

Crafting masculinities: embodying, recuperating and redistributing care in young lives

Carl Bonner-Thompson*

School of Environment and Technology
University of Brighton
c.bonner-thompson@brighton.ac.uk

Anoop Nayak

School of Geography, Politics and Sociology
Newcastle University
anoop.nayak@ncl.ac.uk

Carl Bonner-Thompson is a lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Brighton, UK, and was the researcher on 'Boys to Men: Understanding What it Means to Be a Man' project.

Anoop Nayak is Professor in Social & Cultural Geography at Newcastle University and PI for the project 'Boys to Men: Understanding What it Means to Be a Man'

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Abstract

Research on geographies of care identifies care work as a low-paid, menial and ultimately feminised activity. Much of the work in the field, unsurprisingly, has focused upon the plight of women and how the division of labour produces and sustains gender inequalities. We are interested in how new generations understand gender, work and care and the possibilities for generating heterogenous, caring masculinities. Using creative methods, we engage young people in a series of critical masculinities workshops through which participants are asked to reflect upon what it means to be a man and materialise these ideas through arts and craft. Our school-based discussions with young people and their artworks reveal how participants place an acute emphasis on the felt, affective and emotional register of caring masculinities. We explore their creative endeavours to critically interrogate care as a gendered concept, interpret its ‘troubled’ relationship to masculinity, and analyse possibilities for future change. Our findings suggest masculine care practices have the potential to challenge and redistribute power across the gender order. However, we further found that hegemonic forms of masculinity could become consolidated and recuperated through caring acts, meaning gender power relations are not easily disrupted simply by men becoming caring.

Key words: care; creative methods; embodiment; fathering; masculinities; young people

Introduction

In an era of #MeToo and #TimesUp there is intense scrutiny upon men, masculinity and gender power. It is now widely understood that future generations need to forge better understandings of gender and sexuality than what has gone before where care and respect are mutually recognised. Indeed, when it comes to pedagogy UK state schools must teach ‘the value of respect, love and care’ in their sex and relationship education guidance (DfEE, 2000: 5). Our aim in this paper is to critically interrogate care as a gendered concept, explore its ‘troubled’ relationship to masculinity and analyse the ways in which it can be recuperated or

redistributed across the gender order. In doing so we seek to advance more diverse understandings of what it means to be a man that engage with the ‘emerging concept’ of ‘caring masculinities’ (Elliot, 2016: 240) and contribute to a broader feminist ethics of care (Fisher and Tronto, 1990). Such ‘radical care’ perspectives (Chatzidakis et al., 2020; Hobart & Kneese, 2020) not only furnish us with critical understandings of the geographies of care but holds the potential for greater gender equality and social transformation.

To gain further insight into the relational, embodied and affective aspects of care we draw upon field research with young people in three Primary Schools in a district we call ‘Quarry Bay’ in North East England. Through a series of workshops and creative artworks they illustrate what it means to be a man in ways that have the potential to disrupt and challenge dominant constructions of masculinity. Throughout this process we were struck by the way in which respondents identified practices of care as the most valued aspect they desired from men in their lives and consider its impacts for the reshaping of masculinity. We explore the ways care emerges as an idealised embodiment of masculinity for young people, while also identifying the tensions, conflicts and relations of power that shape and augment care relations. While the construction of men as caring subjects may appear to subvert gender relations, we found that relations of care also have the potential to be recuperated in ways that consolidate the gender order, particularly through practices young people may identify as ‘caring’ or ‘helpful’.

Where a vast amount of international research has explored women caregivers – including nurses, domestic maids, health workers, child carers and others – we contribute to the field of geographies of care firstly, by developing scholarship on men and masculinities. Secondly, extending the important contextual, conceptual and theoretical framing of ‘caring masculinities’ (Boyer et al., 2017; Elliott, 2016; Hearn, 2018; Hunter et al., 2017), through

qualitative investigation that empirically explores how care practices are experienced, understood and ‘lived’. Thirdly, by focusing on the actual recipients of care who are often marginalised in mainstream accounts – in this case children and young people. Fourthly, by using creative methodologies to craft masculinities in new ways that have the potential to challenge, refigure and transform gender relations. And finally, utilising a feminist ethic of radical care to develop critical interpretations of gender that ‘trouble’ existing orthodoxies of masculinities and care by acknowledging structural inequalities in current gender care regimes (Raw & McKie, 2019).

The paper begins by discussing current research on geographies of care, focusing upon an underdeveloped literature on masculinities and care. We then outline our participatory approach with young people, who were encouraged to draw upon creative methodologies to illustrate what it means to be a man in the contemporary era. What is apparent is that for many young people in Quarry Bay masculine care is expressed through the material aspects of regular paid work and providing for the family. Without negating the value of financial procurement for survival, we argue that this focus can serve to ‘masculinise’ the enactment of care and *recuperate* this within the gender order. Here, the ‘breadwinner’ identity and economic provision remain a central pillar of masculinity. In the final section we explore how young people are also engaged in refiguring ideas of masculinity that work towards the *redistribution* of care across the gender order. In doing so these accounts advance critical thinking on gender, adding much needed complexity to contemporary understandings of geographies of care and masculinity.

Geographies of care: masculinities, materiality and gender

Care is a material, embodied and felt set of relations used to ‘to maintain, continue and repair’ people’s worlds (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40). Caring is a patchwork quilt,

comprising paid and unpaid work, market and voluntary institutions that are often reliant upon care worker 'good will' (Raw & McKie, 2019), alongside the material and emotional support of family and friends (Bastia, 2015; Bonner-Thompson & McDowell, 2020; Held, 2005). Feminist geographers are pivotal in critiquing the concept of care as a homogenous practice, arguing that there are multiple ways in which care emerges through relations of power (Bondi 2008; McEwan and Goodman 2010; Bartos 2018; McDowell 2004; Raghuram, Madge, and Noxolo 2009). As such, the formal and informal economies of care frequently merge the public with the private (Sihto, 2018; Staeheli & Brown, 2003), the medical with the corporeal, the abstract with the intimate. Care therefore is not only a fleshy, intimate bodily practice (England & Dyck, 2014), but is materially organised across bodily, local, national, international and global scales through a range of transnational organisations, communication technologies and therapeutic mobilities (Kasper, Walton-Roberts and Bochaton 2019; Parr 2003; Thompson 2019). Recent scholarship has argued for an appreciation of the ways care and conflict are not mutually exclusive but can be held in tension (Bartos 2018; Hearn, 2018), comprising 'a bundle of activities and dispositions whose outcomes cannot be known in advance' (Raghuram, 2019, p. 629). This means practices of care do not always have caring outcomes but may be disempowering, fraught and unequal.

Caring is fundamentally gendered – the way it is enacted, understood, received and embodied is shaped through specific power relations (Bondi, 2008; Bonner-Thompson & McDowell, 2020; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Raw & McKie, 2019). As critical masculinities scholars have argued, conceptualisations of care typically construct it as beyond the boundaries of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hearn, 2018). It is not coincidental that within the prevailing gender order young boys transitioning into adulthood are rarely taught to care in the same way young girls are (Conradson, 2003;

Hanlon, 2012; McDowell, 2005) yet could undoubtedly benefit from nurturing practices (Chatzidakis et al., 2020; Elliott, 2016; Hearn, 2018). Typically, girls are provided with dolls and soft toys that teach them how to ‘care’, whereas boys are encouraged to fight, build and compete. As they become adults, the careers, jobs and professions young people are guided towards in their homes and institutions often reflect this gendered orientation. Traditionally in the global north, young men have been taught that to achieve adulthood they must find paid work, leave the family home, find a partner and care for a (nuclear) family of dependents – a heteronormative, patriarchal, racialised way of constructing masculinity (McDowell, 2019). For most men then, caring is material rather than affective and emotional labour (Gibson-Graham, 2008; McDowell, 2004). Such emotional care is thus assumed to be ‘women’s work’, is hugely undervalued, yet also underpins the ability for capitalist processes to prosper (England, 2010; McDowell, 2005; Walby, 1986). However, the shift to service-sector economies and precarious labour in the global north – where masculine ‘hard graft’ is no longer a premium skill – means many young men find it difficult to transition to adulthood and must navigate new ways to accomplish masculinity (Bonner-Thompson & McDowell, 2020; McDowell, 2019). It is therefore important to understand how care emerges through a sexual division of labour where it can be used to consolidate or refigure patriarchal relations.

Elliott (2016) argues that the boundaries of masculinity must now be redrawn to include emotion, care and sensitivity, as this may have deeper impact on gender relations.

She depicts caring masculinities as those identities that reject domination in favour of care values, embracing ‘positive emotion, interdependency and relationality’ (p. 256).

Superficially this could suggest a ‘softening’ of male identity through more inclusive forms of masculinity. However, Allen (2007) is cautious of the way men who are ‘caring’ are constructed as ‘better’ than those who are not and therefore ‘caring masculinity’ may become a new hegemon, for example when deployed by certain Father’s Rights campaigners to

bolster the patriarchal order (Eisen & Yamashita, 2017; Jordan, 2018).

Fathering and care has been a particular focus of research, notably Doucet's (2004) narrative study with 70 stay-at-home fathers in Canada which found the majority remained complicit in subscribing to the unwritten rules of hegemonic masculinity prioritising paid work. In research with white heterosexual fathers who blog about fatherhood in North America, Scheibling (2018) highlights how fathers who blog identified caring dads as 'real heroes', incorporating caring into the patriarchal order. It is a construction that opens up new lines of power, repositioning them as 'saviours' or 'superdads' (Kaufman, 2013). In a brief overview of the international literature on fathering where men are primary caregivers, Hunter et al. (2017) speculate that caring masculinities may not mean an end to hegemonic masculinities, as many men may seek to reassert their 'breadwinner' status and labouing credentials through paid, unpaid and community work, 'thus asserting to others and reassuring themselves they are still men' (p.5).

Aitken's (2012) account of the 'awkward spaces of fatherhood' in the US, charts some of the difficulties particular men have in engaging in parental care and the uncomfortable, emotional consequences that result. By investigating the gendered geographies of care through mobility research in England, Barker (2011) found only two fathers out of 23 families he researched were responsible for escorting children on the journey to and from school. However, as Doucet (2004) shows, men can feel uncomfortable at Primary School gates where mothers congregate, share stories and enact gendered space. Hanlon's (2012) study with Irish males found respondents essentialised care as intrinsically 'feminine', 'natural' to women and wholly 'unnatural' to men – discourses which enabled them to perform as 'care-free'. While the small number of paid male caregivers he interviewed were more open, nevertheless they accommodated to the role by presenting as

‘professional’ and ‘entrepreneurial’.

However, possibilities for ‘regendering’ care remain (Boyer et al., 2017), as witnessed in Tarrant’s (2013) research with grandfathers in North West England indicating that older men construct distinctively masculine spaces of care, but these may change as they come to be mediated through intergenerational relationships with children and grandchildren. There are parallels here with Milligan and Morbey’s (2016) narrative account of older men’s experiences of spousal caregiving, investigating men’s unpreparedness for this gendered role, the impact this has upon their sense of identity, and the increased loneliness and social isolation that may transpire. Nevertheless, the level of support from wider family and community networks was found to shape how older men construct and perform caregiving. Possibilities for transforming masculinity through care relations is further evident in a telephone-interview study with 25 stay-at-home fathers in the US (Lee & Lee, 2018), building on Doucet’s (2004) pioneering work in Canada. Recent findings indicate that while men were concerned what others thought, and feared social isolation, stay-at-home fathers often came to forge better relationships with their spouses and children in the long-term, that led them to articulate a perspective that ‘caring is masculine’ (Lee & Lee, 2018). Given that care is a transnational process Hearn (2018) has advocated for ‘caring masculinities’ to be a policy aim across European nation-states with possibilities to universalise care (Chatzidakis et al., 2020). This would have widespread impacts upon paternity leave, work-life balance, and gender relations in the household and beyond.

The opportunity to care however involves material resources, time and embodied competencies that may not be available to all men, as Tarrant (2018) found in her research on the impact of austerity on low-income male caregivers in the North of England. The materiality of care is evident in ethnography with unemployed young men and teenage

mothers, where marginalised young women would invest in expensive buggies and designer babywear to avoid being stigmatized as ‘bad mothers’ (Nayak & Kehily, 2014). Boyer et al. (2017) further speculate on the possibilities for ‘regendering’ care following recession, where redundancy may lead to more men becoming stay-at-home-fathers. Material relations are strikingly evident for those living on the margins of society, with the state withdrawal of services and ‘care-precarity’ throughout the market (Raw & McKie, 2019). In a recent study with white unemployed young men residing in fading English coastal resorts, the absence of family support and public resources appears to have left many respondents reliant upon care from friends, while open to the risks of drugs and homelessness (Bonner-Thompson & McDowell, 2020). Increasing longevity across the Northern Hemisphere has resulted in growing care needs in a shrinking state in the US (England & Alcorn, 2018), a rise of male care-workers in the UK, the ‘masculinisation’ of nursing in Canada spurred by migrant men from the Indian sub-continent (Kaspar et al., 2019), and a steady growth in unpaid male carers caring for parents, in-laws, spouses and children (England & Dyck, 2014).

We extend this discussion on masculinity and care by addressing the lived experiences of the recipients of care themselves – in this case, children and young people. Indeed, far less is known about how care is received, interpreted, mediated and experienced by those dependent on care practices. In doing so, we elicit original ‘care accounts’ (Raw & McKie, 2019) from young people, illuminating what they understand as care, how care is masculinised and significantly, how it may be refigured. In the following section we discuss the research process, before proceeding to the analysis.

Young people, place and creative methodologies

Quarry Bay is a coastal area located in North East England, a region steeped in a history of coalmining, ship-building and heavy forms of plant engineering that has undergone large-

scale deindustrialisation (Hudson, 1998). Demographics indicate Quarry Bay has a predominantly white population at 96.6%, and according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for the period of January to December 2018, the percentage of workless households stood at 17.1 percent, which is above the national average of 14.3 percent.

The decimation of industry and the move to a service sector economy is reflected in a growth of retail and business enterprise parks found throughout the Bay district. In low-income areas in the UK local economies can play an important role in shaping care relations (Barker, 2011). Employment in Quarry Bay may also place time restrictions on care practices, with an abundance of telephone call-centres and diminishing fisheries industries that regularly involve nightshifts. Nomis official labour market statistics (ONS January 2019 – December 2019) reflect these transformations in employment which is now largely concentrated in a range of managerial and professional occupations (44.3%), including administration, secretarial work and skilled trades (19.3%), as well as care, leisure, sales and customer service occupations (20.9%). The sharp decline of industry means that only 4.8% of Bay residents currently work in process plants and machine operatives, with a further 10.1% described as being in ‘elementary occupations’.

Despite the erosion of heavy industry, the muscular forms of labour engendered in the industrial period continues to preside through the embodiment of a particular ‘hard’ masculinity in the present. Heavy labour, hard ‘graft’ and physical work retain high prestige in Quarry Bay. As masculinities scholars have shown it is still the case that body mass, the ability to ‘handle oneself’ and physical prowess remain very much alive in the region and can be traced in the post-industrial circuits of drinking, football (Nayak, 2003, 2006) and a masculine gym culture, where body-building and the use of steroids is not unusual (Giazitzoglu, 2018). Indeed, feminist geographers have argued for a more embodied approach to masculinity and care (England & Dyck, 2014). In response, our research with

young people engages with the emotional, embodied and relational aspects of masculinity through creative methodologies.

Recent years have witnessed an upsurge of interest in creative methods in human geography (see de Leeuw and Hawkins 2017; Hawkins, 2019) including painting to enhance encounters with young refugees and asylum-seekers (Askins & Pain, 2011), the use of interactive bingo to develop dialogue and ease tensions between new Filipino migrants and First Nations people in Whitehorse, Canada (Johnston & Pratt, 2017), or the practice of live performance theatre to showcase the Irish diaspora in Newcastle upon Tyne and the changing migrant labour market in Peterborough, UK, respectively (Richardson, 2015; Rogaly, 2016).

The research is a co-production involving the national children's charity Barnardo's, the Great North Tyne and Wear Museums and local Primary Schools in Quarry Bay. In total we worked with 120 young people, across five classes, derived from three schools. The girls and boys we worked with were aged 9-10 years, and we consulted with teachers, gaining prior consent from parents/guardians regarding our study. A robust process of ethical approval was undertaken, drawing on NSPCC guidance for researching children under 12 years, using an 'opt-out' parental/guardian form for consent, and completing a risk assessment assuring that any fieldwork research would only take place with teachers, school assistants and at least one representative from Barnardo's present in the classroom throughout. To maintain confidentiality pseudonyms have been used when it comes to participants, schools and surrounding locations. Although all children wished to participate in the project, some preferred not to have their voices audio-recorded but agreed that they were comfortable with classroom observations and fieldwork notetaking which we draw upon where appropriate.

The research proceeded through a series of phases with the school-based fieldwork completed over an intensive 12-week period during the Spring and early Summer of 2018.

Our research focused upon young people's ideas of masculinity and what it now means to be a man. We found that critical interrogation of masculinity was virtually absent in the UK Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education curriculum, and other forms of teaching on family and relationships. In the absence of any meaningful pedagogy on masculinities we began with an exercise where children were asked to pick a toy that was concealed in bags that we had purposefully arranged. During the exercise, it rapidly became apparent that it was largely permissible for girls to play with a fire engine or construction set when these appeared from the bag. In contrast, when boys drew out Barbie dolls or pink unicorns, this elicited a cacophony of hilarity amongst other classroom members.

The exercise operated as an 'ice-breaker' that enabled us to engage in a series of critical masculinities workshops with young people as they reflected upon the learning of gender appropriate behaviour. Throughout these workshops young people were encouraged to ask questions, to discuss perspectives and to draw on their wider experiences and understandings of what it means to be a man. This culminated in the production of several artworks created by young people, often working in small groups. There were no parameters on the format of the work they wished to present, other than that the artwork should be able to be framed and mountable in a museum gallery. Artworks included line drawings, paintings, poetry, pop-up art, collage, digital images, photographs, stencils, comics, posters and storyboard designs.

A total of 61 pieces of artwork were produced as many young people decided to work in either mixed or single-sex friendship groups of varying size. The artworks were then organised around a series of themes related to masculinity e.g. sport and leisure, work and employment, gender and equality, sexuality and embodiment. In this paper we discuss work concerned with masculinity, embodied care and emotion – a thematic segment that emerged through the data as opposed to being a classificatory typology imposed on the artworks. In

doing so we also draw upon our classroom observations and the discussions generated from critical masculinities workshops. To ensure the veracity of the data collected a digital recording device was used to capture group discussion and a field-note diary was also kept to document observations, comments and reflections as young people prepared their artworks. The auditory data were transcribed and later analysed alongside the thematically arranged artworks.

Masculinities and recuperating care

A critical aspect of care identified in the research is the way that caring relations may become 'masculinised'. In such cases the gender order is rarely disrupted, where care can be co-opted to reinforce and extend hegemonic masculinity. Often, many of the young people spoke about men as people who should be 'helpful', 'caring' and 'there for their children'. Further exploration revealed that men are expected to do this financially. Alicia, for example, understands masculinity through forms of neoliberal citizenship attuned to providing for the family.

Alicia: [My picture] It's showing what a man can do with me and that ... What dads can do with their family and that. ... Parks, places where your dad could take you ... and they need to earn money.

Why?

Alicia: They need to have some... work and bring in money for family and that.

Lakeside

Whilst there are some challenges here to gender relations, especially in terms of the temporal aspects of normative fatherhood, often these forms of care align with capitalist and heteronormative ideas of family life, where men are foremostly understood as archetypal 'breadwinners' (England, 2010; Hanlon, 2012; McDowell, 2005; Walby, 1986).

Consider Drew and James's colourful illustration in Fig. 1. It reads, 'A man who is working long, hard hours has just finished his 13 hour shift. He then receives his pay'. This picture depicts a beaming man in a suit, surrounded with money, and the unmistakable caption – 'Cha-Ching!' We are informed the man is feeling generous and making his way home, when he encounters a homeless man and 'floats him a note'.

Fig. 1 Encountering the homeless – about here

James and Drew elaborate on the message behind the comic strip.

Drew: It's a story of a male who is working long hours.

James: Hard long hours.

Drew: Hard long hours, so he works from six o'clock in the morning till eleven o'clock at night. And then he is very tired after a long day, so the concept is that he is working hard and then he gets his pay eventually and he's happy because he's got loads of money. And then he realises the homeless man across the street. So, he gives him money.... As well, my dad met a really nice homeless man who was very friendly and he bought him a packet of crisps, a sandwich and a drink, and it made his day. You can't tell...He's not like... you can't tell he's really sad. Like he'll probably cry happy tears to receive that drink... just a drink made his day.

Brockley Park

The homeless man is set apart from others as 'really nice' and 'very friendly', connecting to young people's experiences:

James: It makes you a good man to be generous and think of others.

Where do you think you've learnt that idea?

Drew: Because every time I see a homeless man, or someone who's like homeless, my dad, he just gives them money every time and it just inspires me.

Brockley Park

In this illustration being a man is about working hard, being generous and repairing the worlds of those who are economically and socially impoverished. Caring is inextricably

entangled with masculine ideals of paid work, family support, as well as success (Boyer et al., 2017; Hanlon, 2012; Hunter et al., 2017). For Bridges and Pascoe (2014) such engagements may fortify existing social and symbolic boundaries that often work to conceal systems of power and inequality in historically new ways. Indeed, the picture reveals two worlds: that of the neoliberal office with its dollar signs and homelessness on the street; disclosing how masculinities are spatially constituted. Moreover, as Connell (1995) reminds us hegemonic masculinities are not only produced through and against the bodies of women but also through subordinate masculinities, in this case unemployed and homeless men. The act of repair, while well meaning, creates an unlikely scene in the final frame. Here, the office worker and his homeless counterpart gain equivalence as 'best friends', glossing over the gross inequalities between their spatial habitus, lifestyle and futures. In this reading masculine caring ideals are bolstered through paid work and success, with care becoming a masculinised practice, rather than masculinity itself being reconfigured.

Along with the homeless, girls and women were constituted as vulnerable bodies and thereby recipients in need of masculine care. A familiar refrain was the scenario of men helping girls and women in distress. Rex and Freya explain the meanings behind their artwork.

Freya: So, our first one is that a girl fell over and a man has come over and helped her up with her knee. Then the second one is a girl paying money at the counter but she's a pound short and the man behind her gives her an extra pound.

Okay. What do they show?

Rex: Like, they're being nice.

Freya: Kindness and helpful, and always giving a hand.

I just wanted to ask, why are the men always helping women?

Freya: Oh, it's just because girls always get a lot more upset than boys when they fall over because boys just get back up and run around.

Brockley Park

Throughout each vignette we see a form of ‘heroic masculinity’ articulated, where men are constructed as ‘saviours’ to the homeless, women and girls who are constituted as vulnerable. The forms of care may involve physical acts but are often underscored by financial services and patriarchal notions of ‘protection’ (Hanlon, 2012). These practices do not necessarily disrupt the gender order or redistribute care in ways that challenge hegemonic masculinities. Rather the narratives and artwork illustrate the re-surfacing of the traditional ‘breadwinner’ role, the positioning of hegemonic masculinity above marginalised groups, with little critical space afforded to men’s own vulnerabilities.

Money is regularly seen as a solution for ‘repairing worlds’ (Tronto and Fisher, 1990) where capitalist exchange in streets and shops serve to affirm neoliberal citizenship. Historical patriarchal care relations are then not easily transfigured, as Raghuram (2019, p. 626) remarks, ‘if care is theorised as a practice, then we should also recognise that practices are indelibly inflected by these complex geohistories of existing practices of care.’ Thus, in one painting the gender order remained firmly intact where students used bullet-points to identify what made a ‘good man’ noting, ‘working, tidying up, help wife, earn money’. The emphasis on work, money and ‘helping’ wives places a primary emphasis on earning, and secondary one on care and domestic labour (Boyer et al., 2017; Doucet, 2004). In many of these situations men’s capacity to care is understood a product of their ability to participate in paid work, a key feature of embodying masculinity in the region. Therefore, these young people understand that for men (mainly fathers) to practice care, they are required to embody working masculinities.

Some of the young people we spoke with had troubled childhoods, documented in excerpts from our field-note diary observations.

When talking about a ‘good dads’ artwork, Adam says ‘I wish my dad was like this’.

When I ask him what he means, he says that he wishes his dad would do particular things

with him (play with him, emotionally care for him and take him for ice-cream), but he's always too busy.

Field diary (02.07.2018) Brockley Park

Finley is part of another 'good dads' group. He spoke to me about his dad not being around and how his mother stays in bed until 12pm.

Field diary (11.06.2018) Brockley Park

Adam's response reveals his longing for his dad to spend time with him where, 'fathers as a social group can still be thought of as existing outside of everyday gendered carescapes' (Barker, 2011, p. 418). Finley had breakfast at his cousin's house, suggesting parental care is difficult to achieve in financially constrained households where alcohol, drugs and mental health issues may preside. For these young people, what it means to care might actually transgress the material and financial, and start to uncover something different. Having explored the material aspects of care and its masculine recuperation through the 'breadwinner', in the following section we consider ways young people might move against the gender order, using a feminist ethics of care to rework masculinity. In doing so they reconstruct masculine care through bodily intimacies, affect, emotions and the unstable aspects of vulnerability.

Masculinities and redistributing care

Family and fathering were important topics for young people when discussing their expectations of men. Where in the previous section we saw how capitalist market relations underscore the potential to care, some young people went onto reflect how masculine care could still be expanded beyond the narrow confines of wage labour, highlighting a desire for fathers to be a continual presence in their daily lives (Elliott, 2016; Hearn, 2018). The emotional and affective qualities of care emanated through several accounts. Josh (River View) informs us in a group discussion how his picture, 'show[s] that a dad cares for people.

I mean a dad cares for children'. Many young people expressed a desire for affective capacities of care that generate warmth, kindness and love.

Rachel: To be kind and if you have kids and you're a dad you be nice to your kids. Read them things, hold hug them, give them what they want, give them a good childhood – and give them sweets! [laughter].

Brockey Park

The bodily intimacy of reading to, playing, holding or hugging children has the affective capacity to generate security and kindness that overtime may culminate in the creation of 'a good childhood'. In these examples the affective qualities of care hold the potential to create ontological security in young lives.

While the assumption is that men can only demonstrate care through the surplus value generated by their work, young people also critically reflect upon the possibilities of care for men who don't work.

James: It means that you're being really generous and ... helpful.

Drew: They work hard to help their family and stuff.

Okay. Do you think all men have to work hard to help their family?

Drew: Not all... Not all because some maybe don't work but help their children.

Brockley Park

That men may be unemployed, single fathers, retired, or primary caregivers is noteworthy considering the accounts in the previous section. Not enough is known about men's responsibilities as carers and the way in which structural forces such as a diminishing welfare state, may mitigate against resources of time, space and money (Barker, 2011; Boyer et al., 2017; England & Alcorn, 2018; Tarrant, 2018), however as paid work becomes precarious men's relations with care may be changing in unpredictable ways (Bonner-Thompson & McDowell, 2020; Boyer et al., 2017). For young people like James, the absence of paid work does not necessarily diminish a fathers ability to care for their children, but provides an

opportunity for other forms of care to be practiced.

Consider the images that comprise Fig. 2, where the focal point is a series of portraits of a man spending time with his children. A group of young people, Phoebe, Cait and Harriet, designed the artwork in the format of a family album with neatly framed images underpinned by what they believe constitutes a ‘good man’. Here, masculinity is crucially implicated in the repairing of worlds, where the man is seen comforting a crying child, hanging up a framed picture, or openly demonstrating affection as well as attending school prize-giving events. While these may appear relatively pleasant tasks, they should not go undervalued in Quarry Bay, where locally specific economic geographies valorise physical paid labour over care. It is these moments where young people see the ways men, especially fathers, can transgress spatially specific masculinities that take shape through paid work.

Fig. 2 ‘What makes a good man’. – about here

Phoebe, Cait and Harriet’s artwork also explores men’s vulnerability, recognising that men must learn to be emotionally vulnerable and receivers of care.

Phoebe: Sometimes people say that men are really strong, but sometimes it could be the opposite. Like they could be strong inside ... It’s like a picture of another man helping the man.

Cait: Like the main man is crying but the man ...

Harriet: The other man is helping him.

Brockley Park

There is a redistribution of care across the gender order where the carer and recipients are both men (Aitken, 2012; Hanlon, 2012). As Amanda showed in her depiction of an ‘emotional warrior’, men should be able to embody vulnerability in the same way women do.

Amanda: My picture represents two meanings – that men have feelings like women and can cry, rather than be told they shouldn’t.

Lakeside

Men's silences on vulnerability were acutely observed by young people.

Phoebe: My dad just recently broke his arm and he's not very... He's very independent and he's not really used to asking for help ... So, my mum's telling him, 'No you need help. You need help.' So, my mum's helping him.

Brockey Park

Stuart: I've barely ever seen my dad cry... I think to be a proud man ... you need to be kind and loving.

Lakeside

England and Dyck's (2014) study into men who are caregivers and care recipients is instructive; at crisis points it is evident that *everybody* needs care. However, for many men in Quarry Bay relinquishing bodily and emotional control does not come easily, an issue recognised by young people in their home lives.

In a final artwork we discuss, Drew and Evie at Brockley Park make a valiant attempt to highlight multiple masculinities and embed these within different configurations of power. Fig. 3 is formatted in the style of a storyboard. The illustrations represent a variety of marginalised men who are weighed down by a non-traditional bodily schematic. This includes 'glasses boy' who is made fun of as a 'nerd', 'Black skin man' who is shown being rejected from jobs and public spaces because of his colour, a gay man who is socially excluded, as well as conjoined twins and a man with a facial disfigurement who are each objects of fear and taboo. In this complex portrait, there is a direct engagement by young people with marginalised masculinities. Inequalities concerning bodily impairment, dis/ability, ethnicity and sexuality all figure in these representations, coming to splice apart understandings of masculinity as homogenous, heroic or hegemonic. In the storyboard these marginalised bodies are initially uncared for, stigmatized and frequently the objects of abuse and degradation.

Fig. 3 Marginalised masculinities – about here

Nevertheless, the portrait is underpinned by strong sense of hope, in which stigmatized bodies become the recipients of care from other bodies, usually men. The storyboard disturbs the sex-gender order in various ways. Firstly, by taking an intersectional approach showcasing difference and multiple masculinities; secondly, by addressing social inequality where not all men are seen to hold equal power or be privileged; thirdly, by placing an acute focus on the locus of the body and men's corporeal vulnerability; and fourth, by demonstrating the possibilities for future, radical social transformation in what it means to be a man. In reflecting upon the sophisticated elements of the storyboard, there is shift from men as the 'heroic' purveyors of care (Sheibling, 2018), to being both the providers and beneficiaries of care work. As Ragharam (2019) has recently argued intersectionality enables us to focus on moments and events where care can become unsettled, as illustrated in artworks. These representations provide significant insight into the ways young people understand masculinity and the politics of care across the gender order, which moves beyond the idea that men only have the capacity to care through what they may offer through paid labour.

Conclusion: recuperating and redistributing care

Influenced by feminist critical theory on care and emotions this study is situated in the politically contentious, emergent area of masculinities and care. Here, the idea of men caring for others is often seen to implicitly offer a reconfiguration of the gender order. Indeed, Elliott (2016: 255) has highlighted the 'disruptive potential' of care practices, arguing 'men's care can effectively change gender'. Although cognisant of this potential, and the possibilities for a universal radical caring ethos (Chatzidakis et al., 2020; Hobart & Kneese,

2020), our participatory research with young people around Quarry Bay yields ambiguous results where care is an unstable, diffuse and flexible felt practice. The unfolding of care relations is unpredictable, meaning that care itself can become masculinised and *recuperated* to shore up gender identities. Examples of this were repeatedly found in young people's artwork where those in need of care were invariably women, the homeless, disabled people, children and animals. Furthermore, some practices that young people imagined as caring were tied to the material 'breadwinner' identity and ideas of the neoliberal subject who works hard to provide, is generous with money, though remains a 'distant dad' (Barker, 2011). We contend that hegemonic masculinities are consolidated through many of these caring acts, in an extension of patriarchy that further subordinates marginalised others who are reduced to being the vulnerable recipients of care. The recuperation of care into the gender order in this way only serves to affirm gender difference. This does not mean that care is inconsequential to the formation of gender, rather 'care, and its neglect, are founding aspects of different versions of masculinity' (Hearn, 2018: 39).

Despite the significant finding that masculine care can be *recuperated* into the patriarchal system, research with young people also illuminated hopeful examples, where care is discharged and *redistributed* across the gender order. This was apparent in artworks that showed men supporting one another, admitting to frailty or vulnerability, developing interdependencies and generating affective care practices to enhance the life-worlds of children and others. We have argued for an elaborated feminist politics of care that is beneficial to both men and women, and capable of ensuring greater gender equality through an extended redistribution of care. We use these insights not only to 'stretch the boundaries of care' (Bartos, 2019), but to critique and 'hollow out' the gendered and capitalist constitution of 'work', 'care' and 'emotional labour' (Gibson-Graham, 2008). This is particularly pertinent for the formation of masculinities in Quarry Bay, where a historical

residue of labouring masculinities permeates the atmosphere, and notions of care and domestic work are routinely denigrated as feminised – part-time, menial, low-paid, unpaid, worthless labour.

Drawing upon young people's experiences and the materiality of their artworks adds vital empirical depth to current conceptual and theoretical framings of caring masculinities (Elliott, 2016; Hearn, 2018; Hunter et al., 2017), further extending our knowledge of everyday 'carescapes' (Bowlby, 2011). Where research on geographies of care has focused on the various actors, agencies and institutions for the delivery of care practices, less is known about the everyday experiences, desires and expectations of the recipients of care. Interview discussions, ethnographic observations and participatory artworks point to young people's desire for men to also be emotional and intimate caregivers. Young people clearly have important knowledge and insight on the potentials for men and masculinity.

The use of creative methodologies was instructive when it came to exhibiting the multiple, complex and contingent repertoire of masculinities that could be practiced. In some cases, masculine power is recuperated through caring acts. In others, young people 'craft' new understandings of masculinity through artworks where care could be transformative (Elliott, 2016; Hearn, 2018). Illustrations of 'radical care' (Chatzidakis et al., 2020; Hobart & Kneese, 2020) are exemplified in artworks that emphasise social inequalities, relations of power and the intersectional ways in which masculinity is skewered by class, ethnicity, sexuality or dis/ability. The use of creative methods further enabled young people to draw attention to the locus of the body as a site where difference is negotiated.

If the fledgling concept of 'caring masculinities' is to fully take flight, it requires theoretically-informed empirical research located in the accounts of caregivers and recipients. Critical attention to the recuperation and redistribution of care across the gender order is required to 'craft' future masculinities in more caring and careful ways. This is seen where

young people showcase the plural, diverse and elastic forms of masculinity engendered through caring practices, demonstrating their potential to disturb, refigure or implode hegemonic forms of masculinity in the journey to a more caring society.

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