is just, not the same.

The idea of "masc4masc" i.e. masculine-acting gay men who are only interested in dating other masculine-acting gay men, is one which has generated significant literature. It is seen as characteristic of the mainstreaming of gay culture, a tendency to "normalise", and in doing so to claim the power vested in heterosexual masculinity (Payne, 2007, p. 534). It could also be the case that Jack's sexuality has been built without gay companions and his sexuality has been formed around friendships with and fantasies about straight men, though his teenage fantasies were not something we discussed.

This part of the conversation was intriguing for me, simultaneously enjoyable and embarrassing. I was delighted that after the awkwardness around the topic in previous interviews, Jack was discussing his sexuality openly and without rushing onto the next topic. I saw myself as being more or less at the same stage as Jack. I too had recently come out. And I too was embarking into the whole world of dating and romance. I had had a few tentative experiences with sex and romance scattered across the previous thirteen years, but I saw myself as just as new to the whole field as Jack was. Even though he knew it had been a long time since I'd been with a man, he still looked to me as someone experienced, as I saw from his questions to me about the gay scene, both during this interview and in our flat. And I understood

Jack's faith that relationships would change everything, while being somewhat more cynical than he was. I also understood his desire to be with a man's man, but I considered myself camp, and found this whole part of our exchange both funny and uncomfortable. The final thing Jack said about his vision for his own adulthood was that he hadn't planned his wedding yet. Here he was gently mocking me. I had sat with my flatmates in our kitchen that week and described in detail my plans for my wedding, which featured a series of dramatically-staged song and dance numbers performed by my groom and me. And with that sentence, I was confronted with the contrast between Jack's gay masculinity and my gay masculinity. Unlike my own (slightly) more ambiguous gender and sexual identity, Jack was very clear that his gay masculinity was in no way camp or feminine, but also that he was open to finding out more about himself. He had a very openly-stated belief that he would be different once he had experienced dating.

The next question that I had asked Jack to think about before the interview was: "Describe one or two times when you realised or discovered something or someone was important to you."

The first story Jack told was about his older sister. "I realised my sister was important to me when she told my parents I was gay...Her telling them for me was such a huge thing for her to have to do...In that situation, if it was reversed, I probably would have buried my head in the sand...because it was such a difficult thing...I definitely think it brought us closer together."

This turned my previous understanding of Jack's coming out tale on its head. I was embarrassed that I'd previously misunderstood his sister's role. Jack values kindness in others as he does in himself. There is also a suggestion that he values difficulty, that sacrifice is important and that he and his sister are closer because she did something difficult for him.

The next story Jack told was about our flatmate George, a larger-than-life character in our flat. When I had first moved in to our flat, I had been a little bit scared of George. He was tall and noisy and made his opinions heard. But I had grown to care for him, as he had been someone who had looked after me. He had been the one who made sure I had someone to chat to the only night I went out drinking with my

flatmates (the night of Jack's election), he had been the first person I spoke to after I came out to my parents, and he had been the first person to hug me that night. He had also been the one to remove the hair from my back in our grimy kitchen in preparation for my date.

This was Jack's story about George. "We were out in the nightclub, just doing my thing, dance, dance, dance, dancing and there was this guy I went with at Hall Ball, and obviously George and all of them heard I went with him or whatever. That was fine. And then George comes up and he tries to set me up with him again. And just that mere suggestion was just like Oh my God, you know. People say stuff you know. People say it's fine, it's fine. But then for a boy, especially. For girls it's different. For a boy to say that. I know I did not want to go with that guy again. No intention of it. Ew, ew, ew. He's really boring. I was just, Oh my God, that's just really great. That's just how accepting he is. George wouldn't have had, like I've asked him, he wouldn't have had any gay friends in the past. Just for him to be that OK and cool about it was wow, just you are really great....Sometimes I'm really pessimistic about guys and how they approach these things...As my flatmate, you're really important to me."

Of all the moments in all the interviews I did for my PhD, this is one of three or four that really stand out for me. I knew the feeling of gratitude to straight men who accepted me for who I was, and I identified with Jack's description of the wonder of being accepted by a straight man in the context of sexual relationships, as George had done for Jack that night in the nightclub. This story of Jack's comes back to me regularly, very often in the context of my own dealings with straight men.

This story is one that negates the idea that gay masculinities are entirely subordinated to heterosexual ones, at least in the gender regime that existed in our apartment and in Trinity College generally. It can be argued that Jack's relatively "masculine" (i.e. not camp) persona mitigated his homosexuality in the eyes of his flatmates, but George's willingness to accept both Jack's and my homosexuality in such an active way seems to suggest that it wasn't such an issue. However, I believe that the fact that Jack was so grateful for this suggests that even though George didn't subordinate Jack's sexual identity, Jack himself did. Jack's gay masculinity could be described as the product of a mix of acceptance and non-acceptance, an evolving

self-conception that is very liable to change at the hands of social experiences.

We moved on to the idea of a time when Jack realised that a thing (rather than a person) was significant to him.

Jack: There was some point I realised that the way I interact with people. I think I realised that that the way I do that is really important because I feel like it can definitely get me places...I've always found at school and stuff, just the way I am with people, my mannerisms or whatever. OK, not the bitchy comments, coz I just reserve them for my really good friends...I think just the way I am with people, just being nice to people, I realised that was important...I think I've a good way of dealing with people and I think I've realised that is one of my most valuable assets, besides my smile of course, because a smile is important...I'm just, I don't want to say nice...Engaging, perhaps?...Bubbly maybe? Am I oozing here? I don't know. Just whatever it is that makes me me does work with me.

Connor: And is that something studied, something that you put on, or that you switch on?

Jack: I think that I did mention before, that I felt I needed to be that person, because, you know I'm gay, when I was younger, but I couldn't be more thankful for being like that now...You've actually pointed out something really important because it was being gay that made me like that. Without being gay I wouldn't have been like this. That's, it's not something separate. It's really entwined in me. I should remember that I think and that's really important...Was that your question?

Connor: Em, well, I was saying do you have to put it on?

Jack: No. Not now. Maybe I made a bit more of an effort in my early years, perhaps, but like that's growing up. Everyone, you know, does it. But I think being gay sort of pushed me to do it. Trying, sorta at the time make up, but not now obviously...I don't have to put it on now at all.

Jack sees his identity as something that was socially formed through a fear of prejudice. He does see it as something that he took an active role in the formation of, seeing himself not merely as the subject of social pressures but as an independent actor responding to social pressures.

...

Connor: So, this idea of at the time, you felt you had to make up for something, now you don't, now it's OK. What has happened? What's better about being gay now than it was a year ago?

Jack: I'm not talking in terms of a year ago. You have to, from my, you know when I was fourteen, fifteen, I didn't know anything about it. I knew very little. I'm from the back-ass of [county name], all I knew was negative things I'd been hearing.

Connor: And were there any gay adults in the world for you?

Jack: No, not at that age at all. I just knew they existed....

Connor: And as a fourteen or fifteen year old, did you say "OK, I'll get married and it'll all go away"?

Jack: I said that. And I said I'll just live with it, but you know, such irrational thinking. I was naïve, I didn't really know. But at the same time, the way I thought then, that negative, it sort of hit me, and it does leave a lasting impression, that negative way of thinking. But obviously, you know, I opened up to that, you know. I completely don't think like that now, but it's very difficult to sort of kick off the criticisms.

Connor: Yeah. And what has changed? What made it OK to come out? To be OK with it?

Jack: Well, as I said, I'm still sort of trying to get there, but I, the people I met for one thing. God knows how many gay people I met since I came to Trinity. You know, it's just being smarter I think. Having a more open mind and just realising, you know, allowing myself to believe, you know, that it's not that big a deal. But, em, media is changing, gay people on television, you know, stuff like that. But when I was fourteen or fifteen, it was almost a different world...and I was obviously not privy to a lot of the stuff that I watch now, you know. That's that. It's very complicated. It's very mentally straining.

Jack sees a world in transition as regards homosexuality. He sees a public shift away from the subordination of homosexual masculinities. He sees parts of his identity as a product of fear of prejudice that he no longer fears, especially in Trinity College,

implying a belief in a variety of gender regimes (i.e. configurations of gender practices across a social group) concurrently existing in Ireland.

The final question in this interview was: “How do you know what’s right and what’s wrong? What is the source of your morality?”

Jack: I definitely have a morality...In terms of wrong, if you’re hurting someone else, obviously that’s wrong. If you’re doing something for the greater good, it’s right. Obviously, you know, from religion and stuff, that’s where a lot of people get the basis of their morals...Do not steal, all this stuff like that. Basically, just watching my parents, how they react to things...When you’re thinking about what’s right and wrong, you take in something and then you just, you go through a thought process, and, you know, your own right or wrong is so different to someone else’s, for example abortion would just be so wrong to me. Here Jack is more or less describing a liberal morality, i.e. that everything that does no harm to others is acceptable.

Connor: But if it’s wrong for you, then you think it’s wrong full stop?

Jack: Yeah.

Connor: Where does that feeling come from? Is that from inside, is that from outside?

Jack: ...I’m not even sure where that frame of mind comes from, but that’s just the way I think. Jack is very unsure about the source of his morality. Earlier, he had mentioned that he had values that came from within. Here, he mentions both his parents and religion but is inconclusive.

Connor: You mentioned religion. Do you believe in God?

Jack: I believe in something. I don’t know if that is God. And I definitely want to have a little exploration there, just to learn, maybe get my mind opened a wee bit. I don’t know. I definitely... I think the Catholic Church get it very wrong. I think they’re only a group of people like me and you. I think they don’t necessarily know what is right...I really hope there’s something there. I don’t wanna just die...I think it’s important. I think people need something spiritual.

Connor: Is it something you think about?

Jack: Not very often. No.

Connor: Would you say you're a thoughtful person? Would you spend a lot of time with your thoughts?

Jack: ...I generally do think a lot.

Connor: Coz you've said before you don't like to be alone...Not a big fan of your own company. So when do you think?

Jack: In the shower, it's true. On the bus up to [home county], when I'm listening to my ipod, just before I go to bed, when I can't get to sleep. That's basically it.

Connor: Are you somebody who's plagued by your thoughts?

Jack: Sometimes, like, as I said, I'm going through this whole thing of trying to find something else. Sometimes, yeah.

Connor: And is that something that keeps you awake or is that something that just pops into your head?

Jack: It'd be something I'd think about a lot. I wouldn't say necessarily it keeps me awake. No, no. I wouldn't be that extreme. It's something that just comes back at me, "oh no, that's not true". It's only at the minute if you know what I mean. It's almost as if I use my thoughts as a stick to beat myself with, because I used that with the gay thing for ages and now I'm looking for a new stick basically, and now it's really reaching and it's horrible and it's not a nice experience to be going through...At the same time like, I'm very aware that I'm not alone in this, so many other people have gone through so many bad things, so

Jack is at a transitional moment in his self-formation here. Now (two years later) he says he no longer feels this lack, but at the time he was clearly in search of something.

Stepping back for a moment, I have to admit that I feel guilty reading this transcript. I feel as if I am using Jack's pain for petty purposes. I did want to explore some of Jack's inner life, and the idea of an inner voice, as my research questions demanded,

but I feel there was a lot of nosiness in these questions too. The questions I was asking were not so different from those that I had been asked in front of the religious community I'd grown up in, where our "catechists" would visit from Italy and ask us about the crosses we had to bear, and I'd never found those experiences comfortable.

Connor: Right. Anything else on morality, on knowing right and wrong?

Jack: No...I'm very OK with people doing what they want as long as they're not hurting anyone else...Everyone has very different ideas...

Connor: So is there an absolute right and wrong?

Jack: No. It's very subjective. Obviously, there's an absolute right and wrong when it comes to certain things, but there's a big grey area there.

The last words on the recording of this interview are Jack saying, "It's good to talk about these things. God, that was difficult."

I turned the recording devices off and I thanked Jack for helping me to come out, even though I made it clear that he and his story were not the only factors in my decision to come out.

7.2 After the fourth interview

This interview helped complete the picture of Jack's moral world. His values included kindness, generosity and friendship, but a significant part of his identity is built around acts of charity, volunteering and work on the welfare of others. This is a product-focused, practical ethics of benevolence. He finds it difficult to source his morality, acknowledging his parents, schooling and religion, but also an inner or natural morality.

This interview also filled in some gaps in the picture of the development of Jack's sexual identity, one which had suffered from a silence and a shame in adolescence and had not resolved itself in a "magical" coming out experience where he stepped in to a fixed sexual identity. He is clearly uncomfortable talking about issues around physical attraction and is unsure about what sexual acts will be significant for him. He also expects a romantic relationship to "fill in" the empty gaps within and to help

him to get to know himself better.

I felt different after this interview from how I had felt after any of the previous ones. I felt closer to Jack, as the process of revelation had reached its peak (this was by far the most revealing interview in the series), and as we'd finally had the in-depth conversation around issues of homosexuality that I'd been waiting for since the first interview. I also felt guilty. It was clear that Jack had found many of the topics discussed at the interview difficult, and I questioned the necessity of asking anyone to talk about the aspects of themselves that they disliked.

One night, soon after this, I was sitting in the kitchen in our flat with a few of my flatmates, including Jack and one of the other interviewees. Jack said that I was stressing him out and that I'd driven him to emotionally eating after the interviews. Even though Jack was clearly teasing me, and everyone laughed, this added to my guilt about the interviews.

At this stage, with the progress after my own coming out and in my own love-life, my growing relationship with my flatmates and the generally exciting pace of my life, my blog had spread around Hall and it was not only my flatmates who were reading it, but their friends and their girlfriends. I was in the shared kitchen with my flatmates almost every night, and I would see Jack regularly. He would question me about the man I had been on the date with. Our lives were becoming more intertwined and something approaching a normal friendship was forming.

Between the fourth and fifth interviews, I had a second date with the man I had had a first date with before the fourth interview. And at the end of this second date, the man kissed me for the first time. It was the first time I had been kissed in four years, the first time I had been kissed in public ("where straight people can see") and the first time I'd been kissed by someone sober. I came home that night on an absolute high, so excited by the kiss that I'd got a nosebleed. As I walked to my flat, I was overjoyed to see three of my "favourite" flatmates, including Jack. I breathlessly told them my good news, and that I was bleeding. I demanded a hug from each of them, and hugged Jack for the first time. I started crying and as I walked toward the flat and they walked away laughing, I called back to them "I love you boys" and Jack answered "We love you too Connor." This experience of love from these young

men felt as meaningful to me as the kiss from the man I had been out on the date with.

7.3 Interview Five: “Me, the Man”, Room 4044, Arts Block, Monday, 23rd April 2012 (Materials: Appendix B2)

I tried not to bring the relationship we had outside the interviews into the interview process, and in general the tone of the interviews continued to be much more serious than the tone of the relationship that surrounded them, although the fifth interview started with a description of Jack’s latest hangover. Again, this interview was based around a set of prompt questions that I had sent Jack in advance, all on the theme of masculinity, gender and sexuality. The first question was about the differences between men and women.

Jack was hesitant about this question, as he said he was no expert, but I urged him to give his opinions and base his answers on his own experiences. In terms of social differences, Jack said that women were more open than men and more flamboyant in their communications and affectionate with their friends. Men would only meet up if they had a reason, whereas women wouldn’t. Women are more social overall. “In a heterosexual relationship, men are usually the instigators...women follow the lead of the men...There’s a sort of impression that men want sex more than women, but I think that girls want it as much...Whereas men would lead the actually act, girls decide whether it happens or not...Emotionally, girls are obviously far more emotional.”

This is not the first time that Jack has identified communication and emotions with women. He also identifies men as sexual aggressors. These would be fairly standard views of sex difference in popular discourse (see, for example, Baumeister & Twenge, 2002).

I asked Jack to look at things as a sociologist, and say to what extent he thought these differences were biological or socio-cultural. Jack referred to his own studies and what he had learnt about how attitudes could be passed on from parents and teachers to children, and he said that many of our gendered behaviours were possibly learned in the same way. That said he was hesitant to “come down on” one side or the other.

The next question I had asked Jack to prepare was “How “manly” are you? How do you “measure up” as a man? Can you think of a time when you felt particularly manly?”

“I’m not that manly, I’d say....I think I’m manly enough. Yeah. I’d say I’m manly. I’d say I’m as manly as anyone else in the house, like George and them...Manly to me would be being honest and being brave and being, you know, true...I’d say in terms of that I would be fairly manly...When I get an image of manly, it’s like the whole Frank Sinatra thing, men in suits, very well-mannered men.”

This romanticised idea of manliness took me aback. I was surprised that Jack had this relatively gender-neutral definition of what I would consider to be a very gendered word. I took a different tack and asked him about the boys in the flat next to ours, how they would view manliness and how Jack would measure against that scale. He admitted that the definition could be different and that the one those lads would use might include relationships with women and doing things like sport, but that he was happy with his definition of the word.

I asked Jack about the idea of bravery and of being a man. He said that he was brave at the election hustings, that facing your fears is a manly thing to do. He said that the strip auction was not as brave because he’s taken alcohol. I asked if alcohol makes you manlier and he said that it doesn’t.

I then tried using the word “macho” instead of “manly”. This word had a very different, negative connotation for Jack. “I wouldn’t say I’m macho at all. Macho to me is playing sports and doing the whole girls thing, just being a big pig-head really. I wouldn’t associate intelligence with being macho at all.”

Connor: How do you measure up as a man?

Jack: As I said, I think I exude some of those qualities I mentioned, so yeah, I think I do a good job of being a man.

When asked about his feminine side, and about examples of girly behaviour, Jack was also quite hesitant. He said he just didn’t think in those terms. I asked him about what he’d said in a previous interview when he’d talked about avoiding appearing too excited and too enthusiastic to avoid appearing too gay.

Jack: That's gay behaviour, not girly behaviour.

Connor: And is there a difference?

Jack: I suppose. I don't know. I like to keep a line between girly and gay, if you get me. I don't know. You see, it's just, I think it's just different. I think being gay and being girly is so different, because urgh I don't know. I don't know how to say this.

Jack never really answered the question, though he tried it a number of times.

Connor: Is camp a word you identify with?

Jack: Not with myself. I don't know. I think it's fine if people want to be camp. I would just not be attracted to it. It's just so unattractive to me. But some people love that, you know, eating it up, but em, it's just like a quality, a personality quality like any other. It's just really not something that I could be attracted to. Preferences.

Connor: OK. And you don't see it in you.

Jack: Nope.

In my quest to find a vocabulary that Jack and I could agree on, I then asked him about times in his life when he didn't feel *laddish*. "When you're surrounded by girls and you fit in so well and it's obvious that you're the only guy in the room." He said he would have felt more conscious of this before he was out, that he still noticed it, but that it wasn't a big deal.

I believe that the struggle to find an appropriate way to ask Jack about the degree to which he felt masculine demonstrates progress won by feminism in the language used around sex and gender. Jack did not have a language with which to describe his own manliness, and would have appeared to have learned a "script of equality" that says that the differences between men and women are superficial. That said it is clear that he identified himself as masculine insofar as he was not camp, but non-masculine insofar as he got on better with girls than other guys would.

The next question on the interview sheet was: "Do you behave differently around other guys, in comparison to how you behave around girls?" Jack said he behaved in the same way around his close male friends as he did around girls, mentioning his

flatmates as examples of this. He said he found it harder to relate to guys he didn't know well, so he wouldn't act the same way around them as he would around girls he didn't know well. "It's my own prejudice probably, but just you feel like some lads will be a bit more unaccepting [of his homosexuality]." He followed this up by saying that he had never experienced not being accepted. We had a discussion about his male friends in his hometown, as he had previously said that they were more laddish than his male friends in Dublin, but he said that they actually weren't all that laddish. "Those real, proper lads' lads I don't, but it would be ridiculous for me to have friends like that now, because I just wouldn't know what to say to them. We have nothing in common." The issue of Jack's sexuality loomed large when he was talking about relating to other men. I asked how comfortable he was revealing his orientation to other men besides his close friends. "I wouldn't just say it to someone, I just don't see the point. I mean, unless it's relevant. If someone says it to me, I have no bones about telling them. And if it comes up in conversation like, but I wouldn't go shoving it in everyone's face." Jack was definitively setting himself aside from "real, proper lads", saying he had nothing in common with them. The use of words like "real" and "proper" does suggest that he saw their masculinity as socially authorised, even if he didn't personally value that masculinity.

I asked about the older men in Jack's life. He struggled to think of anything to say. He said that his father and uncles weren't particularly masculine or feminine, but were "easy-going". We discussed his father's poetry again. I was interested in this as I felt it set him apart from others, but Jack insisted that it wasn't something that people would make a big deal of. When asked, Jack couldn't think of any adult men in his world as a child who would have any alternative ways of expressing gender, be that gay men, effeminate men or overpoweringly macho men.

I asked Jack if his own masculinity was important to him. He said that it was important to him to be good and to be brave, returning to his earlier definition of "manly". I modified my question and asked Jack if the things about him that make him not a girl were important to him. He thought about this for a while. He said his physical masculinity was important to him. He liked being tall and having broad shoulders. Jack rarely talked about his body, but it was important to him that his body was a masculine one, a socially validated form of masculinity.

After talking about his physicality, Jack had to think a bit more about the ways in which he was not a girl. He said that a lot of girls were irrational and would get very upset over a man in a way he wouldn't. "Girls get attached to boys a lot easier, where I don't think I can." He talked about his sense of humour too, that he would find some lads' jokes funny that girls wouldn't. "Boys talk about their careers and what they want for the future and I talk about that too, whereas girls generally don't talk about that."

I brought Jack back to this idea of him being less emotional or irrational than his female friends. "In terms of the people who I've liked, the men, the man who I went with, I just don't feel like I'd be that attached...I don't think I become attached to people romantically easy...I think girls are more inclined to do that than gay men." Jack quickly added that that was he saw himself and that this mightn't apply to all gay men, nodding to me. "I hope I'm not offending anyone". I assured him he wasn't. Jack explained that it wasn't that he was cold, but that he finds it more difficult to trust people, so he thought that romantic attachments would be more difficult to form, as he "didn't have normal sexual development".

Jack views his sexual development as not normal. At this point in his life, so soon after coming out, and still a virgin, I contend that his homosexuality was more of identity marker than anything else, as he was clearly found it difficult to see himself getting attached to another man and, as noted earlier, spoke about men and romance in an idealised, non-physical way.

The final question that we dealt with related to how Jack's gender and sexual identity had changed over the years. "Maybe when I was younger I might have been a bit more feminine when I started the whole filtering thing and then I changed, but I don't think I filter now, but I think I did back then, and that might have moulded how I turned out a bit...I've probably become more masculine over the years...I think it's just social influence, it's who you're friends with."

Moving on from changes in gender identity to changes in sexual identity, I asked Jack if he could identify a moment of realisation when he knew he was gay. He couldn't, describing it as a blur. "I couldn't pinpoint a time, I gradually came through denial, acceptance."

Connor: You talked earlier about attitudes being socially built into you. Eh, do you think sexuality is socially built into you?

Jack: No, I'd say you're born this way.

Connor: Why?

Jack: Just, because, that's just how I feel. Like even though I was in denial at the beginning, that's just how I developed, just as soon as I started developing feelings, my feelings were never for girls.

Connor: And was that what was first, feelings for men? Rather than feeling different, or?

Jack: Yeah, just sort of what you seen, you'd have more, at that awkward age where you're sort of developing those things, they were just more directed towards men than women.

Jack's idea that he was "born this way" is a popular cultural one in the modern West, where homosexuality (and heterosexuality) is seen as a biological fact, though this is contested by queer theorists, for instance Nadler, who rejects the normative "can't help it" descriptor of sexual identity (2013), and Connell, who rejects a sociobiological reading of gender and sexual identities which she sees as shifting and unstable (2005, p. 9). While Jack freely acknowledges the idea that elements of identity can be socially built, sexual orientation is something that is more fundamental than other aspects of the self for him.

Jack had been hesitant and he sounded less happy the more we talked about his life as a gay teenager. He agreed that he didn't like talking about it. "It's such a pity that I couldn't have just felt like that and been OK with it...I wish I didn't have to go through what I had to, all the thinking in my head. It's just such a pity...That's probably why I don't like thinking back on it much."

Connor: What does it feel like to be accepted?

Jack: It feels good...It's still a weird feeling...I like chatting about it now, but when I think back to when I was fourteen, I just feel disappointed."

I asked Jack about his anxiety problems with public speaking and with exams and whether he associated them with being gay. He said he thought there probably was a relationship but he wasn't sure.

Listening back to the last few minutes of this interview is difficult for me. Once again, Jack sounds sad. I apologised to him for asking him to talk about these things, but I still feel guilty for it.

7.4 After the fifth interview

This was one of the shorter interviews, but it did contribute to my understanding of Jack's gender identity. Although it was difficult to find a language to discuss Jack's own masculinity with him, as the words "masculine", "manly" and "macho" all turned out to be unsatisfactory and as Jack had learned a script of equality that made it difficult for him to talk about differences between men and women, his own masculinity is clearly important to him. For Jack, it is important that he is physically masculine, and that he is not a camp or effeminate homosexual. While he sees value in friendships with both men and women, he has little interest in associating with "proper lads", and he does report that his friendships are gendered, as discussed before, with female friendships forming around the private and domestic sphere (movies, relationships) and male friendships around a public one (careers, politics). Jack accepts that his sexual development was difficult and not typical. He also accepts that identity can be socially and culturally formed. However, he has a strong belief that his homosexuality is biological.

After this interview, I continued to see a lot of my flatmates, including Jack. Many of them were trying to study and there were fewer nights out, so we spent more time in the communal kitchen together. My romance with the man I was seeing stalled over the next few weeks, he stopped returning my texts, and I experienced great sadness around this. I also ran 5 kilometres. I had never done any sports whatsoever as a teenager or child, and I had done little exercise besides walking at any stage in my life. In early 2012, I had started a number of activities, including swimming lessons and joining the university boxing club. I had also started a Couch-to-5K running programme. For years, my own masculinity and sexuality had been bound up in perceptions of a weak and unattractive obese body. These perceptions were

changing, partly as I spent time in changing rooms in gyms and swimming pools, and my perceptions of my own body and those of other men changed. As well as this, I was discovering attributes like strength and endurance, which were contributing to a new perception of my own masculinity, as was my new-found romance and my new-found friendship with the young men I lived with. These young men took an interest in all these activities. The morning I ran my first 5 kilometres, my flatmates lined up at the gate of Hall, with a toilet roll stretched across a gate, for me to run through, like I'd run a real race. This took me aback and I was incredibly touched at my achievement having been marked in this way, and at this sign that I did "matter" to these young men. I later found out that it had been Jack's idea for them to meet me at the gate. Two years later, thinking of that gesture still makes me emotional. It's one of the only moments in my life that I would describe as "fairy tale" and it certainly had a transformational effect on me.

7.5 Interview Six: "My body", Room 4044, Arts Block, Monday, 14th May 2012 (Materials: Appendix B3)

By the time of the sixth interview, Jack was well into his exams. He arrived at the interview grumpy and feeling ill. Most of the flatmates were feeling sick. Jack said he was in a good mood generally, that he'd been doing well in his exams and he'd taken a night off and gone out.

Connor: Anything else happen in the last few weeks?

Jack: Well, I very awkwardly shifted Malcolm, you know the guy who lives upstairs.

Connor: OK. Right. What do you mean "very awkwardly"?

Jack: That it's probably not the most appropriate thing to do, but neh

Connor: Why is it not appropriate?

Jack: Shifting your flatmate is not appropriate.

Connor: He's only your flatmate for another week.

Jack: I know. But still, we share a shower and stuff.

Connor (laughing): Sorry. I shouldn't laugh.

Jack: No, it's fine, laugh away. It's just that it's kind of awks.

Connor: And it was just a shift?

Jack: Yeah (laughing, with a mock outraged tone) I'm a lady!

Connor (laughing): Other than being awkward, is it a good thing, a bad thing?

Jack: It's fine. I'm not that attracted to him though.

Connor: Right. This is a pattern.

Jack: What?

Connor: Shifting guys you're not attracted to.

Jack: I know. I need to sort that out. But it's not a pattern. It's two.

Connor: Two out of two.

Jack: I don't know. It's just, OK, Malcolm is good-looking, as you know.

Connor: Yes.

Jack: He is Trinity's Next Top Model. I'm blessed. But you know, he's just so, he's just not my type.

Connor: Too girly?

Jack: Yeah. Soz.

Connor: I'm not offended by any of this. I'm really not.

This conversation was awkward for me because I had been revealing a camper side of myself to my flatmates as time went on and had even had one or two (very superficial) conversations with Jack about my own sexual preferences. Jack and I were (as far as I knew) both glad to have gay confidantes and the fact that the relationship we had outside the interview room was growing closer to the relationship we had inside it made me nervous, but also happy.

The conversation does reveal that Jack is quite sensitive about the morality of his new sexual experiences. His view that kissing one of his flatmates is "inappropriate"

could be seen as shame, judging himself by some unknown internal standards.

The topic for the interview was the “body” and I had asked Jack to fill in a timeline of his body, giving him prompts, like “scars”, “injuries”, “experiences of weight loss”, “experiences of physical violence and tenderness”, “changes in clothes and hair”. Jack hadn’t filled in his timeline when he arrived and he started talking around these topics in general.

He had one or two minor scars and injuries, he had never had a piercing or a tattoo, he had always felt “relatively strong”, he had never had surgery, never had violence directed towards him. He did talk about experiences of weight loss and weight gain, but said he had never “been put on a diet”.

Jack described an experience of being eight years old and having to have a tube inserted up his penis to deal with a kidney infection and a large group of doctors, nurses and trainee doctors all gathered around watching. He said it was very embarrassing and very painful, but he didn’t think it had any real effect on his development. This led me to ask Jack about whether or not he was private about his body. He said that since he had come to college he was less private about his body. “I feel a lot more comfortable with my body since coming to college coz I lost weight. I don’t feel I’m that heavy any more. I’d say I’m less private.” He said that before he wouldn’t have been comfortable chatting to his friends wearing just his boxers, and he thought that the weight loss was the reason for this. We also discussed the pre-election strip, which he said he wouldn’t have done when he was younger. Here is an example of Connell’s body-reflexive practices (practices where the physical informs the social and can change it) (2005, p. 60) whereby a change in the body (weight loss) leads to a change in identity (confidence).

Jack talked about his relationship with his weight then. His voice went flat when he talked about it and the feeling I had was that he seemed “resigned” to talking about it. I was better prepared than I had been the last time we had discussed this, but again any discussion about weight gain or loss is a difficult discussion for me. Jack had gained weight twice, from around the end of primary school until third year of secondary, and again in the run-up to his Leaving Cert exams. He said he had lost weight when he was in Transition Year because he was more active and happier and

he had lost weight again when he came to college. “I hated being that size. I just didn’t like it...I liked being skinny”. It was clearly something that he had worried about, but it wasn’t a topic he’d ever spoken to anyone about it. His mother would needle him about it, but never sat him down to have serious conversation about it. “I would have thought about it a lot. Every time I would have passed a mirror.”

I believe that Jack’s body was being socially regulated, that his expectations of how much weight he should carry were set socially, according the argument advanced by feminism (Orbach, 1981, p. 18). It could also be argued that his struggles with weight were directly linked to his struggles with his sexual identity and his weight gain was a way of being less sexually attractive, of removing himself from the sexual arena.

At this stage, Jack seemed anxious to make it clear that he had never been seriously overweight, that it had mainly been something in his head. An awkward conversation became even more awkward. Jack was trying to politely say that his weight problem was not comparable to mine, that it was just in his head. “This whole perfectionist thing probably.”

Connor: Would you say you have a good relationship with your body?

Jack: I’d say I do now. I didn’t always. Yeah. I’m much more happy with my body now than I ever have been. Part of that could be, this is just me thinking, part of that could be that I’m happy with myself since the whole, you know, being more comfortable with myself, I’m more comfortable with my body, yadda, yadda, yadda.

I can only assume that by “the whole, you know”, Jack was referring to his coming out experience. It seemed like interview fatigue was setting in.

Connor: What do you like about your body?

Jack: I like being tall, broad shoulders, em, I don’t know. I like my face...I like my teeth.

I asked a series of questions that Jack really struggled to answer, like “Does your body serve you well?” or “Has it ever failed you?” Jack simply did not think of his body in these terms and had nothing to say about these questions.

Jack said he was happy with his body overall and he was happy to call himself

attractive and we moved on to sexual experiences. "There's not much to tell." His experience extended to what he called "shifting" i.e. kissing. He had shifted two men since coming out, but he said that these were only "fine", and that he had shifted a lot of girls when he was still in the closet and that he never really knew them, just like he didn't really know the boys he had shifted and he wanted to have a more meaningful experience. I asked about both men, trying to dig deeper, but Jack was insistent that neither experience was particularly meaningful to him and neither had changed him.

I asked Jack about kissing girls. I didn't know he'd ever kissed girls and he now said that he'd kissed so many girls that he'd made the whole shifting experience meaningless. I asked how it felt to kiss girls and he said it wasn't something he disliked, it was just "nyeh". He said that it never made him feel bad about himself, that it was "just doing what I was supposed to do". "It was just movement."

Taking Jack's description of his actions at face value (i.e. that he did not want to kiss girls and knew he was gay throughout his adolescence), this is evidence of an instinct to conform, a decision that it was more important to fit in (and maintain the benefits of the patriarchy/gender order in which he found himself) than to be true to himself. This was an instinct that was (to an extent) overturned by his coming out, where the notion of being true to himself became paramount.

He said that he felt as if shifting so many girls had ruined shifting boys for him and that the transition from "in" to "out" was very confusing. He said he was sure it would be different if he had shifted boys when he was sober, or if he had been very attracted to the boys he had shifted. Then he told me about a boy in Hall that he did really find attractive and that he was sure it would be very different if he ever got with him. He said he wasn't fixated on this guy, but that he did think about him quite a bit.

Jack said that he rarely felt particularly aware of his body, other than at periods of weight change, as he'd mentioned before. He said that he felt in charge of his body. He didn't seem all that comfortable when asked about experiences of tenderness, describing himself as "not a very huggy person", saying that it wasn't important to him. He said that words and actions were more important to him in friendships and

relationships than hugging or touching.

When I asked him about changes in the way he presented himself, Jack said that when he was more conscious of his weight he would wear baggier clothes, but that he'd never had major changes in hair or clothing. He had never considered piercings or tattoos, and he said that they weren't "classy" and he didn't like them on himself or on others.

When I asked Jack about puberty, he said he'd never thought about it. He wasn't someone who got tall suddenly and learning to shave wasn't a big deal. "I didn't even think about the changes really". He didn't think he'd got any information about puberty from his school or his parents. I was surprised that he had no real memory of the experience of puberty, and he said that it was probably because he was so obsessed with his weight that other changes were less noticeable.

This conversation builds up a picture of a young man who is quite detached from his body. He doesn't really remember puberty, his experiences kissing girls and boys left little impression on him, he can't say whether or not his body has ever failed him or served him well, he has no real interest in clothes or hair. Other than his feelings about gaining and losing weight, Jack seems unaware of his body. Some feminists argue that men do not have bodies in the social sense that women do (Blackman, 2008, p. 73).

He said he wasn't very hairy and he didn't like men who were very hairy. I observed that he was quite definitive about what was and wasn't his type. He said that he had shifted so many girls that when it came to boys he deserved the best. He sounded a little angry when he talked about shifting girls, talking about how meaningless it was, saying he'd only done it because he thought he might never come out and so he had to, but also because he didn't want to feel left out.

My final question was whether Jack's body was important to him. He said it was. He said that he worried about keeping it fit and presenting an attractive and fit body to the world. I was surprised when he said that he worried about this all the time.

"I don't think I ever felt attractive until I came to college. Not one single day." When I asked him what had changed he said "I feel freer, I don't feel confined, I'm definitely

not as heavy; physical, emotional and mental changes...I was so unhappy with myself and who I was that I almost just focused it on my body, but it probably wasn't that bad."

We finished the conversation by trying to be reflexive, and I asked Jack if he would have talked about his body differently if the interviewer had been someone other than me, someone who didn't have the weight problems I had. He said that it would have made no difference.

7.6 After the sixth interview

Jack's account of his own body was minimal. I believe that he was detached from his body, in the same way he was detached from his physical sexuality as discussed previously. This could be the result of an adolescence where he developed with a sexuality that was "walled off" from the world around him. It could also be the result of an Irish masculinity that does not objectify young men's bodies in the same way young women's bodies are objectified.

One area where Jack spoke at length about the role his body played in his life was in his descriptions of periods of weight loss and weight gain. In this case, he directly linked changes in his body to other factors in his life, to his happiness and his social life, implying that the social impacted his body and his body impacted his social life.

7.7 Interview Seven: "My Life in University", Room 4044, Arts Block, Monday, 21st May 2012

The final (shortest) interview took place on a beautiful sunny day, straight after Jack's final exam of first year. After talking about his planned celebrations and briefly gossiping about one of our flatmates, I asked Jack to review the experience of being interviewed.

"Of course, as you know, they were difficult at times, but em, no, it was an overall positive experience. You know, you don't realise what you're thinking until you actually speak about it to someone. Because you can be thinking about it, but unless someone asks you about it and you talk about it, you sort of get a better grounding in it. I thought it was definitely beneficial to me. I know that's not the purpose...Since coming out it's been a thousand things at once, so it was good to

talk it through with someone, get where it's affecting me and get where I'm standing on it....There are certain things you never get to talk about, such as your body and masculinity and stuff, so it was interesting for me to get to talk about those things.” This is an example of dialogue being formative of self. Jack didn't know these things about himself until he spoke about them.

Jack said that the interview he called “what you hate about yourself”, which was the one I called “The Real Me” was the most difficult one, but he said it was also the most rewarding one as it helped him to tease out what he'd been thinking.

We moved on to the main topic of the interview, which was an in-depth look at Jack's first year in college.

Connor: How was the person who arrived on the 15th September, how was that person different from the person who's sitting in front of me now?

Jack:...Well, there's definitely a difference. I don't know, Trinity itself was so different to my home life that there's aspects of that. You know, I'm in a completely different environment to what I had been previously. I definitely feel a lot more comfortable in myself, obviously, because, you know I went through the whole change of coming out this year...I genuinely do feel more comfortable.

Connor: How much of that is coming out and how much is other stuff?

Jack: It's difficult to say...everything happened at once...To be honest it was the people I met, the college I'm in, the people on my course...Of course, there's my age as well, you know, growing up, you generally get more comfortable in yourself...Living with so many different cultures...I'm just more accepting of different types of people.

The impact of moving from one social arena in his hometown to first year in an urban university, with its diversity of social backgrounds, was a significant one, which allowed Jack to “experiment” with new ways of being.

I wanted to know what else had changed for Jack since he'd come to college. I knew that one thing some of the other boys in the flat mocked him about was the fact that when they first met him and asked him who his favourite band was he said The

Black-Eyed Peas. They found such an “obvious” “pop” choice hilarious. In a previous interview, Jack had also said to me that he was surprised at how much people in college talked about money, and at how much money they had. It was his first time having friends who talked about current affairs. And I remembered in advance of the strip auction, he had talked about the fact that he didn’t have Calvin Klein underwear, like everyone else seemed to, but only Dunnes Stores boxers. For me, this painted a picture of someone arriving in college who was less sophisticated than his new friends. I asked him about this impression I had formed.

“I know they probably see me as less sophisticated than they do. I’m not as worldly as they are. But I’m completely fine with that. I really am.” He did say he knew more celebrity gossip than his flatmates. And that he still liked the Black-Eyed Peas. But he also acknowledged that he had changed, that he was more likely to talk about politics (both because of his new friends and his course, which he said “forced” him to think sociologically). He said he didn’t read the news much and he wasn’t ashamed of it and he wasn’t going to pretend to, because he felt that some of his friends were pretending to have certain interests in order to seem sophisticated. Jack said that people in Dublin were different from people he knew at home, because they had a “whole broadening your horizons attitude”.

Jack’s horizons were broadened through contact with politics and sociology, and through friends from different social classes, and, I would argue, different gender regimes. The gender regime in Trinity College that Jack experienced was one that not alone did not subordinate homosexual masculinities. It authorised and celebrated them.

I asked Jack what his stand-out memories from his first few weeks in college were. “Smoking room on nights out. Banter. Hungover days. Going into college. Having lunch. Definitely not my coursework, if that’s what you’re asking.” He said he had gone to lectures, but hadn’t cared about them. Then he started reconsidering this. “Subjects did wake me up to a new way of thinking. A new dynamic. When you think about it, which I often don’t, sociology and political science are really good subjects...Even though the actual content I wasn’t learning off the lectures, it did change my way of thinking...Like social norms, stuff like that, like the difference between city and country life, like I was walking down to the RDS the other day and

this woman just comes out in front of me out of her nice BMW and high heels and business suit, carrying this child into a crèche. I know it just made me think. Definitely a sociology topic essay right there. Something you definitely wouldn't see in the country." Jack has begun to think of how his own identity is formed, as well as those of others around him, and his study of sociology and politics helps him to do this.

Jack said he neither regretted the choice to do Social Work or the choice to go to Trinity. He said he never got homesick. "I went home every weekend...Next year I plan on not going home very much because it's just not normal to be traipsing up and down on a bus every weekend. It's abnormal in fact, to need home that much."

When asked to identify the high points in relation to his course, Jack spoke about times when exams were coming and assignments were due and said that these times brought the course closer together. He said the coursework never got to him. I was surprised that his classmates saw him as someone who was well-prepared, but he said this was only because he was less panicky. He said he put effort in during the year, but that he didn't work anything as hard as he had while still in school.

Jack's account of the first term was one of fun, drinking and hangovers. I asked him if the hangovers were worth it, and he said "Drinking is always worth it." Of course, I then asked him if he had a healthy relationship with alcohol and he laughed at me and said he did. We went back to discussing the first term. He said it was really different to be living with flatmates from England and from Holland, and to be meeting so many different people and it was very different.

We moved on to the second term and Jack talked about coming out. He jokingly referred to it as the biggest moment of his life and then rowed back. "It was significant...there's far more to me than just coming out....I never want the impression that being gay is what I'm all about. Coming out was big for me, definitely, without a doubt, but so have been many other moments in my life...Having great times with my friends have been just as important as coming out."

Jack is trying to balance his presentation of himself so that his homosexuality does not come to dominate it. This could be from a fear of prejudice, but Jack clearly feels that there are elements of his identity that are in danger of being lost to his sexual

identity.

“Second term was different. I didn’t go out as much. I didn’t drink as much. I started going to the gym...Stopped going out on Monday nights, started going to more lectures.” Basically, the story of Jack’s second term was calmer, but then he said that for about three weeks he started getting extremely drunk two or three times a week and started coming out to people. “I had a bit of stress with that.” After he had told his parents, things calmed down again, and in general the second term was very calm. He said he had a lot of support from his sister and his friends, particularly our flatmate George. He said it was “like being in bubble-wrap.” “It’s made me more comfortable...I definitely would never filter anything I say any more.” He did say he’d be more conscious when he was home, and might filter himself a little to avoid sounding too snobby.

The other big moment in the second term for him was his election. “It’s something I do want to impact...I can’t wait for next year.” I asked, “Which is a bigger achievement? Coming out or the election?”, and Jack said that the election was a much more positive experience and that the acceptance he experienced through being elected reassured him after coming out.

We talked for a little about second year. Jack described first year as a “preparation period”. He said he was going to miss George, our flatmate who was going back to England, that he was going to join the LGBT society on campus and that he was going to join the drama society too, now that he’d almost conquered his fear of public speaking. He was very hopeful about his remaining time in college. “I’ll only get better.” And we left it there.

Jack: Thanks for listening to me.

Connor: Thanks for telling me...Thank you very, very much Jack.

Jack: Did you enjoy it?

Connor: I did.

I was sad when the interview ended.

7.8 After the final interview

In the final interview, the stage where the coming out drama (that had been at the centre of so much in these interviews) was played out came into clear focus. Jack was exposed to new experiences, both through formal education in sociology and politics, and through the types of people he met, who were generally of a higher social class, with more “sophisticated” tastes and interests. He experienced life in a new gender regime, where his sexual identity was easier to affirm and he experienced two significant transitional events in his own narrative of himself and his increasing confidence and comfort with himself: his coming out and his election win.

The following chapter will include a summary of the conclusions from the interviews.

Jack and I shared a flat for another four days. He spent a lot of that time drunk. I remember him drunkenly joking with me, trying to convince me to smoke a cigarette, treating me like a serious elder. It was more or less the only time that year I saw him drunk, which shows how partial our relationship was in many ways.

On the final day in the flat, when only four of us were left, I started crying. The goodbyes were long. I drove Jack to the city centre to catch the bus home. On the way, I also drove George to the house where he would be staying for the next few weeks. After saying goodbye to George, both Jack and I cried as we drove along. Jack told me that their relationship with me and the things I wrote had meant a lot to the boys we lived with, including him. As we hugged goodbye he told me that he hoped I would find a man who would text me back. These kind words have stayed with me.

Two years later, Jack is still a part of my life and still a friend. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that my PhD forged a friendship that, while not typical, will probably last a long time.

When I sent him the auto/biography I had assembled from his interviews, which makes up the bulk of the preceding two chapters he responded with this email:

Hi Connor,

Thanks so much for sending it on, couldn't put it down. A very good reflection of who I am, and also parts of it who I was. It is so raw to be able to feel how vulnerable I was after that coming out period. When I think of it now, I certainly didn't understand how much it was affecting me.

I have definitely changed in many ways and I feel like a lot of that time was a big transition process.

Looking back I would totally agree how the entrance exam results and the moment in class when my voice started shaking became a big part of how I seen myself and in a way I have a better understanding of the events and what came after them.

I am happy to say that my relationship with my mum has come on leaps and bounds since then, my lack of ability to be comfortable in my teenage years definitely had a part to play in that friction. It was kind of sad to remember how much we did fight when it was so unnecessary, but again that is so typical of nearly everyones life.

I still remember you questioning me on why I wanted to get away so much, why I wanted to break free. I remember feeling slightly affronted like you were suggesting that it was anything other than a want to see the world. In reality it was a want to break free from a world that I had felt constricted within for so many years. I can honestly say I would still like to travel somewhat but don't have nearly the same urge. I am happy now, I am content. That is something I didn't always feel.

Thank you so much for the experience, I don't believe the PHD chapter would have contained such honesty only for you were the interviewer and were so congruent in the role.

I am sure it will be an amazing phd

Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I start (in 8.2) with a summary of the major findings of the research and the contributions being made to theory. This is followed (in 8.3) by a short summary of the two data analysis chapters that have gone before, giving an overview of the findings from the perspective of masculinities studies in general (8.3.1), Connell on masculinities (8.3.2) and Taylor on identity (8.3.3). I then return to my research questions, as posed in Chapter 4, and show how I believe the data and its analysis has been effective in answering these (8.4). The thesis ends with a personal reflection in section 8.5, including notes on what I have learned and how I have changed from the process.

8.2 Major Findings and Contributions

8.2.1 Methodology: Auto/biographical studies

As was noted in section 1.2 of this dissertation, the area of youth masculinities has been the subject of relatively little study, and a scoping of the literature in the field shows no long-form narrative studies of young Irish men's lives. This study is a contribution to that field, and the specific findings are discussed in section 8.3.

As noted in section 4.3, reflexive auto/biographical studies of the type described by Stanley are usually principally drawn from written sources like diaries and letters. This study innovates in its extensive use of oral life history interviews to compile a cohesive but reflexive written auto/biography.

8.2.2 Methodology: Relationships and Reflexivity

As a flatmate and eventually a friend of the research participant, I had the opportunity to compile a deep and revelatory piece of narrative data that allowed for rich answers to be provided to the research questions.

Also of significance was my approach to reflexivity. Of necessity, as a result of my relationship with Jack, the reflexivity had to be considered and had to have depth. I believe this was achieved by applying a three-part model of reflexivity (see section

5.3), which I adapted by drawing from three different existing models, that was descriptive of process, descriptive of the impact of the data and process on the researcher and the researched and descriptive of the researcher's role in the authorship of the data. I believe this lends the data increased validity.

8.2.3 Methodology: Data Generation and Facebook

Family photos, diaries and mementos of life have been used to elicit details of life ever since Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) constructed the first life histories for use in the social sciences.

I have argued in section 4.4.2j that I innovated in my use of Facebook as an alternative to this. In scoping the literature, I found no reference to the use of Facebook (the most popular social network in the world) for this purpose. The lists of friends, photos and posts on Jack's Facebook Timeline made for a useful springboard for the third interview with Jack, which was based entirely on data from Facebook.

8.2.4 Theory: Connell and Gender Regimes

Connell (2005) innovates in her use of hegemony, subordination, complicity, authorisation and marginalisation to analyse gender relations. While she is the most cited author in the field of masculinities, this categorisation has been criticised as an oversimplification in recent years as being too monolithic and simplistic (for example, Phipps & Young, 2012, p. 35).

I have argued that her categorisations were very useful in learning from Jack's story (throughout chapters 6 and 7, and in section 8.2.2 above), but only when it was possible (as she originally intended) to allow for instability, for change and for inconsistency *between* gender regimes. I believe that Jack grew up in a distinct gender regime in his West of Ireland home from the gender regime he found himself in in Trinity College Dublin. Connell's categorisations are only useful when they allow this space for different gender regimes, and therefore different forms of hegemony, in different places and times. I believe this is a contribution to a current debate on the utility of Connell's categorisations.

8.2.5 Theory: Taylor and Masculinities

As I have shown in chapters 6 and 7 and in the previous sections (8.2.3 and 8.3), Taylor's theory helped me to analyse Jack's masculine identity in three distinct ways (using his thought around inwardness, ordinary life and a culture of articulation).

Further to that, I argue that masculinities are (at least in part) social structures, but they are social structures that are individually experienced, and therefore an analysis of them requires the contribution of a theory that allows for the role of the individual. Taylor allows us to understand the individual bearer of masculinities as a meaning-maker. In the individual's constructive dialogue of self (as described in 8.2), meaning is made, significance is assigned and identity is constructed. We need to examine the individual's dialogue with the world and with themselves and how they express meaning and assign significance in order to know that person and in order to examine their masculine identity.

8.3 Summary of other findings

8.3.1 Masculinities

In Chapter 2, Section 3 of this dissertation, a history of masculinities as a field of study was presented, drawing from the fields of sociology, anthropology, feminism and psychoanalysis. I drew on sociology, feminism and psychoanalysis in my discussion of Jack's auto/biography, especially in the analysis of his early life.

8.3.1a Sociology: Sex role theory

I applied Parsons' (1943) functionalist sex role theory to the analysis of Jack's life story in section 6.4, where I claim that Jack's father filled a traditional male instrumental role and his mother the more expressive female one, and further in 7.3, where Jack describes the traits of his male and female friends. The data shows a consistency in gender roles to the extent that (in Jack's social world) many women continue to hold "traditional" roles i.e. they are more emotional, expressive and more interested in forming relationships, whereas men are less romantic, more

sexual, and more interested in money and careers. The data speaks to an Ireland where gender roles continue to be enforced.

8.3.1b Feminism

I used two feminist theorists in the analysis of Jack's gendered world. Chodorow's (1978) mothering theory which holds that masculinities are formed in young boys through being encouraged to break from their mothers and from things feminine does not fit Jack's auto/biography well. The data certainly shows that as he grows up he follows a trajectory of increasing independence from and rebelliousness towards his parents, but there is nothing in the data to suggest that there was a gendered element to this "break" in Jack's life story.

Friedan (1976) is one feminist who discusses the idea of the restriction of women to a private or domestic sphere, while men enjoy access to the public or political sphere, empowering the patriarchy even if using a language of equality of opportunity. The data in this study shows that this is true in Jack's social world. In section 6.6, Jack describes female friends who tend to watch movies and discuss relationships, and never politics, while male friends tend to be louder and discuss economics and politics more freely than women.

A final piece of evidence the data provides on feminism is the language Jack uses to talk about his own masculinity. The data in section 6.3 shows that Jack has difficulty assigning set traits to masculinity or to manliness, and has learned a script of equality, acknowledging equality and lack of difference. However, as shown in section 6.3 and in the preceding paragraphs, Jack is able to describe differences between men and their world, and women and theirs. It is not that he cannot see differences in gender, but I argue that the impact of liberal feminism on Irish society has meant that Jack has difficulties speaking about gender difference or inequality.

8.3.1c Psychoanalysis

In section 6.2, the data shows a young boy whose primary influences and companions are predominantly female. I applied Freud's analysis of *The Wolf Man* (2002) to this situation, and the identification with females and resulting instability in

masculine identity this can pose. This analysis was borne out in the data across chapters six and seven, particularly in sections 6.2, 6.6, 7.1 and 7.3, where Jack speaks of a gender identity in conflict with the world around him.

8.3.2 Connell

In section 2.4.2 of this thesis, Connell's theory of gender relations is laid out in respect to an analysis of masculinities in society. She describes a patriarchy, whereby men dominate through a model of masculinity known as hegemony (supported by complicit masculinities and femininities) and subordinating some masculinities and all femininities. Connell's theory was used throughout the analysis to provide a framework within which to see Jack's masculinity.

8.3.2a Hegemony

The data in Jack's auto/biography shows two separate gender regimes, each with their own version of hegemony. The data in sections 6.2 and 6.4 point to a hegemonic masculine in Jack's home area that is similar to that described in Connell (2005) with an emphasis on heterosexuality and sexual talk about women, drinking alcohol, playing football, an interest in cars and inarticulacy. The data in 6.2, 6.4 and 7.1 shows that Jack's more expressive nature, few shared interests with peers and homosexuality were, if not a subordinated form of masculinity, at least a marginalised one.

The data shows a second, different gender regime in operation in the university where Jack attended. In sections 6.2, 6.6, 7.1 and 7.7, the data shows a hegemonic masculine, which values articulacy and which does not feature compulsory heterosexuality.

8.3.2b Complicity

Connell (2005) argues that a hegemony can only exist if it is supported by the complicity of men and women who are not exemplars of this hegemony. The narrative supports this. In 6.2, it shows Jack's complicity in the hegemony, not challenging the norm, spending time with a large group of boys, kissing girls and in 6.2 and 6.4 using alcohol as a social tool.

8.3.2c Authorisation and Marginalisation

Connell (2005) includes the intersection of gender with race and class, by her inclusion of the concepts of authorization and marginalisation. Jack's auto/biography includes marginalisation in terms of his parents' attempts to keep his middle class life separate from the more difficult, poorer life of his neighbours.

8.3.2d Engagement

Another key component of Connell's theories that the data speaks to is that of moments of engagement. Connell holds that boys take on the project of the patriarchy for themselves as their own when they engage with the hegemonic masculine. The data in Jack's auto/biography features a late moment of engagement with the hegemonic masculine, given his early female companionship and the retiring nature of his father. The data further bears out Connell's contention that homosexual masculinities being a process often beginning with an unsuccessful engagement with the hegemony.

8.3.3 Taylor

In chapter 3, two aspects of Taylor's theory of self are laid out, an essentialist view of the aspects that all selves bear (3.2), and the socio-cultural aspects that are unique to modern Western identity (3.3).

8.3.3a The Essentialist Self

In chapter 3.2, Taylor's (1985) belief in the self as a being that uses language expressively in dialogue with others for the purposes of self-formation and self-interpretation is discussed. The evidence in Jack's auto/biography is that he uses dialogue in order to do this. The data shows, in section 7.1 and elsewhere, that Jack expresses a feeling of lack or of failure when he does not conduct this dialogue and his auto/biography shows affirmation and growth through dialogue, in 6.2 and 7.1.

One of Taylor's principal contentions as regards identity is that it is a moral stance, and one of the features of this morality that makes us human is that we have an ability to choose between goods, and to see value in that which we set aside, using

“strong evaluation” (1989). The data shows evidence of Jack doing this in his description of his choices as opposed to those of his friends and sisters in sections 6.4, 6.6 and 7.1.

8.3.3b The Modern Self

Taylor proposes that the modern self is disengaged from a greater moral order and looks within to find truth. The data from Jack’s auto/biography substantially bears this out. In sections 6.2, 7.1, 7.3 and 7.7, it is clear that Jack looks within to find his “real nature” and that he finds a source of morality within.

Taylor (1989) also describes a modern culture of affirmation of ordinary life, where aspects of the self bound up in the processes of production and reproduction, work and family life are central to the notion of self. The data demonstrates this in terms of Jack’s need to affirm his sexual identity in 7.1 and elsewhere, as well as in his expressions of the importance of friendship and drinking in 6.6 and elsewhere.

Taylor (1994) describes a culture of articulation, where the self not only depends on dialogue, but on articulating a truth felt within, a call to authenticity, and a politics of recognition, where it is necessary to have this inner truth recognised. The data demonstrates this, in Jack’s desire to come out as gay (7.1 and elsewhere), in his desire to be recognised in the election (7.7) and in his desire to have a boyfriend in order to “find himself” (7.3).

8.4 The Research Questions

1. How does the social and moral space in modern Ireland relate to the constitution of this young man’s masculine identity?

Jack’s identity was formed, maintained and developed in the following social and moral spaces in the nineteen years of his life:

- Jack’s home: a female-dominated, middle class home where Jack did not come into significant contact with the hegemonic masculine as a child, where traditional gender roles were played out and where Jack was discouraged from spending time with a poorer, “rougher” boy.

- Jack's home town: where a traditional hegemonic masculine made up of features such as heterosexuality, pack behaviour and interest in football pre-dominated, identity was policed by rural gossip, and alcohol acted as a levelling force.
- Jack's university: where "being yourself is paramount" and homosexuality is celebrated, where young people come into contact with political and sociological ideas and people from many backgrounds mix.

The data shows that these social and moral spaces impacted Jack, producing a young man who was sociable and charitable, but whose gender and sexual identity was unstable in conflict with the world around him.

2. How can the work of Charles Taylor on identity contribute to our understanding of this young man's masculinities?

In viewing Jack's auto/biography, Taylor's work can be significant in the following three ways:

- Inwardness: Jack's identity, including his gender identity, is something he feels lies within him and is not dependent on the social world he lives in for its truth to be verified, as seen in sections 7.1 and 7.3. This thesis suggests that while it is important to acknowledge the powers in society and culture operating to form the self, identity is something that is lived and experienced by the individual in a subjective way, and to exclude the "inward looking" nature of modern identity is to exclude a significant part of what makes up the self.
- Ordinary life: Jack felt that it was necessary to acknowledge his sexual orientation, to come out, in order to live a good life as seen in section 7.1. Lifestyles predicated around a mundanity like the nature of a person's sexual attractions have become a marker of identity, because the life of the family and the workplace, the life of the ordinary and the everyday is a significant component of selfhood in the modern world.
- Culture of articulation: Contemporary culture is one where dialogue is formative of self, where identity needs to be recognised and the call to authenticity is a public one. Dialogue is used by the modern self in order to establish and affirm identity. The data shows that much of Jack's unhappiness in his teenage years and his detachment from his physical self was a result of

him lacking the opportunities to articulate himself. He experienced significant change with the opportunity for revelation, as did I.

8.5 Conclusion

This PhD was a transformative process for me. I started from a point where I was interested in issues of identity, and felt constrained by the trap of discourse, wondering whether true self-formation or transformation were possibilities in a world where our possibilities and personalities were bound by language, by social and cultural powers and by history. I also had a discomfort at the heart of my own gender and sexual identity.

I started this PhD to find answers. I did not realise the extent to which I was seeking answers until I began to find them.

Self-formation, or indeed, transformation, was at the core of my experience of this PhD. My belief in the social and cultural powers that form our world and our selves has not changed. However, I now stand with Taylor and say that I can orientate myself within this socially constructed world, and I can create myself through dialogue with the world around myself. The forms of freedom I have are limited, because I can only orient myself towards something already existing in the culture, but my experience of this freedom is that it is real.

The very process of conducting the interviews with Jack, and with the other research participants, expanded my world, and the power of self-revelation, of meaningful dialogue, of the expression of self and of the articulation of what you hold to be authentic all made a keen impression on me.

My journey with Jack in particular led to changes in my own life, led to a more authentic self and a more honest articulation of my own self to the world.

In the year after the interviews ended, as I alluded to earlier, I found life very difficult. My interviews sat untranscribed, and I considered dropping out of the PhD. The transformative and meaningful dialogue that I had conducted with my research

participants was over and I found this very hard. However, the process of transformation continued.

I found myself experimenting with my gender identity, and opening my sexual life up. I was a different person.

One of the lessons that I have learned while doing this PhD is not just that self-formation is a real possibility, but that the instability in our gender identity allows a space for self-formation and for transformation. For me, this is a powerful lesson.

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Appendix A:

Information given to participants

Appendix A1 – Letter to Participant

Dear _____,

Thank you for showing interest in taking part in this study. Please read this carefully before you make a decision as to whether or not to participate.

About me

As you know, my name is Connor O'Donoghue. I am a research student in the School of Education here in Trinity College and I'm completing a PhD at the moment. I hope to be finished by September 2013. I've been a teacher since 2003 and I've spent a lot of time dealing with people of a university-going age.

About the research project

My PhD is called "Men, Power and the Good: Exploring the Masculine Identities of Young Irish Male Undergraduates". As you can see from this title, although I am studying in the School of Education, the research is in the area of gender studies. I am working in the field of masculinities, which looks at questions like "What is it to be a man?" and "What does 'being masculine' mean?"

As well as looking at masculinities, I've looked at two philosophers: One is Charles Taylor. He is a Canadian. He's quite traditional. He believes that our identity is very closely connected to our morality. The things that we think are good, or valuable or important, are linked to who we are, as human beings, as men and as Irish people. We choose to associate ourselves with social groups like "the Irish" or "the lads", and this can change or influence our values and our identities. Our wish to be "authentic", to be "true to ourselves" is a moral choice.

The other philosopher I've been looking at is a Frenchman called Michel Foucault. He believed that identity is not something we choose. Instead our identity is something that is forced upon us. There are powers that we are often not aware of and they operate on us through institutions and families and even through the language we use. He doesn't have much time for the idea of a "real me". Instead, he thinks we are just a product of an intersection of social powers and influences. There is no value for him in the idea of being a "man", as a "man" is simply the product of social and institutional proscriptions.

This is a summary of the theories I've been looking at. I want to probe these theories by looking at the lives of some young men. This will involve drawing up some life stories. But to really "get inside" these theories, the young men who I study will have to be willing to look at their own identities, and try to help me identify how these identities were formed. To test my ideas about masculinities, we need to look at what "makes you a man" and your relationship with your own body. To test what

Taylor has to say, we need to look at your values, what is important to you and how you would describe the “real you”. To test what Foucault has to say, we need to look at your social context, at how your family, the institutions you have been involved with and the language you use to describe yourself has shaped your life.

Confidentiality

I will not reveal your name during this process. I will give you a pseudonym, both for what I write and for whenever I discuss you with my supervisor or examiners. I will transcribe the recordings of our conversation myself if possible, but I might end up having to pay a professional to do this. No one will listen to these interviews other than me and possibly a professional transcriber. Extracts from the interviews will be used in my dissertation, and possibly in conference papers, scholarly articles and books that result from this study. However, every time I use them, in whatever form, I will use a pseudonym and will also change the name of any other person you reference and the names of towns, localities etc. I will endeavour to keep all your identity as private as possible.

At the end of the process, I will be able to give you a copy of the written work – the life stories that I have put together and the dissertation.

Final note

I understand that this is a big commitment, both in terms of time and in terms of sharing personal information. You should think carefully before agreeing to it. I will endeavour to be as sensitive, trustworthy and appreciative as possible. I appreciate that you are even considering the project.

If you have any questions at all, please ask. My room is 79.01.04 in Trinity Hall or 3087 in the Arts Building. You can email me at odonocgt@tcd.ie, phone me at 0863628751 or get me on www.facebook.com/connormuzz.

Yours sincerely,

Connor O'Donoghue

TIMELINE

- I will want to meet you **seven** times this academic year, and once in the next academic year.
- Each meeting will last at least an hour, but could easily last up to an hour and a half.
- During the meetings, I will record the conversation, and I will later transcribe these conversations.
- I will generally ask you to prepare something before the meeting – a short text or diagram that will help guide our conversation.
- I have assigned a two-week period for each of these meetings.
- It **is** possible to change these times, as I understand you have commitments and exams. I can be very flexible and am happy to negotiate times for meetings with you, but we need to leave some space between them, so that we can both reflect on what has been said and prepare for the meeting. If you want to leave some meetings until after the exams, I am happy to meet you elsewhere in Ireland, but my timetable means that I need to get seven interviews done by the end of June.

First meeting: (first half of March)

1. “A Timeline of my Life”: Before the meeting, I’d ask you to draw a timeline, outlining all the major events in your life since your birth (try to include *at least* 8 events). You’d bring this along to the meeting and we would talk through it. I expect we’d discuss your family and childhood, your school experiences, and generally any high or low points of your life so far.

Second meeting: (second half of March)

2. “My family”: Before this meeting, I’d ask you to draw a family tree and/or bring in some family photos. We’d talk about your parents and their background, relations you are close to, major events in your family history, your relationship with your parents and your siblings.

Third meeting: (first half of April)

3. “My social life”: Before the meeting, I’d ask you to choose photographs of friends and social situations and particularly important sections of your Facebook or Twitter timeline (photos, links, updates, conversations). We’d talk about your friendships, social circles, and romantic relationships.

Fourth meeting: (second half of April)

4. “The real me”: In advance of this meeting, I’d ask you to write (one or two pages) about the “real me”. 1. What do you value? 2. What do you believe a “good life” is? 3. What does “being authentic” mean to you?” We would base our conversation on these three questions.

Fifth meeting: (first half of May)

5. “Me, the man”: In advance of the meeting, I’d ask you to write a piece (again, about one or two pages) on what being a man is for you. Then we would discuss the idea of being a man, your views on what a man is physically, sexually and emotionally, how a man should and does behave, and how you “measure up” as a man.

Sixth meeting: (second half of May)

6. “My body”: Before the meeting, I’d ask you to write the story of your body (again, one or two pages). 1. Do you like your body? 2. Does it serve you well? How? 3. Has it ever failed you? How? 4. Have you had major injuries? Are you scarred? 5. How has it changed over the years? 6. Is it a “real man’s body”? Our conversation would revolve around these questions

Seventh meeting: (June)

7. “My life in university”: Before this meeting, I would ask you to draw a timeline or write a narrative of your time in university. How has your life changed since you started? What are the major events in your life since you started? We’d base our conversation around this.

Next year’s meeting:

After I have put all this information together, I will start to analyse it, looking at it through the main theories I’ve studied (masculinities generally, and the thought of Taylor and Foucault). When I’ve come up with some ideas, I’ll get in touch with you again. At that meeting, I’ll tell you what I’ve come up with, and you will have a chance to tell me your reactions to this and whether or not you disagree with my various ideas.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, _____, (your name) agree to participate in a study of young male undergraduates’ lives being conducted by Connor O’Donoghue, School of Education, Trinity College, Dublin. This study will last from March until June 2012, with some additional work in October 2012. The project is entitled: Men, Power and the Good: An exploration of the masculine identities of young Irish male undergraduates.

Please Circle

I have been informed of the nature of this project.	YES	NO
I understand that my name/the names of friends and family mentioned will not be used in the reporting of information collected over the course of this study.	YES	NO
I understand that my participation is voluntary.	YES	NO
I understand that I can withdraw at any time without personal consequence.	YES	NO
I understand that information obtained from this project may be used for a PhD dissertation, academic articles/books and conference presentations.	YES	NO
I understand that I will be asked to attend a series of interviews, which will be recorded and transcribed.	YES	NO
I understand that I will be asked to supply written and visual material, copies of which will be retained as part of the project.	YES	NO

OVERALL CONSENT:

I have read the information provided as well as the statements above and give my consent to participate in this project.	YES	NO
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Printed Name

Signature

Date

SUPPLEMENTARY CONSENT FORM

This is in addition to the previous agreement signed at the beginning of the project on _____ (date).

Circle	Please	
I give permission for the researcher (Connor O'Donoghue) to access my Facebook profile (only the parts which are accessible to friends).	YES	NO
I understand that if this is used in any format as a result of this study that all names, places and photographs will be made anonymous.	YES	NO
I understand that I will be able to withdraw this permission at any time without consequence to me.	YES	NO

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Appendix B: Preparatory Materials for Interviews

Appendix B1 – Interview Four

Preparing for Interview Four

These are the questions we will discuss in the next interview. If possible, write out your answers. If you can't think of what to say to some of the questions, that's fine.

- 1. Are you a good person? To what extent do you like/dislike yourself? Can you think of specific times when you liked/disliked yourself?**

- 2. Is there a “real” you? How would you describe him?**

- 3. What does being authentic mean to you?**

4. Can you define a “good life”? Do you think you live a good life? Can you think of times when you would say that you were living a good life?

5. What kind of life do you intend to live as an adult? Why?

6. Describe one or two times when you realised or discovered something or someone was important to you.

7. How do you know what’s right and what’s wrong? What is the source of your morality?

Questions for Interview Five

These are the questions that we'll discuss at the next interview. Try to answer them all, but if you can't think of what to say, just move on to the next question.

- 1. What do you think are the differences between men and women in how they behave socially? In how they behave sexually? In how they are physically? And emotionally?**

- 2. How “manly” are you? How do you “measure up” as a man? Can you think of a time when you felt particularly manly?**

- 3. Do you have a feminine side? Can you think of a time when you felt particularly girly?**

4. Do you behave differently around other guys, in comparison to how you behave around girls?

5. Are there very “manly” men in your life? Are there very “feminine” men in your life? Who?

6. Is your masculinity important to you? Why?

7. Would you say your gender (or sexual) identity has changed as you’ve got older? How? Have there been times when you doubted your sexual identity or orientation?

Preparing for Interview Six

A History of my Body

Please put together a **timeline** like you did for the first interview. However, this time I'd like you to put together a timeline of your own **body**. Include **as much information as possible**.

You could include:

- any changes your body has gone through as you've got older
- points in time at which you liked your body more
- points in time at which you disliked/hated your body
- points in time at which your relationship with your body has changed
- points in time when you became aware/more aware of your body
- experiences of physical strength
- experiences of physical weakness
- injuries
- experiences of violence
- experiences of physical tenderness
- impacts that sexual experiences have had on your body/on your relationship with your body/on your perception of your body
- diets/exercise/weight loss attempts
- bodybuilding/weight gain attempts
- tattoos
- piercings
- changes in hair
- changes in hygiene routines/regimes
- scarring
- medical or surgical experiences
- occasions of self-harm
- anything else that you think is relevant