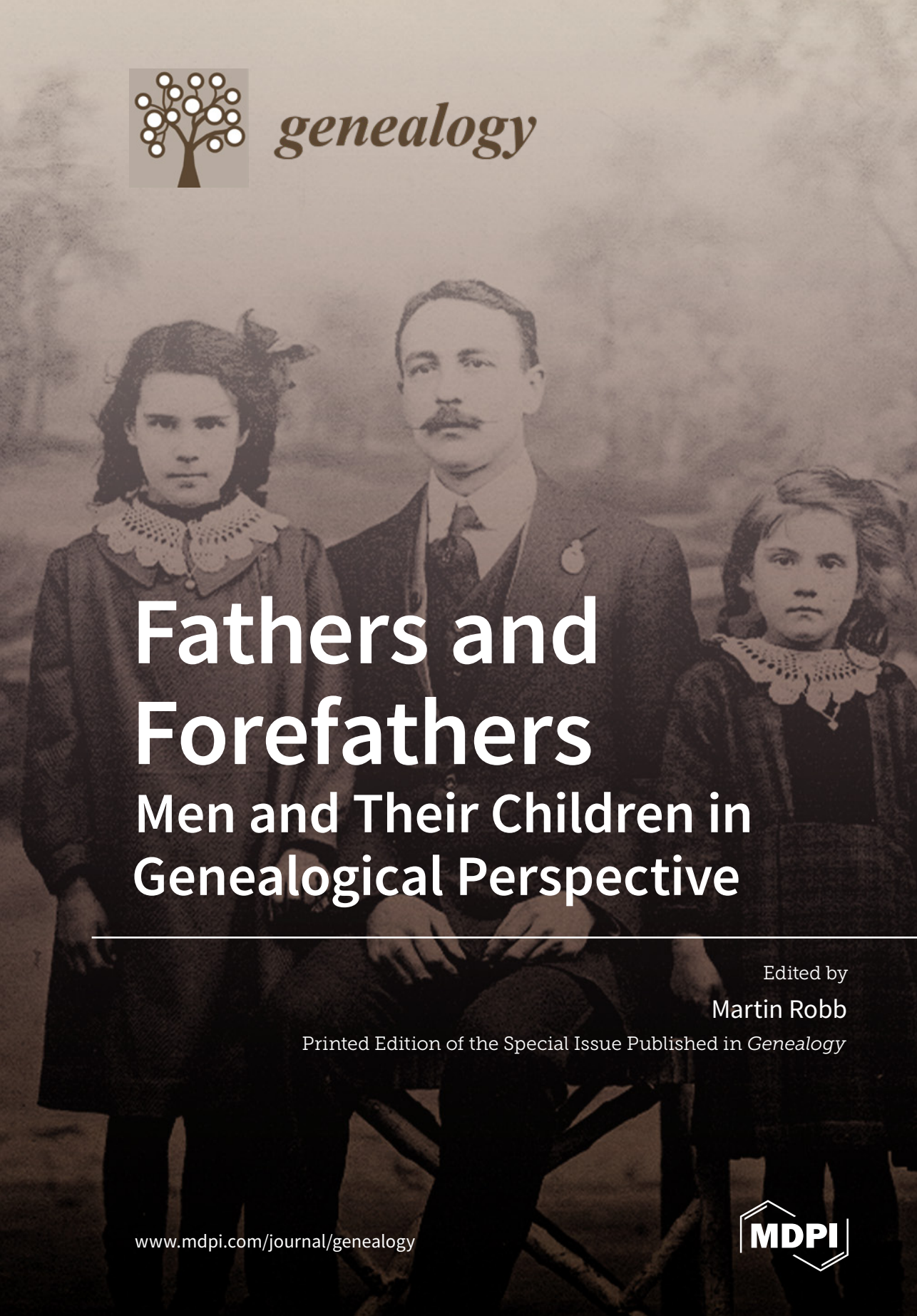*genealogy*

Fathers and Forefathers
Men and Their Children in Genealogical Perspective

Edited by

Martin Robb

Printed Edition of the Special Issue Published in *Genealogy*

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Editor

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Martin Robb
The Open University
UK

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About the Editor

Martin Robb is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies at The Open University (UK), where he is currently the academic lead for the Masters degree in Childhood and Youth Studies. His research has focused on issues relating to gender and care and has included studies of fatherhood, men working in childcare, and young masculinities. He is the author of 'Men, Masculinities and the Care of Children: Images, Ideas and Identities' (Routledge, 2020).

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Editorial

Fathers and Forefathers: Men and Their Children in Genealogical Perspective

Martin Robb

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies, The Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, UK; martin.robb@open.ac.uk

Abstract: This editorial article introduces the seven contributions to the special issue "Fathers and Forefathers: Men and their Children in Genealogical Perspective". It highlights the geographical, historical and methodological diversity of the contributions, as well as their commonalities, and the different ways in which they use a genealogical perspective to explore the relationship between past and present fatherhoods. The special issue, as a whole, aims to deepen the understanding of this relationship and to point the way for future theoretical and empirical work on this important topic.

Research on fathers and fatherhood has blossomed in the past two decades, with a number of ground-breaking studies appearing, for the most part illuminating present-day fathering experiences (e.g., Doucet 2006; Dermott 2008 and Miller 2011), but also beginning to uncover hidden narratives of past fatherhoods (e.g., Tosh 2007 and King 2015). This special issue aims to add something new to this expanding field by exploring the dynamic relationship between present and past fatherhoods.

Popular understandings of fathers in past generations, as being detached and uninvolved in the lives of their children, can be said to play a significant part in the construction of modern fathering identities, with many men defining themselves in opposition to the way they recall being fathered, and ideas of "new" fatherhood being played off against mythicized notions of historical fathering practices (see Robb 2020a). However, historical research has begun to show that these popular myths often misremember the past, judging it by current standards, and obscure the diverse nature of fathering practices in the recent and historical past, as well as globally and interculturally.

A genealogical approach to the study of fathers and fatherhood can critically examine these intergenerational constructions of fatherhood, and more positively illuminate the ways in which experiences of fathering and being fathered are passed on between generations. As Philip Kretsedemas wrote in the editorial to the inaugural issue of this journal, "genealogies can operate as a method for tracing pathways that unravel the definitions we impose on things and for exposing the limitations of familiar narratives" (Kretsedemas 2017).

For this special issue, we invited contributions that used a genealogical approach (broadly defined) to fathering and fatherhood, as a way of defamiliarizing accepted narratives and suggesting new ways of thinking about men and their relationships with their children.

The seven papers published as part of this special issue represent a rich and diverse range of responses to this invitation. The papers are diverse in their geographical coverage, written by researchers based in England, Scotland, Italy and Canada, and representing research from three continents. They are also richly diverse in their interpretation of the genealogical focus of the invitation, and indeed of the journal. Three of the papers (those by Ruxton, Scholar and Robb) draw on their authors' own genealogical research into their families' histories, demonstrating some of the ways in which these personal micro-histories can be a fertile resource for understanding fathering in the past, and the interaction between past and present fatherhoods. Scholar's (Scholar 2020) article explores

the ways in which DNA testing can "disrupt and unsettle" accepted family histories and notions of paternity, while Ruxton's (Ruxton 2020) and Robb's (Robb 2020b) examinations of memoirs and letters written by fathers in the time of war both illuminate and challenge stereotypical understandings of fatherhood in the past, as well as contributing to deepening the understanding of the often unexplored affective dimensions of fatherhood, and indeed of masculinity.

Three other papers are more broadly historical, with Grant and Bowe's article (Grant and Bowe 2020) exploring how stereotypical understandings of African-American fatherhood in the past continue to shape negative perceptions of black families in the present. Writing from Italy, Bosoni and Mazzucchelli (2019) use a review of the academic literature on fatherhood, published in two time periods in the recent past, to explore both generational differences and current debates about the supposedly changing nature of fatherhood. Clapton's paper (Clapton 2019) focuses on the history of a particular form of fatherhood, that of a child given up for adoption, in the process problematizing the concept of the "birth father", and prompting a re-evaluation of the ways in which the identity of "father" is conceptualized. The article resonates with recent debates about "absent" fathers, and with recent work, including some undertaken by the present author, on the consequences of losing a child in the perinatal period for fathering identities (Jones et al. 2019).

The contribution to the special issue by eminent fatherhood scholar Doucet (2019) is more explicitly theoretical in its approach than the others, setting out to provide a "Foucauldian-inspired genealogy" of a key concept in fatherhood studies: the notion of "father involvement". In so doing, Doucet seeks to disrupt the binary opposition between breadwinning and caregiving in academic and policy discussions of fatherhood. Like the more empirical contributions to this issue, this article prompts the reader to look at fatherhoods past and present, and the relationship between the two, with fresh eyes. It is to be hoped that this piece, like the special issue as a whole, will inspire new directions and developments, both theoretical and empirical, in this important and developing field of research.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Masculinity, Intimacy, and Mourning: A Father's Memoir of His Son Killed in Action in World War II

Sandy Ruxton

Department of Sociology, Durham University, 29 Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HN, UK; xzbh45@durham.ac.uk

Abstract: Emotional restraint was the norm for the bereaved during and after the Second World War. Displays of individual grief were discouraged, and overshadowed by a wider concern for mass bereavement. There is limited archival evidence of the suffering that fathers of sons killed in action endured. This article draws upon and analyses a powerful memoir written by my grandfather, lamenting the death of his only son killed in action near the end of the War. While most men contained their emotions in such circumstances, this extended lament expresses a range of deep feelings: Love and care for the departed son, tenderness towards other family members, guilt at sending his son away to boarding school, loss of faith in (Christian) religion, and a sense of worthlessness and personal failure. Of particular interest is the impact of geographical distance over which this narrative is played out, and what it reveals about the experience of one white British middle-class family living overseas, but strongly interconnected with 'home' (and specifically Scotland). It also documents the pain of prolonged absence as a result of war; often boys sent 'home' to board were separated from their parents for much of their childhood, and were forced to 'become men'—but not as their parents had envisaged. The article concludes by exploring the implications of this private memoir and what it reveals about memoir, masculinity, and subjectivity; gender and grieving; connections with 'home'; and constructing meaning after trauma.

Keywords: fatherhood; bereavement; trauma; masculinity; gender; World War II; memoir

1. Introduction: Motivation and Methodologies

Emotional restraint was the norm for the bereaved during and after the Second World War. Displays of individual grief were discouraged and overshadowed by a wider concern for mass bereavement (Jalland 2010). There is limited evidence of the suffering that fathers of sons killed in action endured, perhaps unsurprising given the official repudiation of displays of public grief, and the enduring constraints of embedded masculine codes of stoicism, courage, and patriotism, and rejection of intimations of 'weakness'. One reason for this lack of evidence is that the intimate lives of men have proven more difficult to study than those of women, in part because entrenched gender norms have inhibited men's desire to express their emotions openly. Reflecting this, historians have tended to prioritise the centrality of work and leisure as key issues in understanding masculine identity (Abrams 2017).

A recent turn in studies of masculinity away from social and cultural approaches towards interrogation of emotion and subjectivity is, however, revealing a more complicated picture. Although they remain influential, social and cultural frameworks have been criticized for tending to conceive of masculinity only in terms of external codes and structures, and taking for granted the processes through which men come to identify with such codes (Edley and Wetherell 1995). At the same time, analysis of autobiographical accounts, such as personal memoirs, has provided an opportunity to explore the subjective sense of self expressed in such accounts, and to decode notions of manliness and masculinity (Roper 2005a).

In this article, I draw upon both of these academic strands in my analysis. Critical masculinities research, which reflects both feminist and sociological/social-cultural perspectives, usefully highlights,

among other things, that there is no universal form of masculinity (hence 'masculinities'), and that commonalities and differences among men exist according to class, race, age, religious belief, disability, and sexual orientation. Masculinities are seen as dynamic, actively produced, and collectively constructed. Connell's work has been particularly influential in developing the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', describing the enduring dominance of certain forms of masculinity (usually white, middle-class, and heterosexual) over others (Connell 1995).

In addition, a psychological/psychoanalytic approach also has value in providing the tools to interrogate in more depth, as Roper puts it (Roper 2005b), the emotional experiences of men as public actors, the qualities and character of their relationships with others, and the place of unconscious motivations in social action. From this point of view, masculinities are regarded not just as a matter of social or cultural construction, but also as an aspect of personality. Connell too has recognised the importance of this approach, commenting in her seminal work, 'Masculinities', that a 'purely normative definition gives no grip on masculinity at the level of personality' (Connell 1995).

Critical ethnography is also relevant to my approach here, drawing attention to the importance of contextualising the position of the researcher in relation to the subject. It has been argued that one reason people conduct genealogical research is in order to understand their roots and to get to know their ancestors as people (Lambert 1996). I certainly recognise this motivation in myself, and that 'connecting through time' is a significant impulse. Lambert's characterisation of genealogists and family historians is apposite too: They are *memory workers* who are pivotal in the process of constructing their families' collective memories (Lambert 2002). As Yakel argues, they are 'both seekers and creators of meaning' (Yakel 2004).

In his article for this Special Edition of Genealogy on 'Fathers and forefathers', Robb raises the important, related issue of whether an academic researcher, who is also a family 'insider', may have access to additional material and resources that may unduly influence their interpretation of the material they have set out to analyse (Robb 2020). He notes that this is a particular problem if applying a strict discourse analysis, which pays attention to the text alone, but argues that a psycho-social approach, which explores personal motivations and subjectivity in more depth, might allow for other, relevant knowledge to be drawn upon. In line with this perspective, for this article I was able to supplement the primary source (my grandfather's memoir) with an oral history interview I conducted with my mother Margaret (his daughter) around 50 years after his memoir was written. In the interview, she sheds additional light on a number of important issues addressed in the memoir. For example, her memories of her happy childhood and her positive relationship with her father contrasts markedly with the melancholic tone of his text. I would argue that her 'counter narrative' provides a richer understanding of her father's emotional state and his fathering practices during this period; in particular, it appears to reflect the common split identified in the literature on men and masculinities between men's public and private presentations of self. Although there are risks in family researchers making exaggerated claims on the basis of scant evidence, in this instance these fears seem misplaced, and the additional account of my mother adds important context to the memoir.

2. Key Themes

This article analyses a powerful memoir written by my grandfather, Alex MacDonald, in 1945–1946, lamenting the death of his only son, Ian, killed in action near the end of the Second World War (MacDonald and Ruxton 2017a). Contrary to the stereotype that men contained their emotions in such circumstances, this extended lament expresses (albeit in private) a range of deep feelings: Love and care for the departed son, tenderness towards his wife and daughter, guilt at sending his son away to boarding school, loss of faith in (Christian) religion, and a sense of worthlessness and personal failure.

The memoir also reveals an intimate picture of a middle-class white British father spending significant amounts of leisure time with his young son, reflecting the growing pressure by the 1920s for fathers to be companions to their children, and partners to their wives. Unlike their 19th century

counterparts, fathers were increasingly expected to play a role with older as well as younger children, participating with them in sports and leisure activities, and taking them on trips (Pleck 2004).

This emotional closeness can be contrasted with the impact of the geographical distance over which this narrative played out after Ian was sent to boarding school in Scotland at age 13. Living in Chile, Alex sadly never saw his son again in the flesh after 1937 and prior to his death in February 1945 while serving with the Allied forces pushing into Germany in the last months of the Second World War. His wife, Susan, only saw him in the last four months of his life, having made the perilous journey by boat across the Atlantic in order to do so.

Tellingly, although the interwar period offered young people far greater freedom in their social relations, Alex's memoir contains very little information about Ian's teenage years, other than references to his school and cadet achievements. Although his parents' decision to send Ian to Loretto School as a boarder appears to have been prompted by a desire to 'toughen him up' and 'make him a man', they played little part in this process. Instead, the threat and reality of war meant that boys like Ian were forced to grow up quickly and 'become men' through the imposition of the strict, muscular codes of school and services. Alex's memoir also reflects the experience of migrants from Britain—and more specifically Scotland—after the end of the First World War, renewing an age-old pattern. Under the Empire, migrating Scots had always been soldiers, missionaries, merchants, doctors, engineers, scientists, planters, and administrators. The 1920s exodus reached unprecedented levels, in part stimulated by a collapse in world trade and economic decline at home (Devine 2011). While they were part of the Scottish global diaspora, Alex and Susan also felt strongly tied to Britain and to Scotland, and this attachment was, understandably, especially strong during the War when their son was serving in the forces. Although not discussed in detail in this article, Hall's important work on 19th-century links between Birmingham and Jamaica has demonstrated that such interconnections reflect more than just a binary between domestic and imperial; they also point to the ways in which 'Britishness' (usually subsumed under 'Englishness') needs to be understood not only in terms of class and gender, but also of race and ethnicity (Hall 2002).

3. Alexander MacDonald: Migration, Marriage, and Family

Alex MacDonald (commonly known as 'Mac') was the grandfather I never knew. He was born in Glasgow, Scotland, on 26 September 1894 and educated at Hutchesons' Boys' Grammar School in the Gorbals area of the city. He served as a Second Lieutenant in the 6th Battalion of The Seaforth Highlanders during the First World War and was invalided out, having been wounded in the leg, and also been affected by poison gas. During his convalescence, he qualified as a chartered accountant with the Glasgow Institute of Accountants and Actuaries in 1919, while living with his sisters in the relatively affluent area of Cathcart in Glasgow.

As a result of being gassed, Alex suffered from acute asthma; he probably inhaled chlorine or phosgene, both significant lung irritants. Apparently, the doctors believed that in his case, nothing more could be done to help him in Scotland. It was, therefore, suggested he move to a dry climate, where the lungs would be less affected[1]. Having been appointed to a position with the accountancy firm Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths, and Co. in Chile, he was unexpectedly redirected on arrival in South America to the office in Lima in Peru. Unfortunately, the damp and foggy conditions in Lima were very unsuitable, and it was only eight years later that he was able to move to Santiago, where the climate was much better for his health. More happily, he met and married his wife, Dorothy (commonly known as 'Susan') in Lima, where she worked for the British Consulate as a secretary, having previously been employed by a government Ministry in London during the First World War. She was born in the

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[1] Several destinations were proposed, including California, Australia, and Chile.

Bahamas in 1896; her father was a Wesleyan Minister and an aspiring poet and author, and her mother was a journalist and author, too[2].

In Chile, Alex and Susan were active in the British and Chilean communities and had many friends in both. He worked as Senior Partner in Deloitte's, before becoming Managing Director of Odeon, a subsidiary of E.M.I. (Electrical & Musical Industries), a job he much enjoyed because of his great love of music. Outside work, he designed several renowned golf courses[3] and wrote a guide to trout fishing in Chile, finally published posthumously by his grandson (my brother) in 2017 (MacDonald and Ruxton 2017b). They were very involved in charitable work. For example, she helped set up a soup kitchen after one of the serious earthquakes in Chile, obtaining an M.B.E[4] for her efforts[5]. They were both very committed to supporting Britain during the Second World War, and he was Chairman of the War Effort, for which he received a C.B.E.[6] in 1943.

In his memoir, Alex details some of the key individual events that impacted, either positively or negatively, on their family life: "The ups and downs were many but principally, the birth of Ian in 1923, the death of Mary Elizabeth Florence at the age of eight months in 1925, Ian's illness in 1927, the birth of Margaret in 1932, Susan's M.B.E. in [left blank, 1934], Ian's winning the Intermediate Honour Cup in 1933, my illnesses in 1930 and 1939, my C.B.E. on 1 January 1943, Margaret's musical triumphs, and finally the awful tragedy of 1945." What stands out here of course is "the awful tragedy of 1945", referring to the death of their son. It is clear that this cataclysmic event had a profound impact on both his parents: "The war was over for Ian and life was over for Susan and for me."

4. Ian Lester MacDonald: 'Remembered with Love and Pride'[7]

An obvious explanation for Alex's motivation to write his memoir is that it met the desire to grieve privately and achieve some form of catharsis in so doing. This, however, is not how he describes it himself (even though it was probably the case, consciously or unconsciously). In July 1946, over a year after his son's death, he states: "I do not know why I am doing this other than that I have the urge to do it, just one of those things one does without knowing why". He notes the time that has elapsed, and that he has not sought to complete "this poor attempt to record Ian's short career and to analyse my feelings".

Ian Lester MacDonald was the uncle I never knew. The bare facts of life are as follows. He was born in Edinburgh on 6 April 1923 and grew up with his parents in Peru and Chile, before being sent to boarding school in Scotland at age 13. At Loretto School, he did well academically, passing his School Certificate quite young. He became a House Prefect, was in the VI (6th) Form, Hockey and Swimming Teams, and was a Sergeant in the J.T.C (Junior Training Corps). In July 1941, he left Loretto, and in August of the same year, he joined the Royal Artillery. After two months in the ranks, and a six-month

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2   George J.H. Northcroft wrote the first real book to be published in the Bahamas (Sketches of Summerland, giving some account of Nassau and the Bahama Islands, Nassau, (Northcroft 1902)). Later works include: How to Write Verse (Smith's Publishing Company, (Northcroft 1915)), and Writing for Children (A. and C. Black, (Northcroft 1935)). He was also editor of the Boy's Own Annual from 1933–1935. His first wife, Emily Florence Northcroft, was a journalist, and wrote religious books, with titles such as 'Forces that Help'. She died at age 40 or 41 in 1913 or 1914. He married his second wife, Dora Northcroft, in 1917, but they later divorced. She was a successful journalist and author, editor of Housecraft Magazine, and wrote books such as Yarns on Women Pioneers (J.K. Whitehead, (Northcroft 1944a)) and Girls of Adventure, Frederick Muller Limited (Northcroft 1944b).

3   At Pucon, Los Leones, Santo Domingo (in Chile), and Los Inkas (in Peru).

4   Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.). It is the third highest ranking Order of the British Empire award, behind C.B.E. which is first and then O.B.E.

5   See Supplementary Materials to the London Gazette, 4 June 1934, No. 34056, p. 3567.

6   Commander of the Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.). CBE is the highest ranking Order of the British Empire award. King George V created the Orders of the British Empire awards during World War I to reward services to the war effort by people helping back in the UK (i.e. not on the front line).

7   Remembered with Love and Pride' is the inscription on Ian MacDonald's headstone in the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Rheinberg, Nordrheinwestfalen, Germany. It was chosen by his parents.

course at Aberdeen University, he passed out as First Cadet at his O.C.T.U. (Officer Cadet Training Unit) and was commissioned in October 1942.

He then trained for active service in various parts of England, and a few days after D Day saw fighting around Caen in Normandy as part of the invasion of France. Following this, his troop was disbanded and he transferred to the infantry (rather against his wishes), and joined the Black Watch. Following several months of retraining, he was sent over to Germany on 14 February 1945 as a Lieutenant in the 5th Battalion, which formed part of the 51st Highland Division[8]. The battle fought by the Division in the Reichswald lasted almost three weeks, from the 8–28 February[9]. Ian was killed in action on the night of the 25 February, while leading his men in an attack on a farm building (which turned out to be a disguised pillbox) southwest of Goch (at Robbenhof). He was hit by a burst of Spandau machine gun fire from one of the loopholes, and was buried with 10 comrades nearby[10].

5. "My Own Literary Limitations": Development of a Narrative

Traumatic events are remembered differently from the everyday, but there is no consensus about the relationship between trauma and memory. In some cases, subjects remember a particular event with great clarity, whereas others may suppress painful memories as a survival mechanism. What is clear, though, is that those who have experienced trauma have often not come to terms with it when they write. Also, this may prevent them from producing a coherent narrative. Indeed, their accounts may be disjointed, deeply emotional, and upsetting to the narrator and readers alike (Abrams 2010).

Alex's memoir was handwritten in four unequal tranches over a period of just over one year following Ian's death. The first, headed 'March 1945' (and presumably drafted then) starts by reproducing the laconic words of the telegram informing the parents of Ian's death:

"Important. Deeply regret report from Western Europe. Lieutenant I.L. MacDonald Black Watch killed in action 25 February 1945. The Army Council express sympathy. Letter follows."

Under Secretary of State for War.

It then describes Alex's experience and feelings in the immediate aftermath, and the painful wait in Buenos Aires, with his daughter, for Susan's return by boat from the UK (not knowing when that would be). The second begins by stating that "now over ten weeks have passed" and is headed 'June 1945'. It covers V.E.Day[11], and the consolation he and his wife felt as a result of King George VI's speech on that day. Then he returns to images from Ian's childhood: Their hopes for his future when he was born, the discovery at age four of a leaky valve in his heart and a heart murmur, pride in Ian's school career in Chile and Scotland, and the family's holiday with 5-year-old Ian in the UK in 1927.

The third, and longest, section ('July 1945') is the most poignant. It begins "Another month has passed and, if anything, the wound is deeper. The letters from his Commanding Officer and Company Commander on the field have arrived and tell us how bravely Ian died". While it is not clear precisely when these letters were written, they obviously only reached Santiago three or four months after Ian's death. No wonder the wound was deeper than before. Alex goes on to describe Ian's life as a boy in Chile: His achievements at the Grange School, the fishing trips they took, his skill at horse-riding, teaching him to play golf and piano, and the family's leave in England in 1937 when they parted and Ian left for Loretto. The section concludes by outlining Ian's career at Loretto and in the army, and ends by recounting the circumstances in which he was killed.

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[8] This brief biography is based on the entry in the Loretto School Roll of Honour, 1939–1945, reproduced in full in Appendix III of (MacDonald and Ruxton 2017a).

[9] Details of Operation Veritable, including maps, plans, and photographs, can be found at http://ww2talk.com/index.php?threads/veritable-1945-51st-highland-division-reichswald-forest.74787/.

[10] Undated letter from Major W.B. Johnstone to Ian's guardian (Major Farquhar Young), Appendix I, in (MacDonald and Ruxton 2017a).

[11] V.E. Day (Victory in Europe Day) is the day celebrating the formal acceptance by the Allies of World War II of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender of its armed forces on Tuesday, 8 May 1945, marking the end of World War II in Europe.

The final short section ('July, 1946') records that "another year has passed—time goes so quickly, I did not realise it was so long". Alex then reveals that Susan has been operated on twice recently, but states "I firmly believe we have seen the end of that trouble". He feels Ian's spiritual presence and that "he wants me to devote the rest of my poor life in looking after Susan and Margaret, and doing as much good as I can for my fellow men". He concludes by reflecting upon his own failings and lack of self-worth ("I am often bad-tempered, petty and unreasonable"), his doubts as to whether "the sacrifice of so many magnificent young lives was to any purpose", and his fears for the future of humanity.

Alex makes no claims of literary merit in relation to his memoir; indeed, he tends to downplay his own talents. In the Introductory Chapter to his earlier book on trout fishing, he states that "a knowledge of my own literary limitations" caused his written efforts to be confined to a few press articles. Yet his memoir is structured with more skill than is at first apparent. Within the named time periods, the narrative shifts from a significant event which grabs the attention—the arrival of the fateful telegram, memories of V.E. Day, the letters from Ian's army superiors—to Alex's memories of Ian over the years, and his reflections following his death. This structure both mirrors how memory often operates, not in linear fashion but prompted by different triggers, and maintains the interest of the reader.

6. Mourning and Melancholia

In his essay on 'Mourning and Melancholia' (Freud 1917), Freud provides psychoanalytical scaffolding for understanding the process of grieving that has remained influential. He argued that mourning and melancholia are similar but different responses to loss. In mourning, a person deals with the grief of losing of a specific love object, and this process takes place in the conscious mind. In melancholia, a person grieves for a loss he is unable to fully comprehend or identify, and, thus, this process takes place in the unconscious mind. Mourning is considered a healthy and natural process of grieving a loss, while melancholia is considered pathological.

Building on this foundation, Lindemann, through his empirical observations of grief in hospital patients, differentiated between healthy and pathological grief on the basis of the intensity and duration of their symptoms (Lindemann 1944). Among various more recent theories, the work of Kübler-Ross remains popular, setting out a relatively simple, but not necessarily linear, five-stage theory of emotional reactions to grief: 'Denial', 'anger', 'bargaining', 'depression', and 'acceptance' (Kübler-Ross 1969)[12].

The tone of Alex's memoir is one of grief and sadness throughout (although there are moments of tenderness, and a few playful digressions of gentle humour, that lighten the text[13]). What is particularly striking, though, is that Alex's mood towards the end of the memoir seems darker than earlier, even though he is trying to look forward: "I am not the man I was. My work is not what it was and sometimes I feel afraid of the future. I suppose two wars and Ian's death have been too much for me, apart from other lesser troubles". Whereas in the second section he reacts positively to the King's speech on V.E. Day, and feels that "Ian's sacrifice did mean a great deal", by the end of the text he is doubting the purpose of the sacrifice of so many young lives. Traumatic memories bring forth a range of emotions, and the process of remembering is complex. The experience is raw, and the author (and those around them) are hurting and confused, and the emotions can be overpowering. In these

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[12] The Kubler-Ross five stages of grief cycle:

1. Denial: Shock and disbelief that the loss has occurred.
2. Anger: That someone we love is no longer here.
3. Bargaining: All the what-ifs and regrets.
4. Depression: Sadness from the loss.
5. Acceptance: Acknowledging the reality of the loss.

[13] For example: "I remember when he wrote out to us on one occasion . . . to say that he did not think he had the brains to be a Chartered Accountant and thought he had better be a diplomat. I told that to one or two members of the British Embassy in Santiago, who took rather a dim view of it! It must be tough to go through life entirely devoid of a sense of humour!"

circumstances, trying to make sense of what happened, and begin the process of healing takes time. In many cases, 'closure' is never fully achieved. As the novelist and biographer, Blake Morrison, has said of his well-known 1990s memoir about his father (Morrison 1993): "There is no closure. I still find myself writing about my dad, even now. I go on thinking about him".[14].

If his memoir was intended, even though Alex does not say so, to achieve some form of catharsis, then one has to wonder here whether he achieved this objective. From the point of view of the Kübler-Ross model, he seems stuck in the 'depression' stage, experiencing feelings of sadness, regret, fear, and uncertainty, but no genuine acceptance of Ian's loss. Yet, an interesting footnote here is my mother Margaret's account of her father, from the interview I conducted with her in 2006[15], where she paints a picture of a much more optimistic and fun character: "A lot of my childhood was spent roaring with laughter because all these wonderful people that were friends of my parents were so amusing, or they were so nice to me anyway. It was all jokes, lovely jokes, my father was always full of silly jokes . . . He was very funny. Very entertaining". It is not clear exactly what period she is describing here, but given she was born in 1932, it was presumably just before or during the War. While Alex's feelings about his life were very negatively affected by Ian's death, it appears he (and my grandmother) managed to maintain a happy and stable home life for their daughter publicly, even though they were internally emotionally broken by his passing. To put it more positively, it may be that the reality of caring for and bringing up their daughter aided such healing as they were able to achieve, and gave them a reason to look to the future.

7. Writing, Men's Silences, and Privatized Grieving

There is a view that to write an effective memoir it is better to wait until the pain has been processed. As Byron said: "While you are under the influence of passions, you only feel, but cannot describe them" (Byron 1850), and in some cases, it may be decades before an experience can be addressed (Sissay 2019)[16]. However, books composed in the immediate aftermath of a tragedy can have value, too, enabling the writer to engage with the raw emotion they are feeling, and perhaps thereby help others to do the same.

Writing is a solitary activity, removed from the continuous interchange of day-to-day conversation. It allows space for reflection, and a heightened sense of interior exploration, freeing the narrator from challenges to thought and feeling. Writing 'makes possible increasingly articulate introspectivity, opening the psyche as never before not only to the external objective world distinct from itself but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set' (Ong 1982). Writing also creates an enduring record, giving it a life outside and beyond the narrator. This particular form of expression helps to underpin the construction of a 'composed' personal narrative, which can both draw on shared cultural imagery and internal psychological processes (Dawson 1994). Roper highlights that writing can be a means of attempting to contain and put boundaries around difficult experiences, and that unconscious motivations may also be 'at work' in shaping a text (Roper 2001). Research has also explored the role that silence and (in)visibility play in how men interact (Rutherford 1992). Recent work has illustrated how men can both obscure their inner emotional lives, thus reproducing hegemonic masculine ideals of staying strong and stoic in the face of adversity, while they, on occasion, also seek to make aspects of their inner lives seen and heard (Schwab et al. 2016). These processes of filtering, both consciously and unconsciously, stressful events are evident in Alex's text.

Even if it was certainly the most deeply wounding, Ian's death was not the only tragedy to afflict my grandparents. Indeed, Alex refers to the death of Mary Elizabeth Florence in Lima at only eight months old but makes no attempt to explain what happened. In fact, as his daughter (my mother)

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[14] Quoted in Rachel Cooke (Cooke 2018), 'Blake Morrison: You must write a memoir as if you're writing a novel', Guardian, 10 March 2018.
[15] Margaret Ruxton (nee MacDonald), interviewed by Sandy Ruxton, Cheltenham, 31 May 2006 (unpublished).
[16] A recent example is Lemn Sissay's memoir about his time in the care system (Sissay 2019).

explained in my interview with her, her parents had to go to Chile on a boat trip, leaving the baby with Auntie Leena (one of her father's sisters) and her husband. However, when they got back the baby had died during an epidemic of meningitis. Although the cause was the disease, there was perhaps always the feeling that Mary Elizabeth had not been looked after properly. According to my mother, the relationship between the parents and Auntie Leena was never close after that. Nevertheless, the fact that Auntie Leena was appointed as her godmother suggests at least some degree of rapprochement and forgiveness by seven years later.

One can understand that the tension this death caused within the family was one reason why Alex would skate over it in his account, especially as the key participants were still alive at the time of writing. While his memoir was not intended to be published, it was undoubtedly easier not to explore these issues in any depth, especially if there was any risk they might overshadow the main focus on Ian's death.

Presumably this is also one reason why Alex makes only passing reference to his own experiences in the First World War. However, the harrowing nature of these, and the desire to avoid engaging with them is no doubt another. As he says early in the text: "I had seen close friends fall by my side in the last War and had been deeply affected." Yet he doesn't talk about these events, nor is there any hint that he wrote about them on another occasion. He notes only that "in the last war (1914–1918), I used to call myself a fatalist, which was another way of saying that, if you were going to get it, you would get it. If your name was on a shell or a bullet, it was no good worrying about it or thinking you could do anything to avoid it. It would happen sooner or later". The only other mentions of the First War are towards the end of the memoir about his son, when he quotes from two well-known poems 'In Flanders Field'[17] and 'For the Fallen' (the latter read every year at the Remembrance Day service)[18]. These few asides are the closest he comes to acknowledging the impact of the First War on his own life. Yet the respiratory problems he endured throughout his life were significant, and probably contributed to his premature death in 1954 at age 59.

Similarly, he mentions, but only in passing, his illnesses in 1930 and 1939, but does not say what they were, even though it seems likely that they were relatively serious. At the start of his book about fishing in Chilean rivers, which he says was originally drafted in 1940, he writes that " . . . an unexpected turn of events provided me with a lot of spare time on my hands and the search for an outlet to occupy those hours of leisure is the 'raison d'être' of this book". Assuming that he is referring here to the later of his two 'illnesses', Alex again downplays his own ill-health and what may have caused it, even hiding it behind the circumlocution "an unexpected turn of events"[19].

The lack of attention to his own woes displayed throughout Alex's memoir reflects a wider pattern of changing responses to death and loss that emerged at the time of the First World War, and became entrenched as a norm during and after the Second World War. Ex-servicemen chose to forget the horrors of the Great War, and preferred not to tell their families much, if anything, about their own suffering. Rather, there arose a "necessity for courageous silence" (Walter 1999), especially when the children of such veterans were required to fight in the Second World War. Jalland suggests that the change which prioritised stoicism in the face of loss was more intensive, widespread, and long-lasting from the 1940s on: "Open and expressive sorrow was more strongly discouraged in favour of a pervasive model of suppressed privatized grieving which became deeply entrenched in the nation's social psychology" (Jalland 2010).

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[17] *In Flanders Fields* by Canadian military doctor and artillery commander Major John McCrae, written during the Second Battle of Ypres in May 1915.

[18] Robert Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen' was composed in 1914 in honour of the casualties of the British Expeditionary Force at the Battle of Mons and the Battle of Marne.

[19] In a 'Brief Biography' of Alexander MacDonald, probably written jointly by my parents, it is stated that "He was persuaded by friends to write an account of his experiences in this field when he had a few months of enforced idleness in 1938 owing to illness". The slight differences visible here in dating his later illness may reflect the fact that the writing was undertaken over a period of up to two years. The biography is included in (MacDonald and Ruxton 2017b).

A particular focus was on "bearing grief with silent courage as the dead sons would have wanted" (Jalland 2010). This formulation is echoed in Alex's memoir. Describing his son's 'sacrifice', he suggests that "we must be up and doing and not give way to our grief—I am sure that is what Ian would have wanted me to do". Similarly, the emphasis of letters from other bereaved parents in World War II is that the sons would have wanted them to be strong and stoical, with the implication that expressive grief was self-indulgent and unhelpful to the war effort (Jalland 2010).

8. Intimacy and Fatherhood

Of the recent emotional turn away from social and cultural approaches towards subjectivity, Abrams writes that: "By recovering articulations of selfhood and emotion, by bringing 'subjectivity and emotion back into view', historians have begun to write an alternative history of men and masculinity that privileges subjectivity and the self" (Abrams 2017). For Roper, it is important to place relationships and the webs of care in which they are suspended, understood as psychic as well as social and cultural constructs, at the centre of study (Roper 2005b).

So how are relationships described in Alex's memoir, and what does this tell us about gender, masculinity, and fatherhood? The biographies of Alex and Susan, together first in Peru, then in Chile, suggest their life together was full, and on a day-to-day level, largely contented. As their daughter confirmed, they were sociable, they had lots of friends, and contributed significantly to the communities of which they were part. In his memoir, Alex acknowledged he often tried Susan's patience and she often irritated him, but overall he underlined their love for each other and the strength of their partnership: "I have always loved Susan and there never could be anyone else in my affections. Throughout twenty-three years of married life we had had a lot of ups and downs but had always loved each other . . . In our case there was plenty of character on both sides and, I think, a great deal of genuine understanding."

He notes how much he relies on his wife's support: "She has been such a help to me, bracing me up when I feel depressed and encouraging me to greater efforts". The support she provided went wider, too, to other members of the community (and was no doubt the source of her M.B.E. in 1934). Her daughter recalled that "she was always helping somebody. She had a lot of lame duck type friends who needed help and support, and she was there. She was good that way". While Margaret thought this involvement came partly from her background in the Methodist tradition, it also reflects the long-standing assumption that women should be primarily responsible for care, celebrated as mothers within the family, and for 'doing their bit' in the community.

At various points in Alex's narrative, it is Susan who takes a key role in managing family events and relationships. On family visits to Britain, she goes ahead with the children (with Ian in 1927, with Ian and Margaret in 1936), while he had to stay at home for work reasons. This was still a big commitment for her to undertake alone. In 1944, she was determined to go on her own, risking her own safety in order to spend time with her son before he went into action in the final months of the war. When she arrives in Argentina at Easter 1945, having learned in Freetown of Ian's death and crossed the Atlantic with this knowledge, her "attention was diverted somewhat to Margaret, who had to get better of 'litre' poisoning[20] and needed clothes".

Although Alex always regretted that he was unable to go on the final journey to Britain to see Ian, he comments that: "Those four final months of Ian's life were filled with the companionship and love of his Mother and are her most treasured memory". During the months of further training and battle courses that accompanied his transition to the infantry, "he had the good fortune to have Susan somewhere not far away, always ready to listen to his troubles and to give him the advice and

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[20] *Lithraea caustica* (commonly known as the litre tree) is a species of flowering plants in the soapberry family, common in central Chile. It is a well-known allergenic and can cause a rash of the skin, the effects and susceptibility of which can vary greatly from person to person.

encouragement he so much required". Here he positions Susan as the one who tended to undertake emotional labour within the family, listening to Ian's worries (and also, as noted earlier, to his own).

So what of Alex's notion and practice of fatherhood? He registers his pride, shared with Susan, at his birth: "All our hopes were centred in him and for the next twenty-one years we gave him everything it was in our power to give". He describes the next year or two after his birth as "uneventful", even though these years encompassed the important stages of cutting teeth, and learning to walk and talk. It seems unlikely that his mother would have described these keys events with such detachment. Nevertheless, he covers the discovery of Ian's leaky heart valve and heart murmur in more detail, and returns repeatedly to his concerns about these weaknesses later in the memoir (see 'Toughening Up: Becoming a Man' below).

In the 1920s, fathers were increasingly urged to be involved with their sons in order to provide proper gender role models. This thinking was influenced by Freudian psychology, which gained traction in this decade (Pleck 2004). Particular concern was over boys who were deemed 'sissy' or effeminate, and it was recommended that fathers should do sports and outdoor activities with their sons in order to build boys who were appropriately 'manly' (Rademacher 1933).

Although there is no evidence that Alex was directly influenced by such notions, he says much about the activities he undertook with Ian in his childhood. He attempts to teach him golf and piano, goes horse-riding with him and, in particular, takes him on fishing trips. He describes a "wonderful and unforgettable" holiday in the summer of 1933 when Ian was 10 years old "He learned to ride a horse and caught a fine one pound rainbow trout casting from the bank, to my intense satisfaction". Later he records that "He and I rode a lot together particularly in the early mornings when he had school holidays and it gave me the utmost pleasure to see him ride so well and with such obvious enjoyment". On a farewell fishing trip to the South of Chile in 1936, he comments on the similarities of their characters and how well they got on: "Ian and I had a lot in common, the same things appealed to us, we had a similar sense of humour, and he was a fine companion for me".

Notably, Alex mentions in passing that Ian called him 'Daddy'; while the term 'dad' was used in the 19th century, the term 'daddy' was invented in the 1920s and indicated a growing level of affection for fathers. Pleck records, however, that 'daddy' was a term used more by girls than boys. Daddy was supposed to be his daughter's companion so that she could learn about the world of men (Pleck 2004). In his memoir, Alex's affection for his daughter is very evident—and her interview suggests the feeling was mutual. The day after the telegram arrived, he stresses "What a comfort she was to me then and has been ever since! I saw very clearly that her sweet young life must be preserved and that our small family life must be rebuilt around her". Later he emphasises that: "Margaret is a wonderful consolation to us both. She is such a sweet girl, so full of life, so intelligent and so devoted to us and her home". He concludes that "My one great desire now is to see that her life is a happy one, as far as it lies within my power to do so".

Alex says little about domestic life with the family, and does not recount key events such as birthdays and anniversaries. Of course, he spent more time at work, and was probably not at home as much as Susan was, but perhaps also he did not feel able to talk with as much authority as his wife about domestic matters, as the habitual gendered division of labour meant that 'home' was more likely to be considered 'a woman's place'. In my interview with her, my mother also records that they had a maid (Bertha) who came when she was a baby and stayed all the time until her mother (my grandmother) left Chile in the late 1950s. They also had a cook, and both lived in. In other words, much of the domestic labour was 'outsourced' to other working women, so it is unsurprising that Alex knew less about it, and participated to a very limited degree.

9. 'Home' Schooling in Scotland

A key moment in Ian's short life was his parents' decision to send him to senior school in Scotland. One reason was probably that the Grange School, although modelled on British educational principles, had only been founded in 1928 and had a relatively small number of boys attending. His parents

may, therefore, have felt that an established public school in Britain would offer wider opportunities. They also believed, however, as many other Scots overseas did, in the benefits of a specifically Scottish education and, therefore, sent Ian 'home' to board at Loretto School, in Musselburgh, East Lothian, to complete his education[21]. He started there in September 1936, having travelled from Chile with his mother and sister in August of that year.

Alex does not record whether Ian himself was in favour of this move, but no doubt he accepted it, despite his attachment to his life in Chile. Having stayed behind (presumably due to work commitments), Alex arrived in Britain in April 1937 to reunite with all the family, taking a holiday in Seahouses, Northumberland. Their subsequent parting at Euston Station at the end of September (from where Ian would travel up to Loretto, and the rest of the family would leave the next day for Chile, via New York), suggests that, whatever the external appearance, the separation was difficult—especially for Ian: "My last recollection of Ian is a painful one—a small boy with his eyes filled with tears saying goodbye".

As it turned out, Alex did not see Ian again after 1937 and knew him as a man only from photographs and his wife's descriptions of him in the last few months of his life. In other words, his father did not see him from age 13 until his death at age 21, and thus missed out on being a day-to-day part of his adolescence and his transition to adulthood. Nor, of course, did his mother, apart from right at the end of his life.

According to Alex, "As far as we know, his life at Loretto (1936–1941) was happy—in any event he loved his old school, that we do know and surely that is the answer". He noted, too, however, that: "He had his ups and downs at Loretto and showed a lot of pluck in overcoming the difficulties which handicapped him". He refers later in his memoir to "that unfortunate physical weakness which must have been very embarrassing for him and was undoubtedly the main reason why he was rather quiet and shy by nature". Alex records that Ian's physical weakness "handicapped him at games, particularly rugger", noting also in a nod to the muscular approach of the school that rugger "is very important at Loretto" (Mangan 2012)[22]. Nevertheless, it did not appear to hamper Ian too much as he was in the first 11 for hockey, and also played subsequently for Aberdeen University.

The phrase "as far as we know" chimes with the further revelation that "his letters were few and far between and he was a thoroughly bad correspondent"[23]. Although it may well be true that, in retrospect, he loved his old school, my mother's recollection does not accord with the perception that Ian's life at Loretto was "happy". She told me: "He seemed to be desperately homesick. One thing I used to hear them say was: 'Another week's gone by, no letter from Ian, no letter from Ian'. He was very bad about writing. He told my mother when she met him that he couldn't bear it, he was so homesick. Isn't that awful?". She remembered her father used to write to Major Farquhar Young (Ian's guardian in Scotland) and say "'Can you get Ian to write to us, please?' He did write, but not very much . . . I think he was desperately homesick. One or two of the letters said: 'I can't wait to get back to Chile'".[24]

It is hard to reconcile these very different accounts of Ian's experience at Loretto. It seems likely that his parents just did not know how homesick Ian was, especially as his mother said she was told this by Ian at the end of his life. My grandfather may also have skated over the reality of Ian's homesickness in his memoir, because acknowledging this would have made him feel more guilty than

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[21] By coincidence, my father, Allan Dey Ruxton (1925–2017), also attended Loretto School during the same period, having been sent by his Scottish tea planter parents from what was then Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Although a couple of years younger than Ian MacDonald, he and my father are pictured at one stage in the same school hockey team photograph!

[22] Loretto School always had a strong reputation for emphasis on physical activities and exercise, going back in particular to the leadership of H.H. Almond, Headmaster from 1862–1903 (see Mangan 2012).

[23] Ian's Headmaster at Loretto, Dr. Greenlees, also noted in a letter in Appendix I to the memoir that Ian was "not a great correspondent even when not overburdened with work".

[24] The view that he was homesick at Loretto, at least in the early years there, is reinforced by the reproduction of a postcard to his sister, Margaret, in the front of the memoir. Sent from Lake Villarrica in March 1936, when he was on the farewell fishing trip with his father, it shows him in a happy frame of mind prior to his departure for Loretto.

he already did for sending Ian away to Loretto. Perhaps the most convincing explanation is that both accounts have some truth to them as they reflect different periods of Ian's experience at Loretto. His early homesickness—common in the early stages among children who board—may well have been replaced later by feelings of affection and belonging.

Whatever the reality was, it is clear that his parents later had doubts about their decision to send Ian to Loretto, and regretted the time that they were apart from him: "I often wonder, in the light of subsequent events, if we had known then what the future held in store for us, would we have sent Ian to Loretto? We did what we felt was best for the boy, and if it was wrong in that it may have deprived him and us of a few years of happiness together, I should be eternally sorry". My mother confirmed in her interview that they certainly regretted sending him. Indeed, the seven or eight years of absence must have been an appalling wrench, particularly as those years formed a third of Ian's life.

10. 'Toughening Up': Becoming a Man

One question worth exploring is what prompted Alex and Susan to send Ian to Loretto, especially given their subsequent doubts. It seems likely that their motivations were similar to those described by Heward in her study of the interplay between Ellesmere College, a minor British public school, and the approach of different groups of middle-class parents who sent their children there in the interwar years (Heward 1988). Drawing on over 2000 letters written by parents to the headmaster and governors in the period 1929–1950, she explores the aspirations, plans, and fears of the parents, and what they reveal about the role of such schools in the construction of masculinity. For most parents, it was important for sons to be brought up as capable providers, and prepared for occupations and careers (preferably professional ones). Being a man was, therefore, primarily about being a good breadwinner and having a high, secure income from a respected occupation. Boys' education should be prioritised over that of girls, as the latter would most probably marry and be dependent on their husbands. In general, there was a division of responsibility between fathers and mothers; fathers were more concerned with fees, and the management of their sons' education and careers, and mothers with their health, welfare, and clothing. In the cases of boys whose parents were abroad, there was often much correspondence (often with guardians as intermediaries) with the school about school reports and holiday arrangements. In line with these aspirations on the part of the parents, and drawing on historical legacies of fears of degeneration and national decline and the desire to reinforce physical courage and stoic endurance (Tosh 1999, 2008), elite schools such as Ellesmere sought to define and enforce particular masculinising practices among their boys. These included rigidly enforced dress codes, discipline, academic competition, hierarchy, team games, and gender segregation among the staff. Having said this, Roper suggests that the reality was more nuanced than in Heward's account (Roper 1990). For him, public school education in the interwar years fostered some contradictory images of manliness, for example, by celebrating moral conformity while being profoundly homoerotic, and preaching manly independence while demanding slavish obedience. Also, although public schools could result in psychological scars, he argues that Heward plays down their active role in empowering middle-class boys and lifting them to a new class position.

Based on their middle-class backgrounds, it seems likely that Alex and Susan largely subscribed to the public school ethos described by Heward. Alex's language and comments certainly suggest a desire for Ian to 'toughen up' and an expectation that being sent away to school in Scotland would make him into a man. He writes that in his last year at the Grange School, Ian was a boarder, "so as to be 'broken in' for Loretto". He says Ian always took part in the games at both his schools, and "never shirked", even though he was "very small for his years always". He notes too how he had "often thought in recent years of that small boy of four years old with the weak heart, who grew into a tough Loretto schoolboy and later a fine hardy soldier". Similarly, he wonders at Ian's transformation into a "big handsome tough young Black Watch officer", clearly a source of great pride to his parents: "He evidently showed ability and leadership of a high order and we were naturally very proud of him".

The emphasis here is on a particular form of (hegemonic) masculinity to which boys and young men were (and, in many ways, still are) generally expected to aspire, characterised by 'manly' competitiveness, stoicism, patriotism, heroism, and avoidance of 'unmanly' weakness, interrelating to affirm (adult) masculine identity. This model of masculinity is entrenched by military organisations, and the underpinning values are publicly endorsed and institutionalised in national culture, especially in times of war (Higate and Hopton 2005; Connell 1998). Within this context, it is no accident that Ian's bravery, and the "gallant" attack that led to his death should be celebrated in his father's memoir, and in the letters sent to his parents afterwards by his superior and by the minister who prepared his body for burial.

Given the dominance of these ideals of masculinity, it is unsurprising that Ian, too, seems to have assimilated these values. However, knowing that he had a history of physical weakness, his 'shyness' in his youth, and his homesickness at school, it is interesting to explore whether Ian really felt comfortable in this new 'tougher' shell, and how this transition took place. Of course, he had no option but to enlist—to do otherwise would have been seen as cowardice. However, contrary to some men's accounts of their anticipation and excitement at the prospect of engagement, their sense of embarking on a great adventure, and their desire not to be 'left out' (Nagel 2005), we have no sense of this in relation to Ian. What we do know is that he, according to his mother's testimony, was "strangely quiet on that day of parting" (11 February 1945). The minister also recorded in his letter that "Ian was a little nervous on the Sunday of his death and I noticed it in our little chat after the 'D' co[mpan]y service". It is impossible to know precisely how he experienced these occasions and what his state of mind was at this time, and there are risks of over-interpreting the limited evidence here. No doubt he felt fearful of what was to come, and it may be that he did, as his father suggests, have "a presentiment that he would not come back". He may have been especially anxious because of his enforced transfer from the artillery to the infantry, and the very different, close-quarters fighting role that this would be likely to require. Though, perhaps underneath it all, he never felt at ease with taking on the mantle of the tough manly heroic soldier, leading his men, when his heart was still with his family and what seems to have been a happy—even idyllic—early childhood in Chile.

This final reflection recalls aspects of Rutherford's analysis of masculinity and Englishness in the late 19th and 20th centuries, namely, that for upper- and middle-class boys sent away to public schools, the prohibition on male emotional expression meant that the trauma of being torn from home could never adequately be repaired. As he notes, this resulted in an inescapable tension between a desire to return to close family identification in boyhood and the need to assert manhood through distance from it (Rutherford 1997).

11. 'Floundering in a Sea of Doubt': Faith and Death

In the 19th century, Christian faith heavily influenced the cultural norms around death and mourning, providing a model of acceptance of death as the will of God, consolation for the bereaved, and some hope of immortality—and even reunion—in Heaven. Sorrow was often expressed in highly emotional terms, drawing on the language of the Bible, the prayer book, and popular hymns. However, from 1914 onwards, religion became a less dominant force in practices around death and loss, and Protestant churches in particular appear to have offered less comfort and spiritual leadership than previously. Instead, it can be argued that such leadership gradually shifted to medicine and psychology (Jalland 2010).

Reflecting this move away from finding consolation in faith, Alex's memoir is suffused with religious doubt. Having just heard the news of his son's death, he calls out in anguish:

> "There was no God! There could be no God to allow this sort of thing to go on in the world! What possible Divine purpose could there be in allowing a few unscrupulous politicians—call them Nazis or Fascists or anything you like—to wreck everything there was decent in life and plunge the world into a holocaust of death and destruction! As I paced the floor, I was imbued with a spirit of revolt against God, against everybody and everything".

Nevertheless, on the Sunday following the news of Ian's death, he attended Holy Communion at 8.30 a.m. and his daughter went with him to Morning Service at 10.30 a.m. He relates how gravely he suffered at those services, especially the latter, but maintained "I had to go. I was asked if I would like a special hymn and chose Onward Christian Soldiers but was unable to sing a word nor could I sing a single word of God Save the King at the end of the service".

This sense of confusion and desperation, tinged with revolt, is echoed later in the manuscript. Writing in July 1945, he notes that: "The Bishop says the only help we can have is from the Holy Spirit—it must be wonderful to get that comfort and I can only assume that my faith is not strong enough yet for that as I am still floundering in a sea of doubt and grasping for a helping hand". At the end of this section, he again doubts whether Ian's death can be seen as part of the Divine Plan: "The ways of the Almighty [God] are exceeding strange and, if one believes in anything at all, one must accept Ian's early death as part of the Divine plan. Say what you like, it is hard to believe that!" Not only does religion not offer him consolation, but there appears to be nothing else to replace it either.

At this point, only just over year after the tragedy, it is clear that Alex is, at best, struggling with his faith. Moreover, his writing refers on more than one occasion to his sense of his own worthlessness and personal failure: "When I analyse my situation, I feel that I have been a failure in life. What have I achieved? In the material sense, little or nothing—in the cultural and spiritual fields, nothing". This bleak self-assessment, especially from a man who achieved so much, and was certainly a key figure, alongside Susan, in the British-Chilean community, reflects the depth of his grief. Perhaps Alex's loss of self-esteem here reflects continuing symptoms of Freudian melancholia, whereby the ego is itself presented as worthless.

It is hard to say how long Alex's disillusionment with formal religion lasted, but it appears he became reconciled and was consoled by his faith later on (as was Susan). We know from my interview with my mother in 2006 that they attended Anglican Church almost every Sunday, and that he played the organ there most of the time. Margaret certainly believed that religion was a comfort: "It helped. I think it did help. I'm sure it did. I think she got pretty angry about God's will being this, but they propped each other up very well. They were really amazing . . . they did have great faith. I do know that".

12. 'Our Great Country': Interconnections with 'Home'

An important aspect of Alex's narrative is the relation between his middle-class family in Chile (and, prior to this, Peru), where he settled and established his family, and the 'home' country (Britain, or more precisely, Scotland[25]), and the impact of the geographical distance over which this is played out.

It is unsurprising that Chile was regarded as one of the possible destinations for Alex when it was suggested at the end of the First World War that he leave Scotland for the sake of his health. As well as a more conducive climate, the British had been very important in the formation of the Chilean nation and British communities were established in various parts of the country (Edmundson 2009) [26,27].

Having said this, British influence declined significantly in the interwar years. At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, more than 30% of Chile's imports were from Britain. However, Britain emerged from the Great War as a debtor nation and no longer had the capacity to lend (Miller 1991), and British traders struggled to remain competitive (Barton 2000). Thereafter, British interests in Chile declined rapidly (as they did in Latin America in general), further challenged by the inroads made by

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[25] The influence of Scots in the British Empire and overseas more generally, as administrators, settlers, temporary residents, professionals, plantation owners, and as military personnel has long been recognised. See (Mackenzie and Devine 2011).

[26] The history of Anglo-Chilean relations, going back as far as Bloody Queen Mary in 1554 (who was also Queen of Chile), and continuing up through the colonialist period, left a legacy which spread into society at large. Immigrants moved initially to the port of Valparaiso, and then to others, such as Punta Arenas, Iquique, and Pisagua. British technology in mining, railway, maritime infrastructure, and other industrial applications predominated in Chile in the latter half of the 19th century, continuing through to the 1930s.

[27] Even today, over 700,000 Chileans may have British or Irish origin, amounting to about 4% of the population.

American businesses. The reality was that by the mid-1930s Britain had become more important to the region as a market than as the traditional provider of manufactured goods (Edmundson 2009).

For those who emigrated or were based in Chile it was nevertheless important to retain their links to 'Home' (as it was for most other Britons who settled abroad, either as part of the Empire or beyond). They brought with them neighbourhoods of white, British, middle-class character, schools, social, sport clubs, business organisations - and habitual practices such as afternoon tea (still observed by Chileans as 'onces'). Against this background, Alex and Susan's wide community connections are readily explicable, as was their decision to send their son to the Grange School in Santiago.

In his Introduction to his book on trout fishing, Alex makes explicit the similarity he sees in aspects of the Chilean landscape and his Scottish homeland, and the positive feelings that this arouses in him: "Certain parts of the south of Chile remind me very much of my native land (Bonnie Scotland) and, in recalling to me the beauty of that little country north of the Tweed, stir in me a deeper affection for the land of my adoption, my second home". In a biographical tribute, probably added in the 1990s by his daughter and her husband (my parents) they confirm that "Alex MacDonald had an abiding love for his native Scotland and for his adopted country, Chile, and its people, among whom he had many friends".

Despite this wholehearted affection for Chile, his parents were determined that Ian should have British nationality. When Susan was pregnant with Ian, they were living in Lima, but they returned to Edinburgh for his birth. As Alex comments in his memoir, "we had been so anxious to have him born on British soil, and we certainly had achieved our object . . . he would carry on the family name and we would do everything possible to prepare him to become a worthy citizen of our great country". In the end, their primary allegiance was "to our great country". One assumes here that the country is 'Great Britain', although it could be read as referring to Scotland specifically.

This attachment to Britain and 'Britishness' is reinforced in several places in Alex's text. As mentioned earlier, both he and Susan had played a significant role in organising support for the war effort in Chile, and the contribution of British citizens overseas in terms of manpower and materiel was significant (as was that of citizens from British colonies, especially in India, West Africa, and the Caribbean)[28]. Given their son was enlisted in Britain, their participation would no doubt have been strongly reinforced.

When Susan returned to South America having visited Ian (in what turned out to be the last four months of his life), he describes her on arrival as exemplifying 'British motherhood': "Dressed in a very smart black costume with a gold Black Watch badge on the lapel—a present from Ian—she looked so well, so brave and I have never been so proud of her. To me she exemplified British motherhood, one of the main reasons, if not the strongest reason, why we as a nation have pulled through this war . . . " He does not define precisely what he means by this term, but it appears to signify to him a certain pride, loyalty, strength, and sense of duty and service, especially in support of the forces.

A couple of months later, he reflects that V.E. Day (8 May 1945) gave rise to a sad mixture of feelings for him and his wife: "Grief that Ian was not there to celebrate it and would never return and restrained joy that our great country had been delivered from this dreadful ordeal". This, of course, was a common experience. Amid the rejoicing in cities around the world, many people were mourning the death of a friend or relative, or worried about those who were still serving overseas. For many, the jubilation of V.E. Day was, therefore, hard to bear. For my grandparents, though, it was the measured and slow deliberation of the King's broadcast speech that stood out for them from that day, giving them succour, and renewed motivation: "What a message for the bereaved! It was as if he had spoken to us. We had sought comfort in so many ways without avail and as the days passed felt less and less

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28 Troops from the British Empire fought in every theatre of war during World War Two. For example, over 2.5 million Indian citizens were in uniform during the war. The colonies also sent large quantities of food and other materials to British and Commonwealth forces, and to the British at home. (Sherwood, M. 'Colonies, Colonials and World War Two', http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/colonies_colonials_01.shtml).

inclined to take part in anything. But, after listening to the King speak, we could not but feel that Ian's sacrifice did mean a great deal and that we were letting him down if we did not try for the rest of our lives to do something, however humble, for our fellow men."[29]

Interestingly, Alex doesn't mention that the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, also made a radio broadcast that day, announcing the welcome news that the War had ended in Europe[30]. What is not in doubt is that they were very patriotic and admired Churchill immensely. As my mother told me: "They thought Churchill was just brilliant . . . At the time his speeches were quite formidable. They really kept the morale of the people up. I'm sure they did." This was felt not just by Alex and Susan, but also by many others in the British community, who listened avidly to B.B.C.[31] broadcasts and, in particular, the latest news and Churchill's speeches. It is worth noting, however, that this patriotic framing of Churchill's role in the War is not the only perspective here; in recent years, this discourse has been challenged by some as a romanticised and partial myth, impeding an honest interpretation of British history (Heffer 2015).

13. Discussion

13.1. Memoir, Masculinity, and Subjectivity

The motives for writing memoirs vary widely. Among these, achieving catharsis (a healing of one's own—and others'—wounds) is often paramount. For others, it is important to preserve a story that would otherwise be forgotten. As noted earlier, Alex says he does not know why he is writing, other than that he has an urge to do so. He describes his work as "this poor attempt to record Ian's short career and to analyse my feelings". Clearly, though, he is in some way seeking to recall his son's life and their relationship in order to make sense of the cataclysm that befell them, and to set down and interrogate an important moment in family history. In doing so, he narrates a story that is worth telling, and resonates with the untold stories of so many others from that time.

Virginia Woolf said the reason so many memoirs are failures is that they leave out the person to whom things happened. "The reason is that it is so difficult to describe any human being. So they say: 'This is what happened'; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened" (Woolf 1976). To what extent then do we get a good sense of the author and his son from this memoir?

Alex places himself at the centre of his narrative, tending to write in the first person using 'I'. By contrast, research shows that women tend to place themselves within a web of relationships in their narratives, relying more often than men on 'we' or 'us' in describing events (Abrams 2010). Having said this, Alex makes only fleeting reference to the impact of the traumatic experiences that he underwent during the First World War ("I had seen close friends fall by my side in the last War and had been deeply affected."), and how they coloured his life later. Of course, the main focus here is on Ian, yet one cannot but wonder what Alex's life was like before. His silence about his early life and, in particular, his experience of the Great War is telling, and reflects the fact that ex-servicemen often chose to forget the horrors, if they could, and preferred not to tell their families about them (Walter 1999). In a sense, then, he may implicitly be writing about two wars, rather than just one.

Despite the fact that his story is only really picked up from Ian's birth in 1923 (when Alex was already 28 years old), we learn quite a lot about his outlook. He is informed by his white, middle-class

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[29] Alex was probably reflecting the penultimate paragraph of the King's speech in particular: "We shall have failed, and the blood of our dearest will have flowed in vain, if the victory which they died to win does not lead to a lasting peace, founded on justice and established in good will. To that, then, let us turn our thoughts on this day of just triumph and proud sorrow; and then take up our work again, resolved as a people to do nothing unworthy of those who died for us and to make the world such a world as they would have desired, for their children and for ours". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wv9CcPUU9dw&feature=emb_logo.

[30] Winston Churchill spoke at 3 p.m. and King George VI at 9 p.m. (UK time). Santiago was five hours behind, so in theory at least my grandparents could have heard both speeches during the daytime.

[31] British Broadcasting Corporation.

upbringing in Scotland: He is hard-working, intelligent, patriotic, and committed to duty and public service. He provides for his family, and is tender and loving towards all its members. He is enthusiastic about his many pursuits and hobbies and, reflecting emerging notions at that time of fathers as companions, he is keen to share them with his children. He has a delightful sense of humour, has many friends (both British and Chilean), and is very sociable.

Yet in spite of these many positive attributes, his memoir is heavy with self-doubt. He says he is often "bad-tempered, petty and unreasonable". He states that he has achieved nothing in either the cultural or spiritual fields. Under the stress of two world wars, and Ian's death, he feels that he has been a failure in life. It is hard to reconcile this self-image with the picture his daughter provides of her father: "[He] was always full of silly jokes . . . He was very funny. Very entertaining", and the happy times she spent with him.

Of Ian, we learn something of his character in different moments: Early on, his frailty, his shyness, his sense of humour. Later, his transformation into a handsome, tough, army officer. However, inevitably, it is hard for Alex to explore how this transition happened, as he was not physically present during this process, and only had irregular letters and his wife's testimony at the end of Ian's life to draw upon. He repeats his pride in the adult Ian turned into, yet the poignant absence is his teenage years, only populated by school and army achievements. Notably, his father records that they had a lot in common and that they had a similar sense of humour. There are also hints, highlighted earlier in this article, that Ian also had some of the emotionality and self-doubt that his father described in himself.

A critical masculinities perspective may be helpful here in making sense of the apparent tensions and contradictions between what Alex (and possibly Ian, too) displayed in public and what he felt in private. He appears, consciously or unconsciously, to subscribe to a certain type of masculinity, forged and inculcated by the daily practices and routines of institutions such as the family, church, school, and armed services: Tough, independent, rational, and keen to avoid anything that smacks of 'weakness' or femininity.

These common, collective features are not only produced from unique personal histories, but also by a web of dynamic social, cultural, and psychological forces that go into the making of masculinities, shifting over time and space. Jackson writes in his ground-breaking autobiography, 'Unmasking Masculinity' (Jackson 1990): "Many men hold themselves together through these public presentations of self" that maintain the appearance of correctness and certainty. This pretence is sustained through many men learning to manage a split in their daily lives: "the division between their working relations and a whole range of unsettling emotions that they try to keep buttoned up but which leak out in personal relations, usually at home". Jackson suggests that it is only by recognising these inconsistencies between public actions/relations and everyday feelings, pains, and desires (and wanting to do something about them) that it becomes possible for men to change their lives.

13.2. Gender and Grieving in the Second World War

During the Second World War, the discouragement of expressive and open grieving resulted in a veil of silence being drawn over the suffering of bereaved parents. As highlighted earlier in this article, powerful cultural norms submerged individual traumas beneath mass bereavement. To speak openly of one's sorrows was regarded as selfish when so many others were suffering in silence. It is important to note that at that time there was no guidance for the bereaved to help them understand or cope with their grief, and no bereavement counsellors to encourage them to talk through their pain (Jalland 2010).

This prescription of silence became entrenched and lasted well after the War, so many families continued to grieve privately, often for many years, while outwardly putting on a show of having come to terms with their loss. Alex records that the general expectation among their acquaintances, after they had expressed condolences, was just that they would get on with their lives: "apart from our very close friends, who knew Ian and can appreciate in some measure what we are suffering, or those who have had the same experience, the general mass of acquaintances have expressed their sympathy either verbally or in writing and now feel that we must be getting over it as we seem to be carrying on

with our lives in a more or less normal way. It is just an incident, a tragedy if you like, which has come and gone like a ship passing in the night. But for us there is no slackening of the pains!" He goes on to note that "it is said that time is a wonderful healer but so far I feel that time can only make us realise more and more how much we have missed".

One important observation here is that men and women in British culture have tended to grieve in different ways, with men submerging their feelings and women being more expressive (Walter 1999). Jalland comments that the obligation to remain silent, therefore, fell especially heavily on women during the Second World War (Jalland 2010). Of course, individuals vary in how they deal with grief, and from Alex's memoir we understandably learn more about his experience than that of Susan. He wrote about his son's achievements and his own feelings, and appears to have consoled himself in part by building a strong relationship with his daughter, and immersing himself in those pursuits that he loved (principally music, golf, and fishing). It seems likely that Susan, meanwhile, talked more about her feelings to her friends. My mother's comment that her mother had various 'lame duck' friends suggests not only that Susan was looking after other female friends, but also, implicitly, that they were looking after her in return.

13.3. Connections with 'Home'

Even at a considerable geographical distance, expatriate, white, middle-class families felt a huge desire to feel connected to news from Britain. No doubt they felt this more acutely precisely because of the distance between them and their home country. Radio provided a lifeline in terms of finding out about current affairs, but of course it was much harder, especially in wartime, to keep up with news about friends or relatives. A noteworthy feature of Alex's memoir is the emphasis on the importance of telegrams and letters for this purpose: He complains that at school, Ian was a 'thoroughly bad correspondent'; he is read the stunning telegram telling him his son has been killed; he receives letters from Ian's commanding officer, from a major in charge of his company, and from the Church of Scotland minister who led his burial service, with commiserations and details of his killing.

Alongside this is the importance of long-distance journeys to and from Scotland: In 1923, so that Ian could be born there; in 1927, so that his heart diagnosis could be verified; in 1936, to deliver him to Loretto School; and, of course, the trip that Susan made in late 1944 so she could see Ian as an adult during his retraining and before he went off to the front again. By this stage, the Battle for the Atlantic was largely over, so presumably it was felt that it would be safe enough for her to risk the crossing—a journey that she was determined to make[32]. Alex notes that Susan kept in touch with him through telegrams during her stay in Scotland, and that he, therefore, knew by mid-February 1945 that Ian had, in his words, "gone overseas again". One must assume either that she did not know precisely where Ian had been posted to and/or she was unable to reveal this in a telegram. Having said this, Alex notes that by about a week later, the B.B.C. had been full of the work of the 51st Highland Division, and that the Black Watch (Ian's regiment) had been mentioned specifically. He comments: "I knew—or rather felt so strongly that it amounted to knowing—that Ian was in it".

Most poignant of all are the descriptions in Alex's memoir of the journeys made in the immediate aftermath of Ian's death: Susan returning "in a blacked-out ship on the high seas", who "would know nothing about this tragedy" (until told by the author's brother, Charlie[33], when her ship docked in Sierra Leone on the way) and Alex himself, flying with his daughter to Buenos Aires to meet Susan's

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[32] Although the German U-boats had been defeated, there was inevitably still a significant degree of risk in making such a crossing. Most of the remaining U-boats in the South Atlantic received an official order of withdrawal in August 1944, but the last Allied merchant ship (Baron Jedburgh) sunk by a U-boat (U-532) there was on 10 March 1945.

[33] Charlie MacDonald, younger brother of Alex, was an engineer. In 1945 he was working for the Admiralty in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Ships bound for India and the east, unable to use the Suez Canal, had to sail via the Cape, and were serviced and victualled at West African ports. Freetown was central to the Allies' naval strategy during World War II. It served as a convoy station, with up to 200 cargo and military vessels moving in and out of its well-protected harbour at the height of wartime activities.

boat, but having "no idea what ship she was on, nor when she would arrive" (finally he found out from a telegram from Charlie that she would not reach Buenos Aires until Easter 1945).

The reality of haphazard communications, long delays, and conflicting information must have exacerbated the distress for the families of those in the services—and this distress was probably sharper for those living on the other side of the world attempting to keep in touch with 'Home' in such difficult conditions. In my grandparents' case, as mentioned earlier, it is possible that they did not know the circumstances in which Ian was killed until letters arrived from his Commanding Officer and Company Commander several months after his death. While these may have provided some comfort, and demonstrated a human touch alongside the grim reality, it is hard to imagine how they coped with the period of 'unknowing'.

13.4. Constructing Meaning after Trauma

Narrative is a way of making sense of experience, giving it a coherence and unity that may have been lacking in practice. Traumatic experiences are inevitably more difficult to translate into narrative, precisely because it is hard, or even impossible, to rationalise them and convert them into neatly packaged stories. However, where authors have sought to undertake this task, perhaps with differing success, it is useful to explore how they seek to construct meaning from traumatic experiences.

Building on the five-stage cycle of grief set out by Kübler-Ross, Kessler recently proposed that 'meaning' should be a sixth stage, commenting that "meaning comes through finding a way to sustain your love for the person after their death while you're moving forward with your life". He notes that 'meaning' is personal, it takes time, and that it is not necessary to understand why someone died in order to find meaning. Even when one does find meaning, it won't feel it was worth the cost of what was lost. He concludes that meaningful connections will help to heal painful memories (Kessler 2019).

In his memoir, Alex records how, before Ian's death, he was dreaming of the War's end and was making plans in his head. He would take a quick trip home to Britain, and bring Ian back to Chile: "I used to see the two of us returning together and being met by Susan and Margaret! I used to think of a party I would want to throw to celebrate Ian's return and to reintroduce him to his and our friends and how proud I should be of my soldier son! I used to think about a fishing holiday he and I would take together in the South of Chile when he would use that beautiful new Hardy Teviot rod which has been kept wrapped up in cellophane waiting for him"!

These dreams were, of course, dashed, and Alex and Susan were then faced with the terrible dilemma of how they could build something positive in the future, and try and move on after the tragedy. After hearing the King's speech on V.E. Day, they focused on the notion of what Ian would have wanted them to do. Alex argues that: "we were letting him down if we did not try for the rest of our lives to do something, however humble, for our fellow men". In particular, they should prioritize Margaret's future: "I saw very clearly that her sweet young life must be preserved and that our small family life must be rebuilt around her". Again, he reflects that: "That undoubtedly was what Ian would have wished". In a sense, their approach did, therefore, revolve around making 'meaningful connections', in ways similar to those described by Kessler.

Giving practical reality to what was imagined to be the wishes of the deceased formed a key plank of Alex and Susan's approach and, it appears, that of many other families (although, of course, people's reactions to trauma differ). Not only should they bear their grief with silent courage, as the dead sons would have wanted, but they should also rebuild in a manner that would respect their wishes. Their sons' 'sacrifice' necessitated the creation of something that could be seen to have been worth fighting for.

This impetus was not only felt at an individual level, but also at a societal level. As Hirschberger has written (Hirschberger 2018), when people are confronted with mass death and with their inability to do much about it, they search for meaning and find comfort in the group—a collective symbolic structure that "satisfies the basic elements of meaning and identity—values, efficacy, purpose and worth".

In Britain, for example, a sense of social solidarity, growing state intervention, and a collective desire for change and for post-War reconstruction developed during the War. Reflecting this mood, in 1942 the Beveridge Report was published, outlining plans for a cradle-to-grave welfare state in Britain, built around the establishment of free secondary education, the National Health Service, and the nationalisation of key industries (Timmins 2001). Beveridge's scheme, the key principles of which were implemented by the Labour Government after the War (Bew 2016), aimed to abolish 'five giants': Want, squalor, ignorance, idleness, and disease. Alex makes specific reference to working a few years more so that Susan and Margaret "will enjoy freedom from want in the future", and it seems likely he was consciously referencing Beveridge here.

Having said this, Alex's memoir ends on a despondent note: "when I think of what is happening in the world today, of the difficulties with Russia, of all the troubles, it makes me wonder if the sacrifice of so many magnificent young lives was to any purpose. When I think of the atomic bomb, I shudder! What is going to be the end of it all?" Although the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 was widely supported at the time within the US and the UK, and felt to have shortened the War, the gloom Alex felt subsequently was shared by many who were terrified by the threat of potential mass extinction. Against the background of the threat of nuclear annihilation, focusing on individual sorrows could again seem self-indulgent, and the obligation to remain silent about wartime deaths was reinforced.

14. Conclusions: Some Personal and Public Reflections

Even though we never met, my grandfather's memoir of his son (my uncle) has provided a means for me to build an understanding of who they were, of the relationship between them, and, in Lambert's useful phrase, to 'connect through time' with them. Through the memoir, their stories resonate down through family history and still 'live' today; the portrait on the wall which hangs in the family home is no longer just a portrait of a boy with a family resemblance, but that of my uncle, vividly recalled by his father's account. As a child, I was aware of his death in the War, and that it was a significant event in my mother's—and our family's—life. The full story, though, remained largely submerged, until unearthed by my brother's transcribing of our grandfather's memoir in 2017, which the interview I conducted with our mother in 2006 helped to contextualise.

This individual 're-connection' is personal justification enough for writing this article. However, setting this rich account within its social and historical context also provides layered insights into other important themes: Memoir, masculinity, and subjectivity; gender and grieving; connections with 'home'; and constructing meaning after trauma. Above all, the memoir provides a touching account of one man's fathering, reflecting in the pre-War years his growing intimacy and close contact with his son, then the agonising pain of distance, separation, and loss through the War and beyond. In describing this emotional journey, it casts doubt on stereotypes of inexpressive authoritarian fatherhood, which are often readily ascribed to fathers at this time. Although written for private reasons, the memoir, therefore, has wider public significance in contributing to understanding of the complex psychological, social, and cultural history of fatherhood.

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The Ghost of the 'Y': Paternal DNA, Haunting and Genealogy

Helen Scholar

School of Health and Society, University of Salford, Salford M5 4WT, UK; h.f.scholar@salford.ac.uk

Abstract: Based on a personal family history experience, in this paper, I consider the way in which genealogical DNA testing is revealing family secrets, in particular paternity secrets, which would previously have remained unknown via 'traditional' methods of genealogical research. Reasons for the displacement of these invisible fathers from the records are discussed, and the power of genealogical DNA testing to bring them into focus is examined. Such discoveries may disrupt and unsettle, causing people to think differently about the fathers and grandfathers with whom they have grown up or have believed to be part of their personal histories and, for some people, may challenge their sense of identity. Beyond personal identity issues, in this paper, I draw upon ideas about 'ghost-work' to suggest that these experiences have some of the features of hauntings and that the ghostly fathers who break through may speak to us about social realities and structures, beyond the confines of linear time.

Keywords: family history; hauntology; genealogical DNA; paternity secrets

1. Introduction

This is a story about ghosts—the ghost of my father and of his father and the way in which they have haunted me through my family history research. Although, in that respect, this is a personal account, my reflections on the experience of researching my paternal ancestry have raised wider questions, as I came to realise the relevance of what started as a private project to some of my professional and academic interests as a social work educator.

In discussing my family history research, I acknowledge that I do so from a particular perspective, related to my own gender, ethnicity, nationality, education and experience.

I acknowledge too that both 'traditional' methods of genealogical research—that is, documentary research using physical or digital resources—and more recent methods—involving online searching of huge numbers of genealogical records, facilities to share information and communicate online with other family researchers and genetic testing, largely delivered via US-based companies—rest upon a set of normative assumptions about family, kinship, reproductive relationships and biological identity (Patton-Imani 2018). These are the same assumptions that are reflected and perpetuated in social and cultural practices, legislative and policy provisions and dominant narratives of 'the family' in Western countries, such as the United Kingdom, but that do not represent the variety of family and kinship forms here or elsewhere in the world (Lawler 2014).

Work with families and the complex relationships and patterns of behaviour that may trouble, disturb or damage family members, particularly children, is central to the practice of social work, as is understanding the potential consequences of these difficulties and of our responses to them. In such difficult situations, decisions made by the 'authorities' or privately by families themselves sometimes result in the fracturing of biological families. Although, in recent years, English family law has tended to encourage truth in matters of reproduction, parenthood (particularly regarding adoption) and paternity (Smart 2009, p. 553), this has not always been the legal position and certainly

not the practice of professionals or of private individuals. Smart argues that the development of DNA testing to establish paternity has forced 'legal truth' into line with biological or physical truth and has contributed to a change in attitudes towards family secrets, particularly those relating to paternity. With the commercialisation of DNA testing to determine paternity and for genealogical research, it has not only become increasingly difficult for modern parents to avoid the revelation of genetic truths but also for parents, now long dead, to keep their family secrets.

When my father died at age 86, like many bereaved families, we (my two siblings and myself) found ourselves thinking and talking about him, remembering the details of his life—a process that highlighted how little we knew about his family life and young adulthood before he met our mother. Throughout our childhood, we had learned not to expect answers to our straightforward questions about his family, and as we grew up and embarked on our independent adult lives, these questions had receded in importance for us. With his death, the questions resurfaced, and it seemed important try to discover more about our paternal family and to understand why our father had been so reluctant to share information about his early life.

Several years on, we are still searching for answers and, in many ways, have more questions than when we started. This paper does not then describe the resolution of a family puzzle, nor is it a detailed account of the progress of our family history research. Rather, it is a response to my experience of using genealogical DNA testing, to its potential to reveal paternity secrets in particular and to the implications and consequences of such revelations. In reflecting on my experience and looking for a theoretical space within which to understand this, the paper discusses the relevance of what Roberts (2012) has described as 'ghost-work' to family history and genealogy.

2. Parental Mysteries

In a study of autobiographical memoirs written by adult children who had experienced growing up in families characterised by what he calls "parental mystery and equivocation", Porter (2011) includes a chapter examining five works about fathers who obscured or erased their own histories and identities. He suggests that, as adult children, the writers of these memoirs appeared to feel that they had no clear standing in their family stories until they engaged in the act of uncovering their father's secrets. Doing so involved them in a hunt for evidence, including seeking information from family members and searching the genealogical records, family archives and other documentary sources. I begin by outlining the "parental mysteries" in our family, which led me to embark upon my own search, naively expecting a straightforward uncovering of basic facts about our grandparents, their wider families and the places they had lived, which I assumed would be easily discovered in the documentary records now readily available on websites such as Ancestry, Free BMD (transcriptions of the indexes of English birth marriage and death records, searchable by name, date and place of registration) and Irish Genealogy.

The characters in this story are no longer alive, and consequently, there are no legal constraints about sharing details of their lives. The question of whether there are ethical obligations to keep the secrets of those who have died is a matter of debate. Porter (2011, p. 16) discusses the arguments for and against with reference to the accounts he discusses in his book and concludes that if the motivation of the individual revealing such secrets is to arrive at understanding and to share such understanding with others who have had similar experiences, then revelation is justified. Barnwell (2019), in a survey of Australian family historians who had discovered family secrets, found that emotional proximity, sometimes across time, to those with the secrets and perceived emotional risks to the living were influential in people's ethical decision-making as to who and what to tell about their findings. In my story, some of the details constitute secrets kept by my father, but more significant are the secrets that it seems were kept from him by his family, whose reasons for doing so I do not know and probably never will know. Neither do I know of any living close members of their families who might be distressed by the limited information I have thus far discovered. However, where I refer to individuals by name,

I have used pseudonyms out of respect for them and for anyone who might recognise them from this account.

We grew up in Manchester, England, believing our father to be an only child. Parentless by the time he married my mother when he was 28 years old, he said little about his childhood and less about his family. His father, he said, had died young; his mother, Molly, from Ireland, missed the clean country air of her childhood home. Manchester was bad for her chest, and she was often unwell. Born in 1927, he was a child of the 1930s; they were poor, life was hard. Beyond a few stories of his first school with its playground in a cellar, a brief evacuation to the safety of the countryside at the start of the Second World War, as experienced by many inner city children, and a short spell in the merchant navy when he was 20, the past was something he did not want to discuss. When my brother came home from school asking for information about the family tree for a French language project, all he got from my father was "*Mort. Mort. Mort*".

My mother told us that she knew almost nothing about the people in his life before they were married. It seems to have been a taboo subject; she didn't ask, and he didn't tell. She had never seen a photograph of his parents. On their marriage, he brought nothing with him but his clothes, some official documents (medical card, wartime identity card and a character reference from the newsagent who had employed him as a twelve-year-old paperboy), a handful of photographs from his days in the merchant navy and a book he bought in a second-hand shop at 1543 Broadway, New York, where his ship was in dry dock during 1948.

The early results of our family history research were encouraging. We quickly traced his father Lloyd back five generations, to a family of gardeners in Cheshire, North West England. Our father, it seemed, had followed in their footsteps, working as a gardener himself for most of his life. As we went on though, it became apparent that things were not quite so simple. Lloyd had not died as a young man as we had believed but, rather, when he was in his seventies. We discovered that our father had had a younger brother with whom he had quarrelled and broken off contact, probably not even knowing about his death by suicide less than three miles from where we lived. We learned too that my mother knew of his existence but had been told by my father never to mention him or to tell us that we had a paternal uncle. The brothers' birth certificates gave different first names for their mother, which was puzzling, but her three surnames on our uncle's certificate suggested that she had been married twice and, we assumed, had been widowed. Although this seemed like a genealogical gift—two marriages must surely make her easier to find in the records—the trail soon ran cold. As far as we could determine, our grandmother had never been married, either to her apparent first husband or to our paternal grandfather. We could find nothing to identify her in the UK or Irish records; the only documentary evidence of her existence was the baptismal record for my father, her two sons' birth certificates, an entry in the 1939 Register (a UK national register of civilians, taken in September 1939 following the outbreak of World War II) and her 1952 death certificate.

3. Paternity Secrets

Several years into our search, and running out of ideas, I decided to take a genealogical DNA test in the hope of identifying new lines of enquiry about our grandmother. I had resisted this until now; I am not sure why. Perhaps, it seemed like cheating (surely we should be able to trace our grandparents who had only died in 1952?); more likely, it was the influence of my father, who was always suspicious of sharing personal information for reasons we still do not understand.

Initial autosomal DNA tests (that is, tests of DNA inherited from both parents on the 22 chromosomes that are not sex chromosomes) of the three of us via Ancestry.com revealed matches mainly with people whose names we did not know—the exception being some relatives on our mother's side of the family with whom we were already in touch. This is not unusual, but there were several matches sharing one surname unfamiliar to us—some as close as first cousins to my father and two who were active and experienced family historians, building Irish family trees back over several generations. Having made contact with them but still unable to discover any link in the documentary records

that made sense of this connection, my brother agreed to undertake a Y-DNA test. Although most of our DNA is inherited from both parents, Y chromosomes are carried by men only, passed on largely unchanged from father to son. However, mutations do take place, and these distinctive changes can be observed and compared to identify men who are related to one another. Y-DNA testing examines two types of polymorphic DNA markers (short tandem repeats (STRs) and single-nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs)) to distinguish Y chromosomes from one another and to identify matches between men and estimate distance to their most recent common ancestor (King and Jobling 2009).

In many societies, heritable surnames also pass from father to son, and consequently, men who match one another on the Y chromosome may be expected to share surnames. Y-DNA testing was one of the first two genealogical DNA tests available commercially as direct-to-consumer tests (the other being mitochondrial DNA) and was introduced by Family Tree DNA (FTDNA) in 2000 (Wagner and Weiss 2012). The availability of these tests brought about the development of a large number of surname DNA projects, in which people with the same surname use DNA testing to explore their common ancestry (International Society of Genetic Genealogists 2019). This may be described as a form of recreational genetics (Freeman and Richards 2006; King and Jobling 2009), enabling interested participants to discover 'clan' identities, to locate the places of origin of their forbears or to explore potential links with historical tables, and has been of particular interest to members of the Irish diaspora, particularly those living in North America (Nash 2008).

Although it might be expected that Y-DNA tests would return many matches of men with the same surname, Y-DNA testing reaches far back in time, even before surnames were established, so that, in practice, testing commonly produces matches with widely varying surnames, which poses challenges for family historians. Apart from connections arising from before the era of surnames, there are several possible explanations for surname variation in results lists, which may be perceived as more or less sensitive, depending upon the distance in time since the causal event or the reasons for the individual's interest in their genetic heritage. For example, surnames may differ because of children taking on the surname of a stepfather upon a mother's remarriage, men changing their surnames to avoid being traced or upon migrating to a new country or surnames being 'daughtered out' of a family so that the patrilineal surname inheritance comes to an end (Freeman and Richards 2006).

In other circumstances, which some people may experience as unsettling or even distressing, tests might produce unexpected results that reveal a historic break in the direct lineage between the tester and the assumed male ancestor. Results may show that an individual's DNA is not consistent with the shared DNA profiles of the other members in a surname project or, perhaps more troubling, may reveal that the tester does not have any DNA in common with living members of their supposed biological family, with whom they share their surname. Such results, where men have inherited their father's Y chromosome but not his name, were initially referred to as 'non-paternity events' (NPEs)—a term coined by Sykes and Irven (2000)—in explaining why males sharing the same surname might not share the same haplotype. Nash (2008, p. 237), discussing surname projects, suggests that this terminology is consistent with such failures to match being framed in terms of men's abilities to order or disorder arrangements for male–female relationships, sex and reproduction, and Patton-Imani (2018, p. 12) argues that such patriarchal gender expectations continue to be expressed in the default settings of online family genealogy sites, which are typically "colorblind, heterosexual and cis-gender". More recently, the terminology has been amended, and the acronym NPE is now used to refer to the phrase 'Not the Parent Expected', acknowledging that DNA testing (i.e., including mitochondrial, X-DNA and autosomal testing) carried out by family history researchers seeking to climb their family trees may reveal previously unknown information about the tester's maternal as well as paternal origins as a result of, for example, donor egg conception and surrogacy.

Such discoveries can be disappointing for people hoping to discover distant connections to an ancestral clan but potentially devastating when they reveal previously unknown or unsuspected information about a tester's own parents. The NPE Friends Fellowship, established in 2017, provides membership support for distressed individuals for whom such DNA results suggest, for example, a

family history of closed or secret adoption, infidelity in marriage, traumatic events such as sexual assault or exploitation or other circumstances that are or might previously have been perceived as shameful, including those that cause a father's name not to be stated in the genealogical records (NPE Friends Fellowship).

4. Our 'Not the Parent Expected'

The results of my brother's Y-DNA test revealed no matches with our father's surname as recorded on his birth certificate but did show a match with several men sharing the unfamiliar surname identified by our earlier autosomal testing, suggesting that the man who brought our father up was not his biological father and, consequently, not our biological grandfather. This was 'Not the Parent Expected' for my father.

Returning to our online family history contacts and re-examining the documentary records and our earlier DNA results in the light of this new information, we identified the man who is most likely our grandfather. The evidence we have suggests that he was probably 'Dermot', the missing uncle of one of my father's first cousins with whom we had made contact online. DNA tests deal in statistical probabilities, not certainties, and those probabilities indicate that he might have been one of Dermot's brothers or, less likely, Dermot's father, his nephew or his son, if he had one (Waldron 2018, email message to author). However, while we cannot be certain—the records are incomplete, the evidence is circumstantial and there are still many unanswered questions—there is no evidence that he had other children, and what we know so far places Dermot, and only Dermot, in the right place at the right time to be our grandfather.

Dermot was born in 1887 in Ireland and enlisted in the British Army in 1915 during the First World War. His medal record cards indicate that he served overseas and entered a theatre of war—although we cannot establish where and for how long—and we know that he was discharged from army service to an address in Salford, Lancashire (now part of the Greater Manchester conurbation), in June 1919. He received a small army pension, apparently due to disability related to contracting malaria.

In 1923, aged 36, he married a nineteen-year-old local woman in a civil ceremony and the following year in a religious ceremony in a Roman Catholic church in Salford, having sought the permission of his Roman Catholic parish priest back in Ireland. His occupation is described as 'hotel boots' (responsible for cleaning the boots and shoes of hotel guests) on their marriage certificate. There is no record of any children of the marriage.

Dermot died aged 40 in October 1927 in a Manchester hospital, three months after our father was born nearby. The death certificate gives the cause of death as pulmonary tuberculosis and his occupation as hotel porter. His wife was present at his death, but it appears from the certificate that they may have been living at different addresses. He is buried in a common grave in the Roman Catholic section of a Salford cemetery.

We know nothing about the nature of his relationship with our paternal grandmother.

5. Family Hauntings

Finding Dermot was a surprising and exciting development in our family history research but not for me personally distressing, given that we had never known either of my father's parents or any relatives on our father's side of the family and, other than our shared surname, I had little sense of personal or family identity linked to them. Rather, with respect to our paternal family, we had grown up with a sense of absence, a lack of knowledge, a lacuna. We do not know what kind of a (step)father Lloyd was and whether our father's silence about him suggests that they had a difficult relationship—perhaps, as we now think likely, he knew or suspected that he was not Lloyd's biological child, and this was the reason for his reluctance to talk about his family experiences. So, it was surprising to me that, since learning about Dermot, he has become a pervasive presence, whose grave I have visited and whose shadow I imagine in the streets and buildings of Manchester and Salford,

where I grew up and still work and where he lived, married and died within nine years of being discharged from the British army in 1919.

Being haunted does not have to involve sightings of shadowy figures in the semi-darkness. The word is often used to describe feelings of being troubled, disturbed or preoccupied by something, or more usually by someone, and 'preoccupation' describes my experience of Dermot—the father apparently unknown to my father and the grandfather who has replaced the 'other' grandfather my father spoke of, though infrequently and in little detail. Remembered conversations with my father now take on an altered significance; puzzling and inconsistent remarks that had been forgotten or dismissed now represent lost opportunities to make a connection with Dermot. It seems that he was and is somehow there, yet not there, and that he has things to say to us or at least things that he wishes us to know. It has felt as though Dermot has haunted me, in the unanswered questions, the speculation and possibilities, the unknown details of his life and the impact of the social and political context in which it was lived.

For me, this sensation is often connected to place and occurs as I travel to and from my parents' home or my workplace, which takes me past the address in Salford to which Dermot went upon discharge from the army, through the part of nearby Manchester where we believe he worked, and to the site of the old hospital, now replaced with modern facilities, where he died. Moving through these places, I imagine them as they might have appeared to Dermot in the 1920s and question what caused him to choose to remain in England rather than return to his family home in Ireland? What were his hopes and expectations as he realised that he had survived the war—a significant achievement for a gunner in the Machine Gun Corps? What was the impact on his physical and mental health of the traumatic events he undoubtedly witnessed and experienced, and how did these affect his hopes for his future and his expectations about his life with his young wife, a relationship that it appears must have had its difficulties, given the fact of my father's existence?

Family historians perhaps would agree with Fisher (2014) that "[y]ou don't have to believe in the supernatural to believe that the family is a haunted structure". For example, in her book examining her family history and her reflections on the process of discovering it, Light (2014, p. 252) talks about her mind being filled with "a swarm of ghosts . . . their faces blurred with time", and McGann (2017, p. 302) feels inhabited by his "father's ghost" as he reflects upon his exploration of his McGann family's past. In these instances, as well, the writers' experiences reflect the "heightened state of awareness and alertness [and] sense of unease or sensitivity to a dead or missing person(s)" described by Gordon (1997) in her seminal work, *Ghostly Matters*, as evidence of a haunting.

Roberts (2012, p. 393) suggests that, while what she calls "ghost-work" has been applied across several disciplines, there is no one singular notion of haunting but that it is concerned with the past intruding into the present and can be experienced as disorientating, disruptive, unsettling and sometimes simply mundane. The notion that admitting ghosts and allowing them to speak to us might offer a valuable perspective on social phenomena is attributed to Jacques Derrida, who coined the term 'hauntology' in his work *Spectres de Marx* (Derrida 1994). Hauntology is a portmanteau term, bringing together 'ontology' (the study of being) and 'haunting' (relating to entities that simultaneously exist and do not exist) and refers to the haunting of the present by spectres that cannot be ontologised away—that is, put into an ontological category of 'being' or 'not being'. Derrida's work has been widely acknowledged and influential in literary and critical theory and in "ghost-work" in other disciplines (Roberts 2012). However, according to Davis (2005), the concept of hauntology has two related sources.

Predating Derrida's work, but familiar to him, the psychoanalysts Abraham and Torok (1972, cited Fiddler 2018, p. 3) had explored the processes involved in responses to traumatic loss, using the notion of the 'phantom' to represent lost objects (usually individuals but also places and communities) and of the 'crypt' to represent the structures built around them in the unconscious of those who had experienced such painful losses, which they suggested were often associated with shame and prohibition (Fiddler 2018, p. 4). They explain phantoms as "the gaps left in us by the secrets of others" (Abraham and Rand 1987, p. 287) and attribute to them intentions to mislead and conceal, to keep

their uncomfortable secrets and unspoken traumas from emerging, sometimes across generations. In psychoanalytical terms, for the living to be released and for the gaps in us to be filled, the ghosts must be exorcised; their secrets need to be spoken.

Derrida's 'spectres' are figures hovering between presence and absence. Unlike Abraham and Torok's phantoms, they do not carry negative connotations and require "séances ... rather than exorcisms" (Fiddler 2018, p. 5); they are to be welcomed and understood rather than expelled. Their purpose, or perhaps their effect, is to trouble the distinctions between the past and present, dead and living, and to lead us away from the present to the past and the future and to a consideration of historical alternatives that could have been (Gordon 2011, p. 5). The sensation of being haunted is concerned with an awareness of lost or potential futures, implied by a revealing of what is hidden or absent.

Despite their differences, there are commonalities in the two approaches (Rahimi 2015). Gordon (1997) makes little reference to the work of Abraham and Torok, but her definition of haunting as a 'mediation' suggests elements of both perspectives. She speaks of it as " ... the process that links an institution and an individual, a social structure and a subject, and history and a biography" (Gordon 1997, p. 19). Both interpretations of haunting suggest that trauma can be transferred from one individual to another and be carried intergenerationally, although the mechanisms and significance of this are conceptualised differently. Both also speak of the significance of gaps and absences and of their power to disturb the unconscious—whether in individual, psychological terms or at the social and cultural level.

6. 'Ghost-Work', Family History and Y DNA

How are we to understand ghosts and haunting in relation to genealogy and family history? Mason (2008) proposed four dimensions of affinities as a framework for understanding the fascination with kinship revealed through the burgeoning interest in family history. She presents these dimensions as ways of imagining and practising relatedness. 'Fixed' affinities are aspects of kinship that are experienced as given. They include biological connections but also pre-existing connections that we are born into, such as those with friends of parents known as aunts and uncles, despite their having no genetic relationship with us. 'Negotiated' or 'created' affinities are those developed through relationships and are particularly important in practices of care and support. Sensory affinities are concerned with the material aspects of relatedness, both in terms of the body (voice, smell, touch) and of artefacts such as keepsakes and inherited items—emotionally charged objects that speak to our experience of particular relationships. A fourth dimension is the "ethereal", described using words such as "psychic", "mystical" and "magical" (Mason 2008, p. 37) and which are suggestive of an 'other-worldly' dimension of kinship. She suggests that these aspects of kinship have previously been underplayed but can have a palpable, if transitory and interpretive, existence (Mason 2008, p. 40).

Kramer (2011, p. 389), in an analysis of the responses of members of the Mass Observation Project[1] to a 2008 directive on family history research, refers to examples of Mason's ethereal affinities surfacing only rarely in the written accounts she examined but says that when they did, such connections to the worlds of past historical experience and of ghosts and hauntings were experienced particularly intensely by the correspondents. A number of correspondents mentioned making connections with ancestors by returning to meaningful places, which for some offered the possibility of glimpsing the ghosts of those earlier generations; and one person wrote about experiencing a strong sense of unease when handling documents relating to family members, who he felt were warning him against continuing his research, a warning he acted upon. Neither Mason nor Kramer develop the notion of hauntings or ghost-work in any detail, but Kramer (2011, p. 392) suggests that the dead are significant

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[1] The Mass Observation Project is based at the University of Sussex and issues directives to a group of volunteer writers two or three times a year, asking them to write anonymously on specified themes.

in personal life, remaining as social agents who can influence behaviour and with the capacity to reappear in the present, as hauntings, presences and resemblances.

For Gordon (1997), ghosts are not decontextualized phantoms but must speak to us directly; we are part of their story. They are individuals (or places or things) who mean something to the haunted—not only their identity but also their stories are significant. They are "seething presences", there and not there, not simply dead or missing but drawing us " . . . affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically" (Gordon 1997, p. 8). We do not yet know—and maybe never will—how Dermot's story intersects with ours, but the fact of his biological relationship to us and more particularly to our father, revealed 'magically' through Y DNA testing, has resulted in his becoming present to us.

Secrets, Shame and Trauma: In hauntings, the stories carried across time by ghosts, spectres or phantoms are often associated with trauma, shame and stigma; unwritten, unknown, hidden. The law relating to reproduction, family relationships and responsibilities reflects and influences questions of respectability, shame and what is considered appropriate behaviour in family matters. Smart (2009) discusses how this can be observed in the United Kingdom in the changing nature of what she calls "reproductive secrets" from attempts to disguise premarital conception and birth in the 19th and early part of the 20th century through secrecy about formal adoptions and more recently concerning assisted reproduction, such as donor insemination, with donor anonymity initially endorsed in English legislation until the law was changed in 2005 (Frith et al. 2017). Many of these secrets concern the question of paternity.

This is not surprising, given that maternity has generally been understood as obvious and unproblematic, whereas the fundamental uncertainty surrounding paternity has been the source of fascination throughout history and has been linked to the origins of patriarchy (Freeman and Richards 2006). Although Milanich (2017) suggests that, in fact, maternity is historically more ambiguous than has generally been assumed, her examination of the scientific quest for the father (Milanich 2019) demonstrates how the search for biological certainty about paternal identity has only served to reveal its social, cultural and political nature. Turney (2005), in her study of women with experience of 'paternity uncertainty' (that is, who were uncertain of the genetic fatherhood of their child), describes how many of her participants found it extremely difficult to disclose this uncertainty due to the social conditions in which they were living. They kept their secrets in order to protect themselves and their children from economic hardship, rejection by family and wider community and even potential violence, for example, where a child was born as a result of an extramarital relationship. Informal adoptions, common in England before the 1926 Adoption Act, obscured biological or natal origins (Keating 2008), perhaps to protect the reputation of unmarried girls and women within a family or community.

In his work on autobiographical memoirs of family mysteries, Porter (2011) found that narratives about parental secrecy appear to be more commonly written about fathers than about mothers. The fathers in the accounts that he analysed had deliberately sought to mislead or deceive their children, distorting or obscuring the facts about their origins and past lives. Shame and trauma feature in the motivations for and consequences of keeping secrets. In our family story, we now think it likely that our father was aware, or at least suspected, that Lloyd was not his biological father but that it is unlikely that he knew that Dermot was his biological father or any details about Molly's relationship with him. His reticence in talking about his family was probably due to feelings of shame, perhaps about circumstances that to modern sensibilities would not be considered shameful at all or maybe a consequence of some undisclosed trauma in Molly's, Lloyd's or Dermot's life that disturbed his life, even if he knew nothing or little about its "distant causes" (Davis 2005).

Gaps and Absences: Family genealogists spend a lot of time searching documentary records, trying to find missing people. Sometimes the identity of an ancestor or relative is not known or maybe their existence has not even been suspected; sometimes this search is for a known and named person who is lost in the records. Fiddler (2018) suggests that both spectres and phantoms reveal themselves

through breaks or deformations in language and text. Fiddler was writing about literary and cultural texts, but much family history research relies on textual sources, both on and offline. Breaks may be understood as gaps in the documentary records and deformations as factors that cause written sources to be inaccurate when compared with the original information and inconsistent with one another.

Such absences and inconsistencies occur in the historical and genealogical records for several reasons. Documents go missing or are destroyed, as was the case with most of the British military records relating to World War I, including Dermot's, which were lost in a fire when the Army Records Centre in London was hit by a German incendiary bomb in 1940 (The Long Long Trail n.d.). Where records survive, information may have been mis-transcribed from one document to another or incorrectly recorded in the first place due to carelessness or delay (apparently parish priests in Ireland for example did not always complete sacramental registers contemporaneously). Sometimes the absences may be deliberate on the part of those responsible for making the record, a consequence of social conditions at the time, such as material not being recorded for political or ideological reasons or details that may have been falsified or withheld by the people providing the information.

When registering births in England in the early 20th century, the names of both parents were recorded where the parents were or purported to be married and, if they were not married, where a man accepted that he was the father of the child and was present with the mother to register the birth. However, in some circumstances, the father's name would be missing from a birth certificate. The mother of the child may not have known or been prepared to admit the identity of the father or may have wanted to disguise the fact that a child was conceived as a consequence of infidelity or adultery on the part of the father, or she may have been the victim of rape by a known or unknown assailant.

Where a man was married, he was by law the father of any children born during the marriage, a principle common to legal traditions across most Western and many non-Western jurisdictions (Milanich 2017). Of course, this does not necessarily mean that he was the biological father of the child concerned. The child may have been conceived as a result of infidelity on the part of the mother, which may or may not be known to the registered father. His name might appear on the birth certificate where a couple presented a child as theirs when in fact one or both were not the parents; for example, grandparents may claim to be the parents of an illegitimate grandchild and register the child as theirs, bringing it up believing its mother to be its sister and its grandmother to be its mother. In some cases, the children of other relatives or even unrelated children may have been informally adopted at birth and registered by the adoptive parents. Even after the introduction of the Adoption of Children Act in England and Wales in 1926, informal adoptions are said to have continued well into the 1930s (Keating 2008).

In our father's case, there is no evidence that his mother and stepfather Lloyd were ever married, but his mother registered both my father's Catholic baptism and his birth as though they were, and it appears that neither the priest nor the registrar had any reason to suspect otherwise. We have no way of knowing whether Lloyd was aware that he was not the father of the child, whether Molly herself was sure of my father's paternity or whether Dermot knew that he had a son.

Imagined Futures: Light (2014, p. 252), reflecting on her genealogical research, describes absences in her family story as rippling through time, "shaping events, reverberating into the future", in imagery reminiscent of the functions of phantoms and spectres imagined by, for example, Gordon (1997) and Roberts (2012, p. 393), for whom ghosts blur the distinctions between binary oppositions such as fact and fiction, the natural and supernatural, the past and the future. Hauntings are not just about the past but also, as Morriss (2018) captures vividly in her account of women who have lost their children to state care, about disrupted and imagined futures—futures that might have been or might still be.

Genealogical discoveries, such as that of our father's paternity, reviving what has been "forgotten, buried or erased from the record" (Kleinberg 2017, p. 9), not only dissolve the boundaries between past and present but between past, present and future(s).

We do not know the effect that knowledge about Dermot might have had on our father's life or even on ours, but it appears that Molly may have taken control of the 'official' family narrative through

her manipulation of the data in the church and civil records to construct a future for herself and her son. As Patton-Imani (2018) observes, writing about the regulation of illegitimacy in the United States, the social situations of women influence their access to choices in family making and may make it necessary for them to make difficult decisions to protect both themselves and their children from what they perceive as risky or shameful. Could it be that Molly was not actually our father's biological mother but that this was a family or informal adoption? Not only did she claim to be married to Lloyd, but the information she provided about her name was not consistent—she used different first names on each of the two documents and a 'maiden' name different from the one by which my father knew her. Perhaps, this was intended as a clue to his biological heritage for him to explore in the future (maybe a fanciful notion, it has proved difficult to see how); perhaps, it was to protect her own real identity. Perhaps, Molly was haunted by her own ghosts; whether through the trauma of violence or shame of betrayal surrounding the circumstances of my father's birth or the sadness of an impossible future for herself, Dermot and my father.

7. Conclusions

Dermot, our grandfather, was always there but was lost to his Irish family who were searching for his grave and was missing from our story. Through DNA testing and specifically through Y-DNA testing, he has become a presence. However, beneath the bare facts of his life that we have thus far uncovered is an untold story, shaped by the person Dermot was, the experiences he had and the decisions he made in the context of the political, religious, social and economic forces of the early 20th century in Ireland and Great Britain.

While it is of course true that not all surprises in family history research concern fathers, the original choice of the phrase 'Non-Paternity Events' to describe unexpected findings arising from genealogical DNA testing reflects those most commonly reported—that is, the uncovering of a paternity secret somewhere in the tester's family history. Hatton (2019) conceptualises genealogy as fundamentally a technology or craft concerned with "bringing forth to presence from concealedness to unconcealedness". Although by the term 'technology', he is referring to the broad practices of genealogy and not only or specifically to genealogical DNA testing, this recent development has the capacity to "bring forth to presence" in particularly dramatic and unexpected ways. Yet. while Y-DNA testing may tell us who was *not* the father we expected, it does not itself reveal the identity of the person who was. To have any prospect of discovering this and what it might mean to us requires the mastery of genealogical research methods, time, persistence and perhaps a willingness to look into the gaps and fissures in our family stories, allowing ghosts to pass through into our awareness and to make themselves known to us.

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'From Your Ever Anxious and Loving Father': Faith, Fatherhood, and Masculinity in One Man's Letters to His Son during the First World War

Martin Robb

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies, The Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, UK;
martin.robb@open.ac.uk

Abstract: In the early months of 1916, Charles Robb a retired shipping clerk in the East End of London, England, wrote a series of letters to his 19-year-old son Arthur, an army private awaiting embarkation to the Western Front. Charles Robb was my great grandfather and Arthur Robb was my grandfather. The letters offer an intriguing glimpse of one man 'doing' fatherhood under conditions of traumatic separation and extreme anxiety. This paper presents an analysis of the letters from a psychosocial perspective, exploring the ways in which the writer exhorts his son to live up to the ideals of Christian manhood, while managing the anxiety of separation by presenting a reconstruction in language of the familiar world of home and church.

1. Introduction

On a Sunday evening in February 1916, a 65-year-old shipping office clerk from East Ham, a suburb on the eastern outskirts of London, England, sat down to write a letter to his 19-year-old son, a private in the Royal Fusiliers, who was stationed at Aldershot, Hampshire, awaiting transfer to the Western Front in France. The writer of the letter was my great grandfather, Charles Edward Robb, and the person he was writing to was my grandfather, Arthur Ernest Robb. The letter is one of a series of eight written by Charles Robb to his son on a more or less weekly basis between 6 January and 24 February 1916, which came into my possession after my grandfather's death. They had been preserved for half a century in my grandfather's wallet, which is a sure sign of their emotional importance for him. Sadly, only one side of the correspondence survives, as any letters that my grandfather may have written home have been lost.

Initially, my interest in the letters was purely personal, and I regarded them simply as useful background to my family history research. However, the more I read them, the more I came to see their potential as a resource for my academic research on fatherhood. When I looked more closely at these letters, it occurred to me that what they showed was a man actually 'doing' fathering. Most interactions between fathers, and indeed mothers, and their children are fleeting, evanescent, and difficult for researchers to observe or capture. Recent years have seen the field of fatherhood research growing exponentially, with ground-breaking studies of fathers' experience (for example: Doucet 2006; Dermott 2008; Miller 2010; Ranson 2015). However, despite the valuable insights that it offers, most research on fatherhood (including my own) is forced to focus on analysing fathers' reflexive constructions of their fathering practice, which is inevitably slightly removed from that actual practice (Robb 2004a, 2004b, 2020). However, letters between parents and their children provide a rare opportunity to see fathering, and indeed mothering, in action. In the case of my great grandfather's letters, written just over 100 years ago, there is also the opportunity to observe an example of fathering practice at a particular historical juncture, in a specific social context, and to assess it against rhetorical

claims about fathering in the past. A further cause for interest in these letters is that they present an example of a man 'doing' fathering in the unusual conditions of separation and anxiety created by war and the very real threat of personal loss.

Moreover, the value of letters such as these is that they represent a kind of text that is increasingly rare. Before the age of the telephone, not to mention the smart phone and the internet, letters were the usual way in which family members separated by distance, or by extended periods of absence, communicated with each other, thus providing us with the kind of record that is rarely available in an age of texts and emails. What is more, an extraordinary event such as a war, with its experience of lengthy separation between family members and friends, has the side effect of producing extended series of correspondence.

However, it could be argued that these letters are also unusual, even in the context of First World War letter-writing, in that they are from a father to a son. Michael Roper, in his ground-breaking study of 'the battle for emotional survival of young British civilian soldiers on the Western Front in the First World War, and the part played by their families in that battle', writes that 'relationships with loved ones at home . . . played a crucial role in sustaining the morale of this largely young, amateur army' (Roper 2010). Inevitably, these relationships had to be conducted remotely, 'through letters, parcels and other long-distance means'. However, Roper suggests that it was mothers, and not fathers, who were the principal correspondents with their soldier sons: 'Among the Imperial War Museum's collections of sons' correspondence from the Western Front there are almost six times as many letters to mothers as to fathers' (Roper 2010). Elsewhere, Roper concludes that 'the figure who appears least often in family correspondence is the father . . . The letter was a feminine form, and because of its potential introspection and emotionality, for many mothers it felt a natural means of staying in touch' (Roper 2010). Nevertheless, Roper contends that 'examples of mothers' letters are hard to come by' (Roper 2010), which presumably means that examples of fathers' letters, such as those written by my great grandfather, are even rarer. More broadly, there has been a lack of academic attention paid to the study of fatherhood in the First World War by comparison with the impact of the Second World War on fathering practices (see for example, LaRossa 2011).

Besides his gender, there were other reasons why my great grandfather's letters caught my interest as a researcher on fatherhood and masculinities. One is that they seemed to demonstrate an emotionally expressive form of fathering that contradicted many of the stereotypes about Victorian and Edwardian masculinities. At the same time, these letters were shot through with my great grandfather's deep Methodist Christian faith: indeed, it seemed difficult to separate or disentangle his faith from his fathering. So, these letters offered a case study of a man 'doing' both fatherhood and religious faith, while these two aspects of his identity appeared interwoven in intriguing ways.

With these issues in mind, I set out to analyse the letters, looking for answers to four key questions:

- How does the writer 'do' fatherhood at a distance?
- How does he manage the anxiety of separation and the threat of loss?
- What is the relationship in these letters between fatherhood, masculinity, and religious faith?
- What light can the letters throw on our understanding of fatherhood in their specific historical context?

In what follows, I present my findings based on a close analysis of the letters. In addition, this article will also reflect on the more general questions raised by these letters and the experience of analysing them. These include questions about the validity or legitimacy of using material from one's personal family history as the material or basis for academic research. What kinds of methodological questions does this bring to the surface, and how should the researcher approach the use of 'found' material of this nature?

2. Background and Context

Before presenting a detailed analysis of the letters, it will be useful to place them in their familial, social, and historical contexts. Born in Soho, London in 1851, the son of a law stationer's clerk and a mother who would die within weeks of his birth, my great grandfather Charles Edward Robb spent most of his childhood in Stepney in the East of London. His family were Methodists, and Charles' own series of lowly clerical jobs would include employment as housekeeper at the Wesleyan Mission in Whitechapel. Married at the age of 26 to the daughter of an umbrella maker, Charles was the father of eight children who survived beyond infancy, of whom my grandfather, Arthur, born in 1897, was the youngest. By the time of the 1901 census, the family had moved out from Whitechapel to the expanding working-class and lower-middle-class suburb of East Ham, on the Essex border. In 1902, Charles suffered the first of three serious bereavements, when his eldest son, also named Charles, a Royal Marine, died on active service in Aden at the age of 23. Three years later, Charles experienced two more losses within months of each other. In April 1905, his 16-year-old daughter Marion died from heart failure, and a few months later, his wife Louisa died from typhoid fever at the age of 48, leaving Charles to raise his surviving children alone. By the time of the 1911 census, he was living with his married daughter Louisa and her family; also with them were another daughter, Caroline (the 'Carrie' mentioned in the letters) and my grandfather Arthur. Before the outbreak of war, Arthur had worked as a brass finisher's apprentice. We know from other wartime letters that he was already 'courting' Polly Webb, the daughter of a Stepney bootmaker, whom he would eventually marry. Family legend would have it that when war broke out, my grandfather joined up as soon as he was able, perhaps even falsifying his age to ensure that he was eligible for active service in the Labour Corps of the Royal Fusiliers.

As already mentioned, the Robb family were Methodists. Founded by John Wesley in the 18th century as a revivalist sect that eventually broke away from the Church of England, 19th and early-20th-century Methodism was distinguished by its overt emotionalism, an emphasis on a personal relationship with a loving Jesus, and by the involvement of lay people both in preaching and in self-government through the local 'class' system. The socialist historian E.P. Thompson (Thompson 2013) was famously disdainful of Methodism's emotionalism and could only see its influence on the emerging working class in negative terms, despite the fact that he himself came from a Methodist background. The historian of masculinity John Tosh takes an altogether more positive view of the Nonconformist movement's impact, particularly on gender relations. In his book on 19th-century masculinities and domesticity, Tosh discusses three case studies of Victorian couples who were committed to 'the Methodist way of life—the class, the chapel, the preaching, the hymn-singing' (Tosh 2007) and claims that 'Methodism furnished the materials for a feminine, as well as a masculine view of the world, and even for a measure of challenge to patriarchal authority' (Tosh 2007). The relationship between Methodism, masculinity, and fatherhood, in the context of my great grandfather's letters, will be discussed later in this article. Charles Robb's family background, his employment history, which included jobs as an office messenger and shipping clerk, and his Nonconformist affiliation meant that he and his family hovered on the borders between the 'respectable' working class and the lower middle class. Nothing is known for certain about Charles' political affiliations, but his letters show evidence of a robust patriotism alongside the all-important influence of his devout Methodism.

Charles Robb's letters to his son Arthur were written in 1916 at the height of the First World War (Fussell 1975). The second Battle of Ypres had been fought in the previous year, with the loss of about 60,000 British lives. The Battle of the Somme would take place later in 1916, with the loss of more than 19,000 British lives on its first day and 500,000 by the end of fighting in November. This is the theatre of war towards which my grandfather was heading at the time that his father wrote these letters to them. However, all of the surviving letters were written before Arthur left England and were addressed to him at Corunna Barracks in Aldershot, which was the main training ground for British infantry and a gathering point before embarkation for France.

3. Content and Structure of the Letters

What did my great grandfather write about in his letters to his son, and how were the letters structured? In what follows, I will take as an example the letter that Charles wrote on Sunday 1916, one that is fairly typical of the series as a whole, and provide an overview of its content and structure. The letter is, similar to most family letters, something of a mixed bag, combining the serious with the trivial, the meaningful with the mundane. It begins with a reference to Arthur's previous letter and some continuing business about an undershirt that Charles had sent him, while later on, there is some other fairly trivial transaction6 Februaryal business: an address for a sister, a response to a request for a photograph.

However, the letter moves very quickly from these everyday concerns to expressing an intense anxiety about Arthur's current situation, which is framed initially as the writer's surprise that his son is not planning to come home on weekend leave:

> *My Dear Arthur*
>
> *I received your letter yesterday acknowledging the Undershirt but was rather surprised to hear that you were not coming for the weekend. I do not know under what rule or regulation the passes are given in your section but I do hear that in most sections they are allowed by the Officer in Charge to a certain number of the best behaved and most attentive to duty during the week.*
>
> *If this is the case in your section it does not appear to be altogether as it should be with you otherwise I am sure that you would have been able to obtain leave by this time.*
>
> *I have been making enquiries from two or three who are able to inform me about the Fusiliers and they have made me almost to wish that you had not joined in that Reg[imen]t.*

Then, there follows a long paragraph in which Charles exhorts his son, in explicitly religious language, to mind his moral behaviour:

> *Dear Arthur do take some advice from me, before you left home I begged of you not to associate yourself with bad companions. Remember you are an abstainer from all alcoholic drinks. Stick to the Temperance whatever it may cost you, likewise avoid in every way card playing or gambling betting and every means of dishonesty. I have not the least doubt that you will often find it rather difficult to avoid some or all of these Temptations. If the comrades with whom you are placed are mostly used to these things then not only for your sake but for my sake and all your Brothers and Sisters. There is still a Higher Sake for you to consider. Do try and Remember that you have always been taught the Supreme Great Truth that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and that all through Him might be saved. Again I beg of you Arthur do not be led into following these awful Soul destroying habits. I am very much afraid that you have not at all times enough courage to say No when you are surrounded by Temptation You must Pray and Pray sincerely and earnestly and keep a Watchful eye wide open so that you can clearly see there is Temptation and do not be in the least afraid to meet it and Resist. Not alone in your own strength but keep your memory clear that God is Omnipresent always near you, always ready to hear your Prayer, always willing and anxious to Help you to persist. So I beg of you Arthur not to be negligent with Prayerfulness and Watchfulness. You are not praying alone. I have promised that I will always Pray for you, that promise is to me a Solemn Vow to God so when you find you feel weak Let God know all about it and remember that I too am praying for you.*

This is followed by a short paragraph in which Charles advises his son to recall the words of a favourite hymn as a way of overcoming temptation:

> *If you cannot think of words at the moment that you feel depressed try and call to mind some Hymn verse that you know like this Shun evil companions. Bad—Language Disdain—God's Name hold in Reverence. Nor take it in Vain. Be thoughtful and earnest. Kind hearted and true*
>
> *Look ever to Jesus. He will carry you through.*

The lines quoted in the letter are from *Yield Not To Temptation*, a popular Victorian hymn written by Horatio R. Palmer in 1868. Then, there is a concluding paragraph in which the writer shifts the focus to himself and his own health and well-being:

> *In conclusion I must tell you this is Sunday evening and I have not been able to attend the Hall or any of the meetings as I am not at all well and am resting all day. It is very quiet and lonesome by myself but I must stand it till about the 26th when I expect that Carrie will be home again.*

After this comes a final exhortation that returns to the main theme:

> *Now Arthur I beg you to read this letter and give it all the consideration you can and Do your very best to make a True Soldier not only for your King and Country but try and enrich your Loyalty by Faithfulness and whole Heartedness in your Service to God and His Son Jesus Christ who Loves you*

The writer signs off:

> *From your ever anxious*
>
> *And Loving Father*
>
> *Charles Edward xx*

4. Methods of Analysis

In setting out to analyse this and the other letters in the series, I used a methodological approach that drew on both the tools of discursive psychology and the insights of psychosocial research. Potter and Wetherell, in their classic text on discursive psychology, argue for paying attention to the function or purpose of a text, suggesting that 'people use their language to do things: to order and request, persuade and accuse' but that this should not be understood in a mechanical way: when people are persuading, accusing, requesting, etc., they do not always do so explicitly' (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Writing about the ways in which masculinities are constructed within discourse, Nigel Edley makes the claim that 'when people talk, they do so using a lexicon or repertoire of terms which has been provided for them by history' (Edley 2001). As Wetherell and Potter explain, the term 'discourse' has been used in many different ways. Some use the term 'to cover all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal', whereas the influential French theorist Michel Foucault used it to refer to 'broader, historically developing, linguistic practices' (Potter and Wetherell 1987). For Foucault, discourse is 'a conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced . . . the effect of discursive practices is to make it virtually impossible to think outside them' (Hook 2001; Foucault 1981) Drawing on a Foucauldian understanding of discourse and subjectivity, Lupton and Barclay argue that discourses, 'as ways of framing, speaking about and giving meaning to phenomena, are the sites of struggle, open to challenge from other discourses' (Lupton and Barclay 1997).

A discourse-analytic approach sees identity as multi-layered, non-unitary, and as established and performed in language. While psychosocial researchers would largely agree with this, they are also concerned with what motivates speakers or writers to invest in specific discourses, or particular discursive or rhetorical strategies. At the same time, psychosocial analysis, while sharing discursive psychology's general sense of the social construction of identity, is also interested in how social factors interact with personal factors. Drawing on the principles of psychoanalysis but refracted through a social lens, psychosocial research studies the ways in which subjective experience is interwoven with social life, maintaining that subjective experiences 'cannot be abstracted from societal, cultural, and historical contexts, but nor can they be deterministically reduced to the social'. Instead, social and cultural worlds are 'shaped by psychological process and intersubjective relations' (Association for Psychosocial Studies n.d.). As Stephen Frosh has argued, a purely sociological approach to personal experience risks 'flattening' out emotional life and reducing it to the interplay of social forces (Frosh 2002).

In his study of First World War letters, Roper raises the question of how the insights of psychoanalysis can assist an understanding of the emotional lives of young men on the Western Front

without being reductive or over-speculative. He suggests that while Freud's original psychoanalytic insights on love, hate, loss, and trauma might be useful, for this specific purpose, Melanie Klein's object relations theory offers a more productive resource (Roper 2010; Klein 1986). Clearly, in Roper's case, Klein's emphasis on the primacy of relationships between children and their mothers is determinative, but her broader understanding of emotions and relationships might also inform an understanding of my great grandfather's strategies in his letters to his son. Roper writes that 'emotions for the Kleinian are not perceived as self-contained and individual, but as generated in human conduct and through communication—conscious and unconscious—with others' (Roper 2010, p. 24). In particular, a Kleinian-informed psychoanalytic approach can help to understand strategies for dealing with anxiety, Roper argues, and in particular for understanding omissions and evasions in the letters he analyses (Roper 2010). According to Hollway and Jefferson, common to all psychoanalytic schools is 'the idea of a dynamic unconscious which defends against anxiety and significantly influences people's actions, lives and relations' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). This is clearly relevant to the present case study, which focuses on one man's rhetorical strategies for dealing with his own anxieties resulting from separation and the fear of loss. On the other hand, Roper echoes the 'common criticism of the use of psychoanalysis in history that we cannot put the dead "on the couch" … and we cannot test our interpretations on our subjects as a psychoanalyst would' (Roper 2010, p. 25). The same applies to any psychoanalytically informed analysis or interpretation of textual material, which means that conclusions must inevitably remain speculative and open to contestation and revision.

In addition, a psychosocial approach to gender shares, with writers from a sociological perspective such as (Connell 1995), the notion that masculinities and femininities are plural, socially situated, and constantly formed and reformed in social interactions, rather than being static or biologically predetermined. However, a psychosocial perspective also includes a keen awareness that, to quote Peter Redman (Redman 2005), writing about research with boys, 'the various practices through which boys and young men [and one might add, all men] "do" masculinity are saturated with unconscious fantasy, intersubjective communication, and inextricably blurred boundaries between self and other.' Elsewhere, Redman and colleagues argue that 'psychoanalytic arguments can help us get to grips with the emotional labour involved in [everyday] activities, since they necessarily focus on the endless business by which unconscious anxieties and desires enter into and inflect our experience of the social world' (Redman et al. 2002).

A psychosocial approach, drawing at the same time on the tools of discourse analysis, can help us to see that Charles Robb's letters to his son are shot through with a deep sense of anxiety, and at the same time to identify the ways in which he uses language to deal with that anxiety.

5. Conflict and Resolution

If one were subjecting these letters to a rigorous discourse analysis, the first question one would ask of the texts would be: What are they trying to accomplish? What is it that motivates these texts, and what purpose or purposes are they setting out to fulfil? My analysis of my great grandfather's letters leads me to conclude that they are, first and foremost, struggling towards the resolution of a central underlying conflict between the writer's religious identity and beliefs on the one hand, and his son's current situation as a soldier in the British army about to go off to war on the other. I want to suggest that this tension is at the heart of, and is the driving emotional force behind Charles Robb's letters to his son, and it is one that the letters return to and worry away at repeatedly and in different ways.

Another way of expressing this is to suggest that the principal opposition in the letters is between two worlds: on the one hand, the familiar world of home, at the heart of which is the religious faith that Charles holds dear and to which he hopes Arthur also ascribes, and what is perceived to be the alien world of the army and the war. More specifically, it could be argued that the conflict to be resolved in the letters is between Charles' perception of his son's *spiritual* vocation as a Christian and his *secular* calling to serve King and country, which is a calling that Charles rhetorically endorses,

while at the same time articulating a distinct sense of unease about its consequences for Arthur's spiritual well-being.

The letters are constructed in such a way that they move, or attempt to move, towards a resolution of this conflict. A clear example of their attempts at resolution is provided by the way in which a number of letters end, with a ritual bringing together of the two callings, the spiritual and the secular. For example, the letter of February 1916 already cited ends as follows:

> *Do your very best to make a True Soldier not only for your King and Country but try and enrich your Loyalty by Faithfulness and whole Heartedness in your Service to God and His Son Jesus Christ who Loves you.*

There are similar examples in other letters:

> *God Bless You and make you a good Soldier of Jesus Christ so that it may Blend with your life as a Soldier for your King and Country.*

> *God Bless you and make you a Good and Steadfast Soldier not only for King and Country but for Jesus Christ who Loves you so much.*

These ritual and formulaic conclusions, which are similar to the blessing at the end of a religious service, combine the two vocations by using the traditional image of the Christian as a soldier of Christ, which is an image that was especially popular in Victorian and Edwardian Protestantism, coinciding with the heyday both of the British empire and of Christian missionary activity, and of which the words of the popular 19th-century hymn *Onward Christian Soldiers* provide a striking example.

However, on the way to these brief moments of ritual resolution, the letters contain all kinds of fractures and failures to resolve the two opposing positions. How does the writer of these letters deal with these conflicts and attempt to resolve them?

6. Displacing Anxiety

As we saw from the letter of 6 February 1916 quoted earlier, the focus of my great grandfather's anxiety in these letters is very much on the moral threat posed to his son by life in the army: the temptation to drink, to gamble, and so on. Charles Robb's expressions of concern about these threats become more intense as the series of letters unfolds, and there is a palpable sense of the distance between himself and his son creating an increasing sense of loss of control over Arthur's behaviour.

What is striking, certainly to the modern reader of these letters, is the absence of any reference to the very real physical threat posed by the war in which Arthur will soon be involved. At the same time, it is important to see things from Charles' perspective. To him, as a faithful Christian believer, what may seem to us with historical insight to be venal or trivial matters, when compared to the danger of death or injury in battle, might have appeared serious threats to his son's spiritual well-being and indeed to the fate of his very soul. At the same time, perhaps direct reference to the threat posed by war would have been taboo not just for my great grandfather, but for any parent writing to a son about to face such dangers. Therefore, a certain amount of avoidance of the subject, even to the extent of devoting precious space in the letters to the discussion of missing items of clothing or overdue subscriptions, might be said to be understandable.

However, on another reading, Charles' apparent obsession with venal temptations and domestic trivia can be interpreted as a displacement of his anxiety about the physical dangers faced by his son going to war and the very real threat of losing him. Even if we allow for the stringent demands of my great grandfather's Methodist faith and his teetotalism, the sheer energy expended in these letters on warnings and scoldings about drinking and gambling seems to speak to a deep level of repressed fear about that which cannot be mentioned in writing. Thus, at least some of what comes across as fear of losing his son to the apparently immoral culture of the army can be taken as a displacement of fear of a loss a more serious and permanent nature. Would it be too speculative to view these unspoken and

repressed fears as intensified by Charles' previous experiences of loss, particularly that of his other soldier son?

In addition to the displacement of anxiety on to the moral culture of the army and domestic trivia, there is a third kind of displacement that is evident in the letters, in the perhaps surprising focus on concerns about the letter writer's own health. To the modern reader, it seems odd to see a father whose son will shortly be facing the prospect of injury or death in battle, complaining about his own minor health problems, especially given the magnanimous Christian concern for his son shown elsewhere. The ostensible aim seems to be to evoke sympathy in his son, and perhaps a sense of guilt, primarily at not coming home for the weekend, but perhaps also at an unspoken level guilt for volunteering to join the army and leaving his father alone. So, perhaps there is a tension here, albeit at an unconscious level and confusingly articulated, between Charles' ostensible patriotism and suppressed feelings of betrayal and loss exemplified by his son's departure for war.

At the same time, I would argue that the letters' repeated focus on the mundane objects and activities of home can be seen as fulfilling a positive function in relation to the letters' aim of reconciling the familiar and sacred on the one hand with the alien and secular on the other.

7. Reconciling Two Worlds

A key way in which the letters seek to redeem the alien world of the army and the war is by creating a bridge between the homely, faith-filled world and the hostile world of the army by projecting an image of the former world into the latter in written form. Interestingly, there are parallels here with the rhetorical strategies adopted by the poet David Jones in his First World War epic *In Parenthesis* (Jones 1937; Jones 1959), which I have written about elsewhere (Robb 1989) and which adopts a similar process of making the strange familiar or redeeming the 'unhomely' world, in Jones' case of the Western Front, by connecting it with 'homely' parallels. It might be argued that this strategy, in Charles' case, is as much for the benefit of the writer as the recipient of the letters; it is a way of overcoming fatherly anxiety as much as comforting and reassuring his son.

One interesting way in which the letters do this, and once again there are intriguing parallels with the work of 'sacramental' poets such as David Jones, is by reproducing the actual language of the 'homely' world, and more specifically the language of the chapel and the Sunday school in the text of the letters, interweaving these quotations with his own words in a multi-layered way. As was noted in relation to the first letter quoted earlier, there are whole passages that do not simply quote from the Bible or from familiar hymns and choruses but rather almost recreate in a ritual way a Methodist service, as if the writer is actually breaking into song.

What this strategy accomplishes is in effect to transfer in a very tangible, sensuous, and emotive form a simulacrum of the 'home' world that embraces not only family and home, but also faith and the weekly world of the church and all it signifies into the unhomely world of the army. Charles' strategy provides a connection between the two worlds, but it also aims to redeem the alien secular world of the army and the war by imaginative association, to bring them back into connection with the familiar spiritual world of faith, family, and home.

Roper (2010) writes about the way in which parcels from home acted for soldiers on the Western Front as a tangible expression of maternal love as well as an embodied reminder or representation of home. He gives examples not just of food but of other tokens of home such as a mother sending her son swatches of their new kitchen wallpaper, which are tokens that acted in an almost sacramental way (in a way that David Jones would have recognised and endorsed) as physical representations of 'home'. As Roper comments:

'Some might interpret these offerings as signs of civilian incomprehension of life in the trenches, but this was the stuff of home itself, and it offered the most direct contact short of going on leave. Historians, transfixed as they are by the written word and the drama of the trenches, have sometimes overlooked the significance of these ordinary domestic objects—now vanished—as conveying maternal love' (Roper 2010).

Charles' tangible but seemingly trivial representations of home in words can be seen as fulfilling a similar function to these parcels, in this case acting as tokens of paternal love. John Tosh argues that there was something particular about Victorian Methodism's emphasis on the home as a spiritual entity:

'In drawing religion into the home at the same time as work was being taken out of it, the Methodists greatly intensified the hold of domesticity over the middle class and produced much of its characteristic tone and atmosphere. Methodism, like other forms of Evangelicalism, had its own theological rationale for locating so much religious observance in the home. It was a "religion of the heart" which valued the spiritual feelings of the individual. The relative intimacy of the small domestic gathering made space for an atmosphere of spiritual fellowship, in which the soul was bared, guidance sought, and reproof administered. This new dispensation, it has often been pointed out, enhanced the status of women, since it implied a new spiritual dimension to their traditional role as guardians of the hearth. But there were vital implications for men as well. What bound men to the home, in the early Victorian period especially, was not just the popular ethic of companionate marriage, or the emotional and material needs of the breadwinner, but the conviction that home was the proper place to cultivate one's spiritual well-being. The godly household was a corner of heaven on earth' (Tosh 2007).

8. Fathering and Faith

Discussion of my great grandfather's rhetorical strategy of forging redemptive connections between familiar and unfamiliar worlds prompts the question: what is the relationship in these letters between fathering and faith? One way of answering this is to suggest that Charles Robb's Methodist Christian faith provides him with two distinctive registers for his performance or practice of fatherhood and by extension for his identity as a man.

One of these registers has already been seen on display in the extract from the first letter quoted earlier. It is a register of moral exhortation with an insistent emphasis on courage, effort, and action. There are similar examples in other letters in the series:

Try and do all and everything of your Best in all things and do not forget the best way to conquer difficulties that seem almost impossible and are likely to conquer you is to use your own energy, capability, goodwill and endeavour.

I hope that you are getting on well and endeavouring in every way to do your very best. You are now placed in a position that everything you are told to do must be done immediately without any excuse for not doing it so keep up your courage and at every difficulty that comes in the way keep smiling and at all risks persevere until you conquer it Be active Be prompt Be careful Be willing Be diligent and then you will get on.

Dear Arthur I trust and pray earnestly for you that you will not forget the teachings of the Sunday School and the Scouts to Trust in God at all times and remember God for Jesus Christ's sake. God loves you not for a day but eternally and in answer to your Prayer assist you to overcome all difficulties and Temptation Do not forget to Be constant in Prayer and Watchful against Temptation.

We can see here one side of Nonconformist spirituality: the Puritan emphasis on working out one's own salvation with fear and trembling, and on individual effort, courage, and persistence, which are familiar from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Max Weber's famous analysis of the Protestant work ethic (Weber 2013). The connection with conventional images of Victorian masculinity should be apparent (Mangan and Walvin 1987). This aspect of his religious identity is a resource for a particular kind of masculinity in Charles' letters, one that is active, self-reliant, defensive, bounded, and wary of threats from outside.

However, alongside this, it is evident from the letters that Methodism provides Charles with another quite different register for performing fatherhood. Tosh (2007) has written about the ways in which Methodism provided a language that enabled Victorian men to be emotionally expressive, with its emphasis on the unconditional love of God and an intimate personal relationship with a loving Jesus, which was imagined often in quite feminine terms. A hint of this is seen in the final

quotation above, with its reminder of God's infinite love for Arthur. Charles signs off one letter as 'your anxious and Loving Father' and adds two kisses. Another letter ends with the words 'With prayer from your Loving Father Charles Edward' and 'Love and Kisses from all'. Other letters in the series end in a similar fashion, with references both to the divine love of Jesus Christ 'who loves you so much' (24 January), 'Jesus Christ who loves you' (6 February), and to paternal love 'With abundance of Love and kisses from your father' (10 February), 'With love and kisses from your loving Father' (18 February), and so on.

These examples provides something of a corrective to the conventional image of the ways in which a 65-year-old man, brought up in the Victorian era, might have written to his 19-year-old soldier son 100 years ago. It suggests that another kind of masculine identity was available to men of this era from particular Christian backgrounds besides the austere stereotype of the self-reliant Puritan. The Christian, and specifically Methodist, image of the loving fatherhood of God provides Charles with a model for his own fathering, and at the same time, the emotional spirituality of Methodism offers him a language in which to openly express his love for his son. Tosh writes about one of the men in his case studies, a Methodist farmer from Lincolnshire, that his 'fatherly involvement' was 'not what we might expect of a Victorian father, much less a devout Methodist' and that fatherhood was integral to this man's 'sense of his divinely ordered place in the world, and inseparable from his masculine self' (Tosh 2007).

One might be tempted to characterise one of Charles Robb's rhetorical registers as more masculine and the other as more feminine, if we take masculinity as being conventionally associated with effort and action and femininity with expressivity and care. However, this is to fall back on stereotypical assumptions of what 'typical' fathering or masculinity might have been when Charles Robb was writing. To see him as unusual is to fall into the trap of viewing 'past fatherhoods' as the opposite of early 21st-century notions of caring or 'hands-on' fatherhood. One might argue that the contemporary discourse of 'new' fatherhood almost needs this stereotypical image of fathering in the past against which to define itself, although research by Tosh and other historians of fatherhood has done much to problematise the received picture of fathers' lack of engagement in the care of their children in the past: see for example Julie-Marie Strange's work on Victorian and Edwardian working-class fatherhoods (Strange 2015), Laura King's overview of post-First World War fatherhood (King 2015) and Ralph LaRossa's work on fathering practices in the inter-war period (LaRossa 1997). Part of the problem has been the absence of first-hand evidence of different fathering practices in the past, an absence for which I hope this analysis of my great grandfather's letters, as well as pioneering research such as that conducted by Tosh and others, might begin to compensate.

9. Family History and Fatherhood Research

The analysis of my great grandfather's wartime letters in this article prompts certain questions about the methodological legitimacy of using 'found' family history material of this kind as the basis for academic research. One question that is raised by this approach is the degree to which one can claim that the accounts analysed are in any sense representative of the broader spectrum of experience, in this case of fathering practice, in the period being studied. However, the same question might be raised about any other example of so-called 'micro history', or indeed any research using a 'case study' approach (Ginzburg 1993). The claim is not that these localised case studies are necessarily 'typical', but rather that their analysis lends a depth and richness to understanding of a spectrum of experience that is not available when using a wider historical lens. The same might apply to the burgeoning field of autoethnography, in which researchers use the example of their own experience as data (for example, see (Strasser 2016).

However, there are additional issues raised when using material from personal family histories as the basis for academic research. For example, the researcher, as a family 'insider', may have access to external data that could colour his or her interpretation of the material. This might take the form of direct personal knowledge of the writer or speaker, or in the case of more distant relatives such

as my great grandfather, access to family stories and anecdotes, as well as a general 'feel' for the family context not available to an 'outsider' researcher. Again, some of these problems and issues are familiar from other kinds of 'insider' research, such as participant observation in ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019).

These factors would certainly create complications if one were adopting a purely discourse-analytic methodology, in which case one would want to rigorously exclude any information from outside the text. Clearly, both as a family 'insider' and as a family history researcher who has researched my grandfather's and great grandfather's lives, this was not possible for me, as it might have been for an outsider researcher coming to these texts without that knowledge. However, a psychosocial approach, with its interest in the personal factors behind an individual's investment in particular discourses, might take a more permissive attitude to this extraneous knowledge. At the same time, one needs to bear in mind Roper's caveat, mentioned above, about the dangers of psychoanalysing the dead.

To what extent, then, might what we know of Charles Robb's life experience from external sources help us to understand the strategies he adopts in these letters and the way in which he practices fathering? I have already referred to the fact that his life had been marked by a number of losses, beginning with the death of a mother whom he never knew, and followed by the deaths of two children and of his wife. Added to the experience of the latter bereavement, and as a consequence of it, is the fact that, to be the best of our knowledge, Charles had to raise his younger children as a single father, although we cannot know the precise circumstances of this, or whether there were other female figures—older sisters, or aunts, for example—who acted as maternal substitutes after the death of his wife Louisa. It is tempting to speculate that Charles was forced to act as both 'father' and 'mother' to Arthur, at least, as the youngest child (who was only 8 years old when his mother died), and this might lead us to conclude that the particularly expressive nature of Charles' letters, rather than being typical of fathers from his religious background or his generation, have resulted from his unusual role, for the period, as a single father.

As a researcher analysing my great grandfather's letters, it would have been difficult if not impossible for me to exclude this kind of extraneous information from my interpretation of the letters. However, as with all academic research, surely the response is to remain reflexively aware of the dangers of over-interpretation, to avoid speculative conclusions based on limited evidence, and at the same time to consider alternative explanations, all of which I hope I have done in this analysis.

10. Conclusions

My great grandfather's wartime letters to his son provide a rich case study of one man 'doing' fathering under difficult conditions of distance and separation in a specific social and historical context. Analysing the letters has demonstrated some of the ways in which particular rhetorical and discursive strategies may be used to displace overwhelming anxiety and to resolve seemingly intractable personal conflicts. At the same time, this analysis has cast light on some of the ways in which religious belief and masculine identity can interact, and the ways in which a particular religious tradition—in this case, Methodist Christianity—was able to provide a resource for an affective and expressive masculinity and fathering identity. It is to be hoped that this kind of 'micro-history', accompanied by rigorous analysis, can make a significant contribution to the growing social history of fatherhood and to the re-evaluation of stereotypical assumptions about fatherhood in the past, as well as contemporary debates about fatherhood and masculinity.

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"My Daddy . . . He Was a Good Man": Gendered Genealogies and Memories of Enslaved Fatherhood in America's Antebellum South

Susan-Mary Grant * and David Bowe

School of History, Classics and Archaeology, Newcastle University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 7RU, UK;
d.bowe9994@googlemail.com

* Correspondence: susan-mary.grant@ncl.ac.uk

Abstract: While the last few years have witnessed an upsurge of studies into enslaved motherhood in the antebellum American South, the role of the enslaved father remains largely trapped within a paradigm of enforced absenteeism from an unstable and insecure familial unit. The origins of this lie in the racist assumptions of the infamous "Moynihan Report" of 1965, read backwards into slavery itself. Consequently, the historiographical trajectory of work on enslaved men has drawn out the performative aspects of their masculinity in almost every area of their lives except that of fatherhood. This has produced an image of individualistic masculinity, separate from the familial role that many enslaved men managed to sustain and, as a result, productive of a disjointed and gendered genealogy of slavery and its legacy. This paper assesses the extent to which this fractured genealogy actually represents the former slaves' worldview. By examining a selection of interviews conducted by the Federal Writers' Project under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s (the WPA Narratives), this paper explores formers slaves' memories of their enslaved fathers and the significance of the voluntary paternal presence in their life stories. It concludes that the role of the black father was of greater significance than so far recognised by the genealogical narratives that emerged from the slave communities of the Antebellum South.

Keywords: Slavery; Fathers; American South; Memory; WPA Narratives

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> You growed up in slavery time. When Old Massa wuz 'drivin you in de rain and in de col'—he wasn't don' it tuh he'p you 'long. He wuz lookin' out for hisself. Course I wuz twelve years old when Lee made de big surrender, and dey didn't work me hard, but—dese heah chillum is diffunt from us.
>
> (Zora Neale Hurston, Jonah's Gourd Vine, 1934)

1. Introduction

British actress Fanny Kemble was, famously, horrified by what she encountered on her husband's slave plantation in Georgia; so horrified, indeed, that the couple soon separated. Kemble waited, however, until the United States itself had, temporarily, separated to publish her memoirs of life in the slave south, memoirs that included a damning indictment of the constrictions that slavery imposed on the relationship between enslaved fathers and their children. This, she charged, "resembles . . . the short-lived connection between an animal and its young. The father, having neither authority, power, or charge in his children, is of course, as among brutes, the least attached to his offspring." Kemble was not much more positive about enslaved motherhood, which she described as "mere breeding, bearing, suckling, and there an end," but she did identify a stronger, albeit compromised, bond between mother and child (Kemble 1863, pp. 59–60). Historian Andrew Delbanco has recently echoed Kemble's

comments. Slavery, Delbanco argued, "robs mothers of their motherhood, and thereby stunts the souls of their sons. It turns motherless black boys into heartless black men." In its destruction of the mother-child bond, he concluded, slavery was "a factory for manufacturing monsters" (Delbanco 2019, p. 157).

This paper challenges the assumption that slave men were heartless monsters, and offers evidence to show that enslaved fathers bequeathed their children a more robust legacy than historians have so far acknowledged. Using a selection of 200 interviews (some 10% of the total available via the Library of Congress) conducted with former slaves by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s, it divides the analysis into two parts: the first concentrates on the evidence from the WPA interviews themselves, and the second assesses how bringing fatherhood more firmly into the frame might nuance the ways in which the WPA narratives have so far been used by historians.

Slavery's destruction of the African American family unit formed the focus of much contemporary abolitionist criticism of the institution, and has been of interest to historians for many decades now (Gutman 1976; Manfra and Dykstra 1985; Jones 1985; Malone 1992; Stevenson 1997; Hudson 1997; Dunaway 2003; West 2004; Fraser 2007; Fraser 2009; Patterson 2010; West 2012). This critique, however, has become increasingly gendered over the years, productive of a genealogy of divisive descent within which the role of the black father remains a contested, unsettled, and often marginalised one. There are, in some respects, sound reasons for this, the most obvious being the fact that from the mid-seventeenth century, enslaved status, first in Virginia and then in the rest of the then colonies, derived from that of the mother. The reasoning behind this, and the sexual exploitation of slaves that it highlighted, was made clear in the wording of the legislation (Act XII) passed in Virginia in December of 1662. This was in response to doubts that "have arisen whether any children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free." To abolish these doubts, the act ruled "that all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother" (Hening 1809, vol. II, p. 170).

This matrilineal ruling has led to many erroneous assumptions over the years. For the modern African American family it had perhaps its most deleterious impact with the publication, in 1965, of *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then Assistant Secretary for Labor. Commonly termed the "Moynihan Report", this argued that a combination of the economic and psychological effects of slavery, the segregated nature of society after the Civil War and into the twentieth century, and the ever-present threat of lynching "worked against the emergence of a strong father figure" within black communities. In support of his racially-informed assertions, Moynihan cited cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead's 1962 publication, *Male and Female*, and specifically her argument that slavery, along with warfare, famine, epidemics, and social unrest, undermined the family unit and destroyed the "delicate line of transmission" whereby men learned nurturing, paternal roles. The primary familial unit to emerge from slavery, Moynihan argued, was "mother and child . . . the biologically given" (United States Department of Labor 1965, chp. III).

As far as oral history is concerned, the absent-father trope gained traction via one of the most commonly-cited and influential writers on the genealogy of black America, Alex Haley, who penned both *Roots* (1976) and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965). Haley expressed the belief that, typically, "slave children would grow up without an awareness of who their parents were, and particularly male parents" (Haley in Perks and Thomson 2015, p. 23). This assumption can be heard even now in the most recent scholarly literature. As Michael Connor and Joseph White noted, "[h]istorically, black fathers have been either invisible in the study of child development and family life or characterized in negative terms." Above all, they are too often seen as "absent fathers who are financially irresponsible and rarely involved in their children's lives" (Connor and White 2007, p. 2; see also Hamer 2001).

Yet, Connor and White could almost be writing about the WPA narratives when they observed that that there "seem to be major discrepancies between the negative absent father images of black men described by demographic studies and the picture of black men in fathering roles which emerges from structured interviews, narratives, biographical sketches, community-based observations and

ethnographic investigations" (Connor and White 2007, p. 2), because what the WPA interviews represent above all is an assertion of a genealogical narrative for the African American community in the South. By far the largest percentage of the interviews examined for this paper begin by listing the names of mother and father, and often grandmother and grandfather, too. Those interviewed had a clear sense of their ancestral history, their location within a line of descent, even in cases of an absent father. In this respect, the oral history of the formerly enslaved has had a "transforming impact" upon our understanding of the black family (Paul Thompson in Perks and Thomson 2015, p. 37). The WPA narratives are clear about the positive role that many fathers, even what Jennifer Hamer termed "noncustodial" fathers, represented in the lives of their children (Hamer 2001, p. 33). Many enslaved fathers played what Connor and White termed a "generative" role in guiding the next generation, and this was recognised by their offspring (Connor and White 2007, p. 5).

It must be stressed that in seeking to extend our understanding of the father's role under slavery, this paper is not an analysis of enslaved masculinity, but rather the *memory* of enslaved masculinity in its paternal iteration. The WPA interviews are, as has long been recognised, difficult sources to use. To date, they have been approached largely as a debriefing exercise, the interrogation of a generation on the cusp of leaving the national stage with the intention of securing, before it was too late, direct evidence of life under slavery in the antebellum era. The interviews were conducted in the Depression-era South, a land of lynching, where racial tensions were high and the likelihood of many of those interviewed being completely candid about slavery was slim. The degree of directness could and did vary depending on whether the interviewer was white or black. "Dissimulation," as Paul Escott observed in his study of slave memory, "became a regular part of life for most slaves," and, bringing this forward, Catherine Stewart observed that the "compromising circumstances of the color line in 1930s America made it almost impossible for blacks and whites to speak to one another freely" (Escott 1979, p. 34; Stewart 2016, p. 3).

Historians have long been aware, in short, that as far as the conditions of slave life were concerned, black interviewers usually elicited both more direct and more detailed accounts than most white interviewers, although as Stewart noted in her discussion of Zora Neale Hurston's attempts to collect folklore in Florida, this is not necessarily an assumption the historian can always make (Stewart 2016, pp. 133, 155–65). However, recounting memories of fathers sidestepped the racial dynamic. The subject of slavery was politically charged in a way that the personal memory of a parent might not seem to be to a patronising interviewer, since it did not directly involve any kind of assessment of the interviewee's experience under or opinions of slavery, nor did it challenge white hegemony directly—but indirectly was another matter. A memory of brutality to a father could be recounted to an unsympathetic white interviewer in a way that an account of brutality to oneself, or anger at the black economic condition in the 1930s, might not safely be attempted. This enabled those interviewed to critique, indirectly—so indirectly that it is sometimes doubtful if the white interview picked up on the criticism—the brutality of the South's "peculiar institution". Theirs was, in its purest form, "a language of implication" (Stewart 2016, p. 201). Not all bothered to dissemble. "You are going around to get a story of slavery conditions ... before the civil war?" interviewee Thomas Hall asked. "You should have known before this late day all about that. Are you going to help us? No! you are only helping yourself," he charged. "No matter where you are from I don't want you to write my story cause the white folks have been and are now and always will be against the negro" (Library of Congress n.d.; see also Crosby 2012, p. 271).

In Hall's case the interviewer had clearly stirred up unwelcome memories, and this raises a second issue with these interviews. Many of those who first used them, as much as many of those who conducted them, did so absent any oral history training (Blassingame 1977, pp. xliii–lvi; Stewart 2016, pp. 2–7, 64, 201–3). This can be problematic when the interviewee is not being as direct as Hall. Laura Cornish, for example, welcomed her interviewer by observing "Lawd have mercy 'pon me, when you calls me Aunt Laura it seems jes' like you must be one of my white folks, 'cause dat what dey calls me" (Library of Congress n.d.). At face value, this could be read as welcoming. More subtly, it can be read

as a somewhat passive-aggressive reaction to the interviewer's calling her "Aunty". It was more likely a blunt criticism of the interviewer's patronising approach, but whether the interviewer heard it that way is open to doubt.

Nevertheless, and bearing all these problems in mind, as the first example in America of state-sponsored space within which former slaves could "talk about black identity", these interviews are indispensable (Stewart 2016, p. 2). In order to assess the role of the enslaved father in the life stories of those who were children when slavery ended, the memories of fatherhood that they retained, however indistinctly, the significance of the paternal presence, or absence, in their lives, and the role that fatherhood played in the genealogical narrative constructed out of the slave past, they are revealing. What they reveal is that fatherhood was of greater significance in the autobiographical memories and consequently the life narratives of many former slaves than it has been, so far, to the historiography of slavery. This paper agrees that, in purely evidential terms in respect of slavery, the WPA narratives are open to challenge; but as a means of assessing the ways in which former slaves wrote themselves into a national genealogical narrative of family and freedom, it proposes, they are both revealing.

1.1. Enslaved Fatherhood in the American South

Fathers are not wholly absent from the extensive and, for obvious reasons, frequently fractious debate over slavery in the United States. From Eugene Genovese's magisterial study of slave life, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (Genovese 1976, pp. 482–95), onwards, the significance of the father has not been entirely ignored. In part reacting against the "Moynihan Report", many historians, mainly writing in the 1970s and 1980s, challenged the idea that slave families had been compromised, if not entirely destroyed, under slavery. They emphasised the importance of the slave family in sustaining individuals trapped in an inhuman labour system, and identified an active slave culture distinct from the white world in which the enslaved had been forced to live (Blassingame 1972; Gutman 1976; Genovese 1978, p. 29; see also Parish 1989, pp. 76–89). Subsequent scholars, however, have evinced a tendency to read the problems that Moynihan described back into the slave past, and have qualified the image of the relatively stable slave society that emerged from earlier studies. Such stability as existed, historian Brenda Stevenson insisted, inhered in the matrifocal nature of the slave community around which "flexible extended families were formed to provide nurture, education, and socialization for its members to cope with the ever-present threat of displacement by their owners." Within this structure, "'husbands' had no legal claim to their families" and therefore "could not legitimately command their economic resources or offer them protection from abuse or exploitation" (Stevenson 1997, pp. 160–61).

As a result, the role of the slave father has, of late, become somewhat neglected; lost in wider studies that seek to assess enslaved masculinity in the Antebellum South. It is not entirely absent. Emily West, in particular, has closely examined the lengths to which enslaved men would go in order to hold their family units together. She has found that over 30 percent of marriages were "cross-plantation" relationships, where husband and wife succeeded in sustaining the family unit, but only across distance (West 2004, pp. 46–47; and see also West 2012; West 1999). However, it forms no obvious part of what Sergio Lussana has termed the "homosocial world of enslaved men". This world, Lussana argued, provided a very necessary "emotional landscape" for enslaved men, "serving as a buffer against the dehumanizing features of enslaved life, and a source of resistance" (Lussana 2013, pp. 872, 874; see also Lussana 2010a). For him, relational masculinity functioned within a framework of violence, particularly in respect to semi-organised wrestling and boxing contests, where the fighters could validate their own masculinity by defeating their opponent in front of their fellow slaves (Lussana 2010b, pp. 901–22; see also Doddington 2018). With its focus on the relationships male slaves formed with each other rather than with their children, the issue of fatherhood did not really factor into the emotional equation.

Walter Johnson, examining the slave markets of the Antebellum South, detailed several cases where an individual resisted sale away from family, but most of these met with little long-term success. The father, one former slave recalled, "was not considered in any way as a family part" (*Slave Narratives* 1941, North Carolina, XI, Part 1, 361). Slavery, as Johnson emphasised, was a "story

of separated lovers and broken families, of widows, widowers, and orphans left in the wake of the trade" (Johnson 1999, p. 41). Increasingly, as historians tell it, it has become a story largely about mothers (White 1985; Frankel 1999; Lindquist 2011, p. 220; Cowling et al. 2018; West and Shearer 2018; West 2018; Glymph 2020), and yet, this was not necessarily the narrative that former slaves recounted to their WPA interviewers.

Hannah Plummer's family was typical of many in America's Antebellum South in that her parents, Allen and Bertcha Lane, had different enslavers, albeit in this case living proximate to each other in Raleigh, North Carolina. As a result, Hannah's father lived with his family. He also lived a more independent life than some. As a stone cutter, he hired himself out for wages, the bulk of which, however, went to his enslavers. This prompted the somewhat critical comment from his wife and children's enslaver, Governor Charles Manly, that although Hannah's father lived with his family, Manly derived no financial benefit from this arrangement. Hannah's father, Hannah recalled the Governor complaining, "ought to keep up his [the enslaved] family" (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, Part 2, p. 178).

Hannah was born in 1856. She was eleven years of age when America's civil war ended and slavery was abolished via the 13th Amendment, and in her early eighties when asked to recall her memories of life as a slave. Did she remember Governor Manly saying this to her father? Is it likely that he said it in front of her? Can we, in fact, be certain that he said it at all? The answer to these questions is probably not, not very likely, and no, we cannot be certain. What we can be more certain of is that this is what Hannah Plummer told her interviewer. This was one of the "memories" she pulled out from her years of enslavement, one of the "memories" she retained of her father, and it is worth our while to ask what it tells us; not just about Hannah's years as a slave, but about the assumptions often made in relation to the WPA narratives as a whole.

The problems of racial and class bias and intimidation that historian John Blassingame highlighted over half a century ago now with respect to the compromised nature of the WPA interviews have not diminished (Blassingame 1977, pp. xlii–li). What has changed is that oral historians now feel more confident dealing with the fact that oral history represents "a shared project in which both the interviewer and the interviewee are involved together, if not necessarily in harmony." Both the "specific distortions" that the interviewer brings to the table, along with the likelihood that interviewees frequently tell the interviewer only "what they believe they want to be told" are now accepted qualifiers in the process of conducting, and consulting oral testimonies (Alessandro Portelli in Perks and Thomson 2015, p. 55). Furthermore, as oral historian Michael Frisch has stressed, in the context of memories of the Great Depression, what historians are often presented with is *received memory*. This is most evident, he argued, in interviews with the young, whose sense of the past "owes much to what their parents have not remembered and have not told them" (Michael Frisch in Perks and Thomson 2015, p. 46).

With these findings in mind, the charge that the WPA interviews lack immediacy due to "the long time between the actual slave experience and interview," combined with the fact that "an overwhelming majority" of those interviewed "could describe only how slavery appeared to a black child," appears less of a barrier to comprehension and analysis than it once did (Blassingame 1977, p. l). Indeed, the WPA interviews have never described slavery as it "appeared to a black child". What they actually described was how slavery appeared to, or at least was described by, an adult, and an adult at the other end of life course from the child he or she was during slavery. Assessing the extent to which memory in older age is necessarily neurologically compromised, combined with the impact of the hostile racial environment of slavery itself, as well as that in which many of these interviews took place, is beyond the scope of this article. However, as Kelly McWilliams et al. noted, "[r]esearch on the influence of prior maltreatment on children's eyewitness memory is still in its infancy", which should at least give us pause when it comes to generalising about the reliability, or unreliability of what the WPA interviews reveal (McWilliams et al. 2014, p. 702).

What we can say with certainty is that what these interviews offer us is not the detail of the memory of slavery, but an insight into the genealogical *narrative* that emerged from slavery. More than many

other sources, they "compensate for chronological distance with a much closer personal involvement" (Alessandro Portelli in Perks and Thomson 2015, p. 53). They are examples of what psychologists term "autobiographical memory . . . the chronicle of our lives, a long record we consult whenever someone asks us what our earliest memory is, what the house we live in as a child looked like, or what was the last book we read." Autobiographical memory, as psychologist Douwe Draaisma has stressed, "both recalls and forgets at the same time". It contains "next to nothing about what happened before we were three or four," it focuses on and never fails to remember "hurtful events" and "humiliations", it is "our most intimate companion". The earliest memories, in particular, "cannot always be separated from stories circulating in the family" (Draaisma 2004, pp. 1, 12, 24).

Bearing all this in mind, Hannah Plummer's apparently perfect recall of quite a specific conversation that took place over seventy years previously tells us one, or both, of two things: first, this conversation was of significance to Hannah, such that she was able to recall it with some clarity well over half a century later; or, second, that it was the product of received memory, an echo of her mother's memory of it. In either case, it was a memory that positioned Hannah's father firmly within the fledgling cash nexus that functioned as part of slave society, as a man with some status, such status deriving both from the skills that enabled him to work quasi-independently and the recognition of this fact by Hannah's enslaver (on this point see Hudson 1994, p. 77).

Whilst it may have been an unrealistic assumption given the family's particular circumstances, Hannah's enslaver clearly considered Hannah's father as having the same responsibilities as a father and husband that a free man would have shouldered. This was not unusual. As historian David Doddington stressed, the evidence indicates that "enslaved men who lived in family units were typically expected to act as providers of sorts", as well as "be the mobile partners in abroad marriages", an observation borne out in the interviews examined here (Doddington 2018, p. 100; West 1999, p. 238; Macdonald 1993; Pargas 2006a, 2006b; see, e.g., *Slave Narratives*, Charles W. Dickens, North Carolina, XI, Part I, p. 255; J. H. Beckwith, Arkansas, II, Part 1, p. 132; Henry Bland, Georgia, IV, Part 1, p. 83; Amanda McDaniel, Georgia IV, Part 3, p. 71). A slave was always both property and person in the Antebellum South, but Hannah's father appears to have been considered, by Hannah's enslaver at least, to have been both slave and free. It is difficult to assess what this meant for Hannah's father, but his contradictory status may have been the source of some pride for Hannah's mother and, by extrapolation, Hannah herself. What appears to be a negative memory of an enslaver's complaint can, in fact, be read as a positive assertion of a father's status.

Hannah Plummer was not alone in deriving some pride from her father's position as a skilled slave. Charles W. Dickens recalled how his father "split slats and made baskets to sell", but this was clearly received memory, because Dickens went on to add that "[h]e said his master let him have all the money he made sellin' de things he made" (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, Part 1, p. 256; see also Della Briscoe, Georgia, IV, Part 1, p. 125; Minnie Davis, Georgia IV, Part 1, p. 255). John Day, a former slave from Tennessee, recalled his father, Alfred's, success as a blacksmith. "Blaksmithin' was a real trade them days," he told his interviewer, and by the end of the Civil War his father had accumulated some "fifteen hundred dollars in Confederate money". So valuable was Alfred, indeed, that when his enslaver decided to sell him, not on any other grounds than "he could git a lot of money for him", he quickly changed his mind and bought Alfred back. "Day de only time," John reported, "master sold one of us" (*Slave Narratives*, Texas, XVI, Part 1, p. 302). Similarly, Carey Davenport, a retired minister at the time of his interview, understood that a specific skill translated into cash value for a slave. Proud of his father's carpentry and ironwork expertise, and keen to emphasise that his father had made "the best Carey plows in that part of the country", the economic worth that this translated into for his father's enslaver nevertheless became inseparable from, was possibly part of, the pride that Davenport derived from his father's abilities. "He was a very valuable man," Davenport reported, "and he make wheels and the hub and put the spokes in" (*Slave Narratives*, Texas, XVI, Part 1, p. 283).

Independent work of this nature, as Doddington has emphasised, "could be an arena of 'self-making' for enslaved men" (Doddington 2018, p. 90). Given the second-hand nature of much

of the evidence with respect to the WPA interviews, this is plausible but perhaps harder to prove. The emphasis placed upon paternal skill and effort in these interviews, however, certainly suggests that this particular narrative was of significant value to the "self-making" of their descendants. It is important to stress that maternal support, skill, and effort is not entirely absent in these narratives, and apparently equally valued by the interviewee in many respects. However, what dominated many of the accounts was the father's, not the mother's work. This was the case even when the interviewee detailed the mutual effort that both parents sustained in order to support their families.

Louisa Adams, for example, told her interviewer that her "[d]ad and mammie had their own gardens and hogs," which was essential, as Louisa recalled. "We were compelled to walk about at night to live," she reported, we "were so hungry we were bound to steal or p[e]rish." Later in the interview, however, she highlighted the hunting skills that her father deployed in order to keep the family from starvation. "My old daddy partly raised his chilluns on game," she recalled, apparently privileging this over the combined effort of both parents to raise food (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, Part I, pp. 2–3). An even more obvious example is that of Hannah Crasson from North Carolina. At first Hannah did not differentiate between her parents when recounting their efforts to provide for their family. "They worked their patches by moonlight," she recalled, "and worked for the white folks in the day time. They sold what they made. Marster bought it and paid for it." However, then joint effort suddenly translated into paternal success alone: "He made a barrel o' rice every year, my daddy did" (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, Part I, p. 188).

In some cases, the durability and security of an enslaved family was clearly understood by those interviewed so many decades later to have been directly linked to the father's independent economic leverage within the slave system. This may have pointed to its unusual nature, or it may have been a reflection of survival recounted at a time, during the Great Depression, when survival was becoming more of a challenge. The memory was not always a pleasant one. Robert Glenn from North Carolina recounted the considerable efforts that his father had exerted to try and hold his family together. "My father's time was hired out," Glenn explained, "and as he knew a trade he had by working overtime saved up a considerable amount of money." When Glenn was sold, his father attempted to buy his son back, but was unable to do so, not because he did not have the money, but because the slave speculator refused to sell to a black slave. Economic power, when wielded by African Americans, had its limitations in the Antebellum South. It was not until long after slavery had ended that Glenn, unlike so many in the aftermath of slavery, succeeded in finding his parents again, an emotional encounter that Glenn detailed to the interviewer. "I broke down and began to cry. Mother nor father did not know me, but mother suspicioned I was her child," Glenn recounted. "Father had a few days previously remarked that he did not want to die without seeing his son once more. I could not find language to express my feelings" (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, Part 1, pp. 329–330, 339).

Given the extended trauma attendant upon separation, combined with the emotion Glenn experienced when the family was reunited, the reader can be reasonably confident that this was part of Glenn's autobiographical memory. Trauma, indeed, is most likely to produce, and retain, "the very first autobiographical memories," so it is unsurprising that it forms a significant component of the WPA interviews ([Draaisma 2004](#), p. 22). The high cost of resistance was just one aspect of this. Rebellion, violence, and resistance have been the main themes analysed by historians seeking to understand how male slaves manifested their gender identity; a trend evidenced in, most prominently, Darlene Clark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins' edited collection of essays on masculinity and slavery, *A Question of Manhood*, almost all of which are centred on slave violence and resistance, defined as "slave flight and revolt, sabotage and the destruction of property, the feigning of illness, manipulation and refusal to work, self-mutilation, suicide and even the killing of one's children, poisoning, physical, and violent confrontation" ([Hine et al. 1999](#), p. 2). Violent confrontation, or confrontation of any kind, however, could carry a high cost, as Anne Clark's father found out. "My poppa was strong. He never had a lick in his life," Anne recalled with some pride. When the day came that the enslaver tried to whip him, Anne's father stood up to him. "I never had a whoppin' and you can't whop me," he declared. "But I

can kill you," was the response, and the enslaver "shot my poppa down. My mam tuk him in the cabin and put him on a pallet. He died" (*Slave Narratives*, Texas XVI, Part 1, p. 224).

In some cases, it was not direct confrontation that produced violence, and not necessarily white on black violence. Mary Bell from Missouri looked back at the effort her father had expended in order to visit her mother on the two days a week that he was allowed to do so. However, "so often he came home all bloody from beatings his old nigger overseer would give him," she remembered. "My mother would take those bloody clothes off of him, bathe de sore places and grease them good and wash and iron his clothes so he could go back clean" (*Slave Narratives*, Missouri X, p. 27). Louisa Adam from North Carolina recalled performing this service herself, a memory that must have stuck in the mind of the child she was at the time. "I have greased my daddy's back after he had been whupped until his back was cut to pieces," she reported. "He had to work jis the same" (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina XI, Part 1, p. 5). Similarly, Mary Gladdy from Georgia recounted the time that her father, able to hold off several of his fellow slaves who had been charged with helping the plantation foreman whip him, was then shot by the foreman, "inflicting wounds from which he never fully recovered" (*Slave Narratives*, Georgia IV, part 2, p. 17). A J Mitchell's father was whipped for asserting his freeborn status. "I've seen stripes on his back look like the veins on the back of my hand," the interviewer was told, "where they whipped him tryin' to make him disown his freedom" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas III, Part 5, p. 103).

Retrieving and repeating these memories of violence similarly spoke to an assertion of status that enslavers were unwilling to acknowledge; an assertion of racial equality, of humanity, of belonging to a family, a family that slavery as an institution was designed to destroy. Fathers within these familial units were sometimes remembered as functioning in ways identical to more stable families, to free families, although sometimes also in having to behave in ways more extreme than most free families ever had to experience. Although bell hooks proposed that "most black male slaves stood quietly by as white masters sexually assaulted and brutalised black women and were not compelled to act as protectors," those interviewed by the WPA sometimes told a different story (Hooks 2004, p. 34).

Sallie Carder's father was "shot and killed", for example, whilst attempting to prevent the overseer from whipping his wife (*Slave Narratives*, Oklahoma XIII, p. 28). Fathers also often experienced extremes of violence simply for visiting their families, as Mary Bell's father might have done, despite having passes permitting them to travel. In part this may have been indicative of gender-related assumptions in the Antebellum South, but here, too, fathers sometimes take second place to mothers in the literature. Deborah Gray White, for example, argued that this arrangement reinforced female independence (White 1985, p. 154). Yet, this came at a cost for their husbands. Enslaved fathers visiting wives and children on nearby plantations risked being beaten by the patrollers, who clearly needed little excuse to mete out violence to slaves. Manda Walker, for example, remembered how, due to the problems caused by a swollen creek, her father had "stayed over his leave dat was written on his pass." As a result, the slave patrollers "[t]ied him up, pulled down his breeches, and whupped him righ befo mammy and us chillum. I shudder to dis day," Manda recalled, "to think of it." "I often think," Manda mused, having narrated this harrowing episode, "dat de system of patarollers and bloodhounds did more to bring on de war and de wrath of de Lord than anything else" (*Slave Narratives*, South Carolina XIV, p. 171).

The role of father was not always so fraught with danger. Memories of a father's love and concern also come through the WPA narratives. "I 'members when I's jus' walkin' round good pa come in from the field at night and taken me out of bed and dress me and feed me and then play with me for hours," Will Adams recalled. John Day looked back in admiration at a father who would, after "de day's work" work for himself to support his family. "He'd work until midnight, sometimes," Day remembered, commenting "I never seen such a worker." John Smith from Raleigh had mixed memories of his father who, according to Smith, "believed in whuppin like the white folks did." Yet, before his father died he told Smith that he "had done more for him dan de other chilluns. He whupped me too much,"

Smith commented, "but atter all he was my father an' I loved him" (*Slave Narratives*, Texas XVI, Part 1, p. 2; Texas XVI, Part 1, p. 302; North Carolina XI, Part 2, pp. 279–80).

Slave fathers also sought to protect their families by offering simple advice and encouragement. Susan Davis Rhodes, an ex-slave from Missouri remembers that "people in my day didn't know book learning but dey studied how to protect each other, and save 'em from much misery as dey could" (*Slave Narratives*, Missouri X, p. 284). Similarly, Tennessee Johnson, a slave from Louisiana, recalled how "[d]ey do all dey can to keep de young people out o trouble, but if dey get into trouble, dere's a place in de quarter de meet an' dey talk it over. One say 'yo' boy do dis, or yo' girl do dat', and dey help to get dem out of trouble." Slave fathers, in particular, one interviewee recalled, were particularly concerned with protecting their daughters from both black and white men, and supervised the courting practices of their daughters: "He (the father) sit . . . de boy in one corner an' de girl (the daughter) she sit in dis corner, fo' de paw don' want her thrown back on de fambly" (Malone 1992, p. 234).

By focusing on their fathers in these various ways, former slaves were asserting both the stability and gender norms, for the era, of the slave family under a system designed to destroy both it and the individuals it encompassed. They were also able to critique slavery as an institution obliquely. Rather than challenging the interviewer directly, as Thomas Hall had done, and asserting bluntly the obvious truth that slavery was a system predicated on violence, that "punishments were severe and barbarous", and that some "marsters acted like savages", those interviewed achieved the same end by approaching the subject indirectly, speaking for or about their fathers rather than for or about themselves (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina XI, Part 1, p. 360). In so doing, they were also openly and consciously retrieving a relationship that enslavers had so often attempted to subvert, and not necessarily through sale. Enslavers sometimes deliberately inserted themselves into a quasi-paternal role, either because, as was the case with Laura Cornish's enslaver, they wished to deny the reality of enslavement; "he won't 'low none he culled folks to call him master," she recalled, or in an attempt to undermine the familial bond. "We called our fathers 'daddy' in slavery time," Jerry Hinton reported. "Dey would not let slaves call deir fathers 'father'" (*Slave Narratives*, Texas, XVI, Part 1, p. 254; North Carolina XI, part 1, p. 429; see also Minnie Davis, Georgia IV, Part 1, p. 254). It was an assertion of fatherhood, and freedom.

1.2. Bearing Witness to the Slave Past, and Its End

Perhaps the most famous escaped slave and leading abolitionist advocate and editor, Frederick Douglass, concurred with Fanny Kemble's reading of the parent-child relationship under slavery. Although apparently able to recall the considerable risks his enslaved mother had incurred in order to see him, travelling some twelve miles on foot in the dark after a day in the fields, he had little real memory of her. In adulthood, he understood that the separation of mother from child was most likely intended "to hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child." When she died, he remembered, he "received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger." The issue of fatherhood for many, but not all slaves is encapsulated in Douglass' emphasis on a barely-remembered mother rather than a father. It is most likely that, for him as for many others, Douglass' father was his mother's enslaver (Douglass 1845, pp. 2–3; see also Douglass [1892] 1962, pp. 28–29; Blight 2018, p. 9; Settle Egypt 1945, p. 105; Cade 1935, p. 13; and Alex Haley in Perks and Thomson 2015, p. 23).

In part, the extraction of the male slave from a fatherhood role is because for too long he was understood to function as a man only within a familial setting. As former slave Elias Thomas commented, "[i]t took a smart nigger to know who his father was in slavery time" (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, Part 2, p. 343). The acceptance of this assertion as typical of the slave experience has largely dominated ever since sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, followed several decades later by historians such as Kenneth Stampp and Stanley Elkins, concluded that male slaves were denied both their masculinity and a fatherhood role. Kenneth Stampp cited the intensive labour regime imposed on

slaves as a major source of disruption to a slave's family life and relationships (Kenneth 1956, p. 292). E. Franklin Frazier also pointed to sale and forced migration as a significant cause of rupture in the bond between a slave father and his children (Frazier 1939, pp. 79–94).

Elkins, echoing Fanny Kemble, proposed that for enslaved children, "the plantation offered no real satisfactory father-image other than the master", since the 'real' father "was virtually without authority over his child". Indeed, as Elkins emphasised, "a father, among slaves, was legally 'unknown'." Furthermore, "the very etiquette of plantation life removed even the honorific attributes of fatherhood from the Negro male, who was addressed as 'boy'—until, when the vigorous years of his prime were past, he was allowed to assume the title of 'uncle'." Only in naming practices, Elkins found, were fathers acknowledged in the naming of their sons (Lindquist 2011, pp. 224–25; Elkins [1959] 1976, pp. 55, 130, 284).

Perhaps the main issue with the concept of fatherhood, as this wends its way, in essence providing a faint historiographical genealogical pathway, through the extensive literature on slavery in the United States, is that of the long-term impact that enslavement had on slave fathers, slave families, and, by extrapolation, the American nation. Here, one must draw a distinction between micro-studies, often localised, of the slave experience, and macro-studies of masculinity, only some of which engage with race, such as those by Rotundo (1993), Harper (1996), and, of course, Hooks (2004). Several of these examine what one might regard as the fall-out from slavery across a wider geographical distance and a longer time-span than the Antebellum South (Harper 1996; Hooks 2004; Bederman 1995). Some are comparative (Patterson 1982). Almost all, arguably, have been in some way influenced by the conclusions offered in Moynihan's contentious 1965 report and its proposition that "[a]t the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family" (United States Department of Labor 1965, chp. II).

Echoes of this concern for the stability of the African American family, specifically, can be heard throughout the nineteenth century. They were reinforced by a variety of individuals and organisations, among them the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission and the short-lived Freedmen's Bureau, both of whom sought to influence the future of the black family, in the years immediately after the Civil War (see, e.g., Frankel 1999, pp. 136–37). Scholars, too, have disagreed about the stability of the black family in the South in the aftermath of slavery. Researching black step-families, Jo Ann Manfra and Robert Dykstra, for example, challenged Herbert Gutman's suggestion that "[f]rom bondage the black family passed resolutely into freedom, its demographic health less damaged by slavery than it would be by Gilded Age racial discrimination and economic deprivation." What they uncovered in Virginia was "that serial marriage and the stepfamily, initially observable in slavery, became characteristic features of the postemancipation black family" (Manfra and Dykstra 1985, pp. 18–20). One only has to look at the post-slavery marriage records of the Freedmen's Bureau to get some sense of the extent of this, containing as these do the echoes of the uncertainty of relationships under slavery, of "previous connections", and children from unions whose stability could be so readily undermined by an enslaver (The Freedmen's Bureau Online n.d.).

Manfra and Dykstra's findings, however, have themselves been qualified by, among others, Andrew Billingsley, who strove for a more nuanced assessment of the black family in the 20th century and the legacies this carries from slavery. "Too many discussions of African-American families," he charged, "focus exclusively on single-parent families or on the underclass or on children in trouble as if these phenomena were characteristic of African-American families." The result, he argued, "is an absurd and counterproductive tendency to see African-American families in isolation," but also, one might add, to see them as somehow fixed in our assumptions about slavery and its fall-out across American society (Billingsley 1991, p. 27; see also Billingsley 1968). In fact, as has been shown by Raley, Sweeny, and Wondra, the "long-run historical influences such as the legacy of slavery" have less impact than one might suppose, and "the racial divergence we see now in marriage formation is relatively recent" (Raley et al. 2015, pp. 91–93). Moynihan's report, avoiding as it did any discussion of middle-class, middle-income black families, and working instead within the kind of stereotypical

parameters critiqued by Billingsley, tells us more about the racial assumptions prevalent in 1960s America. It tells us very little either about the extent or the importance to children of their father, but it has arguably had the effect of preventing us asking the question.

The ending of slavery allowed the formerly enslaved to acknowledge a paternal relationship the very name of which had previously been compromised, and many did so even if the father in question had been mainly or wholly absent from the family unit. Not all did—Thomas Cole from Texas commented that he "was sposed to take my father's name, but he was sech a bad, ornery, no-count sech a human, I jes' take my old massa's name" (*Slave Narratives*, Texas XVI, part 1, p. 225)—but many did. Contra Frazier's argument in respect of the lack of memory of black fathers, they did so in order to assert their own genealogical narrative, to write an often invisible or absent black father into their life stories ([Lindquist 2011](), p. 213).

"Pap's name was Tom Townes, 'cause he 'longed on de Townes place. He was my step-pap and when I's growed I token my own pap's name, what was Crawford," John Crawford explained. There was no hostility toward his step-father in this decision. His narrative made it clear that he had enjoyed a good relationship with Townes. but for Crawford, the absent biological father was an important part of his own identity. "I never seed him, though," Crawford admitted, "and didn't know nothin' much 'bout him. He's sold away 'fore I's borned" (*Slave Narratives*, Texas XVI, Part 1, p. 257). It was important to Willie Buck Charleston, Jr. that he could identify a line of genealogical decent. "I'm for the world like my daddy," he proudly told his interviewer (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 2, p. 8; see also James Monroe Abbot, Missouri X, p. 1). Perhaps the most poignant example of the significance of fathers to those formerly enslaved came from Mary Colbert from Georgia, whose father had died when she was a child. "Now about my father," she mused, "that is the dream" (*Slave Narratives*, Georgia IV, Part 1, p. 213).

Some former slaves acknowledged the direct influence that their fathers had had on their lives. "Father could neither read nor write," announced the Rev. W.B. Allen from Georgia, "but had a good head for figures and was very pious. His life had a wonderful influence on me," he admitted. Although "I was originally worldly—that is, I drank and cussed, but haven't touched a drop of spirits in forty years and quit cussing before I entered the ministry" (*Slave Narratives*, Georgia IV, Part 1, p. 12). For others, it was a particular skill or trade that they had inherited from their father, enabling them to make a living after slavery. "I am a shoemaker," James Bertrand told his interviewer, "I learned my trade from my father." Ed Craddock took over from his father, a school janitor, after slavery (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 1, p. 158; Missouri X, p. 96). Perhaps the most important skill that slave fathers passed on to their children was that of survival in a post-war, racially hostile world where violence against former slaves was endemic.

Memories of violence, indeed, run through the WPA narratives, violence and the long-term evidence, the scars of being "skinned up", that it left on the body if a slave had been whipped, and on the mind if a child had witnessed it (e.g., *Slave Narratives*, North Carolina XI, Part 2, p. 103; see also [King 1994](), p. 147). Survival after slavery, however, meant that these memories, if not the physical evidence of their accuracy, had to be suppressed. Roberta Manson recalled the struggle her family had to make a living as sharecroppers after slavery. They "stayed on wid marster caue they didn't have nuthin. Dey couldn't leave," she reported. On one occasion, a former overseer who had beaten Manson's father very badly came to ask her father to work for him. Roberta was shocked. "I axed pa ain't dat de man who beat you so when you wus a slave?" Her father, having a clearer sense of what survival required in the New South, hushed her: "you shet your mouth," he told Roberta, thereby conveying a lesson about suffering, survival, and suppression that Robert never forgot (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, Part 2, pp. 103–4). Similarly, Della Fountain from Oklahoma remembered how her "brother Joe felt mighty big after freedom and strutted about." On one occasion, a white man had thrown a ball of mud that landed on Joe's foot. "It didn't hurt him a bit," Della recounted, and had not been meant seriously, "but Joe bridled up and he started to git smart, and father told him he'd break

his neck if he didn't go home and keep his mouth shut." Father "finally to whup Joe," Della recalled, "to make him know he was black" (*Slave Narratives*, Oklahoma, XIII, p. 104).

The importance of the father in helping offspring to safely navigate the new and dangerous landscape of freedom is perhaps the most significant, and most meaningful evidence that one can draw from the WPA interviews. It is evidence of what, in the context of post-Franco Spain, has been termed "genocidal genealogy", the delineation of a world in which former victim and former perpetrator of extreme violence are not only required to construct a future proximate to each other but in which the former victim must somehow relinquish, or at least not express openly, the memory of that violence (Macho 2016). The difference is that former slaves could not safely relinquish that memory; their future safety depended on their keeping it alive and passing it on to their children in ways not obviously likely to prompt racial retribution. The racial realities of the American South prompted them to play an active "generative father" role, both under slavery and after it ended. This was, for many, a conscious decision. Historian Edward Baptist emphasised the importance of being a husband or a father to enslaved men "who wanted to live in a way defined by moral choice rather than fear." Such men, he proposed, "had to turn to the long view, to thinking of the people who would one day be left behind them" (Baptist 2014, pp. 281–82). We can see the results of that approach clearly in the WPA interviews, both with respect to the memories of fatherhood recalled and the ways in which these were framed (Connor and White 2007, p. 5).

Here, too it must be stressed that interviews with the aged, designed to elicit memories of when they were young, are likely to suffer from the same constraints and the issues of memory as in the very young. However, because what we are dealing with here is often "received memory", and also because some of the WPA interviewees made it clear that they were not talking about themselves, but about their parents, we can hear the echoes of slavery in the life narratives of those too young to remember it in any coherent way. These individuals are not presenting their own memories of slavery, but representing those of their parents. "I was mighty young an' I members very little 'bout some things in slavery but from what my mother and father tole me since the war," Martha Hinton admitted to her interviewer. Still, some memories stuck. "De first pair of shoes I wore," she recalled, "my daddy made 'em" (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, part I, p. 434; see also Irella Battle Walker, Texas, XVI, Part 4, p. 123). "I was never a slave," Millie Markham told her interviewer. "I was not born in slavery, but my father was. I'm afraid this story will be more about my father and mother than it will be about myself" (*Slave Narratives*, North Carolina, XI, part 2, p. 106; see also J. H. Beckwith, Arkansas, II, Part I, p. 132).

The significance of memories not their own to the life narratives of African Americans living in the post-slavery south can be clearly seen in the case of J.F. Boone from Arkansas. Boone had been born seven years after slavery, and was clear about his lineage. He set it out for his interviewer. "My father's name was Arthur Boone and my mother's name was Eliza Boone," he established at the outset, "and I am goin' to tell you about my father, Arthur Boone." Boone went on to detail what his father had told him about slavery, the violence, the hardship, the cruelty. His father died relatively young, Boone reported, at just fifty-six. The implications of why this should be, at least in Boone's opinion, were clear. He concluded his narrative by stressing that this was his father's story. "Now whose story are you saying this is?" he asked. "You say this is the story of Arthur Boone, father of J.F. Boone? Well, that's all right, but you better mention that J.F. Boone is Arthur Boone's son." So adamant was Boone about this that even the interviewer felt moved to comment: "the insistence on the word 'son' seemed to me," he observed, "to set this story off as a little out of the ordinary" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 1, pp. 210–13).

For Boone's interviewer there was one other aspect of this particular narrative that was unusual; the fact that Boone's father was a Union veteran. "Yes, my father fit in the Civil war," Boone confirmed. "I have seen his war clothes as many times as you have hairs on your head I reckon. He had his old sword and all. They had a hard battle down in Mississippi once he told me" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 1, pp. 211–12). What Boone's interviewer found unusual was not mention of the

war—many interviewers specifically asked about that subject—but he was most likely expecting to hear that Boone's father had accompanied his Confederate enslaver to war; it was the Union part of the answer that surprised him. His surprise said more about white expectations about black behavior during the Civil War than anything else. However, the Civil War component to the memory of fathers is significant to our reading of these interviews and to the memories of fathers that they contain. Recounting Civil War activity, and specifically on behalf of the Union, was a clear assertion of agency on the part of the slave father and, as such, a source of pride for his children. It was evidence that the father concerned had fought actively for his freedom and that of his family. It emphasised that his story, and consequently his children's life narratives, could be located in the national emancipation narrative to emerge from the war, however compromised in racial, social, and economic terms emancipation had proved to be. Some memory of the Civil War that ended slavery in the United States formed a significant component of the narratives of over 75 percent of the group assessed here. "I 'membr more 'bout that war back yonder than I member 'bout the war we had a few years ago,: Margaret Green from Georgia commented (*Slave Narratives*, Georgia IV, Part 2, p. 63). In this respect, however, how it came into the discussion, what narrative was remembered, or at least offered, and whether any memory of a father came into it was almost wholly location-dependent.

Those interviewed in states such as North or South Carolina had a lot to say about the war, about the arrival of Union troops in their area and the impact these had. Many described hiding the enslaver's valuables and food from the troops; many recalled that union troops had looted the slaves' cabins; some recollected shooting a "Yankee". How plausible aspects of these narratives are is open to some doubt, since it is more than likely that this "memory" of a faithful slave, or at least a narrative of shared suffering when Union troops arrived, was one that the interviewer encouraged (see e.g., *Slave Narratives*, North Carolina XI, Part 1, pp. 255–56, 434; Part 2, pp. 135–36, 214, 217; Missouri X, p. 40). Narratives from former slaves located further west were more mixed, and the memory of Union troops was, similarly, mixed; a child's fear remembered, combined with an adult's realisation of what the war had meant for the enslaved (see, e.g., *Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, part 5, pp. 2, 7). For some, the memory was a sad one; of a father disappearing into the Civil War, and never coming home again. Some fathers, such as Irene Robertson's or Warren McKinney's, both from South Carolina, took the opportunity to abandon their families and begin new lives; others, as was the case for Joe Casey's father, came home just to die (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 5, pp. 30, 40; Missouri X, p. 76).

Boone's narrative was, therefore, unusual in its recollection of a father who fought for the Union. Unusual but not unique. Tanner Thomas remembered his mother telling him that his father had "taken sick and died in the war on the North side" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, part 6, p. 304). Some, of course, were not certain. "My daddy got his leg shot in the Civil War," one interviewee recalled, but "I don't know which side he was on" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 4, p. 62; see also Nannie Jones, p. 164). However, most knew which side their father had been on, or at least wished to have a father who fought for the Union as part of their life narrative. "My father ran off and joined the Yankee army," William Latimore reported, adding that he had a clear recollection of when Abraham Lincoln had died because the Union troops "all wore that black band around their arms" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 4, p. 242). J.T. Tims recounted how he and his father had escaped slavery and travelled to Natchez, where both had joined up; he in a white regiment and his father in an African American one (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 6, p. 338).

Several of these narratives emphasised the significance of the military contribution their fathers had made to the cause of freedom. J. Roberts related the story of his father, "a federal soldier in the Civil War," and his father's reminiscences about a conflict that he never expected to survive, while Omelia Thomas recounted the wounds her father had sustained fighting for the Union. On this subject she was adamant. "He was on the Union side," she stressed, "He was fighting for our freedom. He wasn't no Reb" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 6, pp. 53, 297). Sarah Woods Burke from Virginia, similarly, engaged in a bit of racial role-reversal when her interviewer unwisely enquired about which side her father had fought for in the war. "On which side? Well, sho nuff on the side of the North, boy!" was

her sharp retort (*Slave Narratives*, Ohio XII, p. 17). Although, for obvious reasons, they were hardly in the majority, these particular life narratives staked a claim for the speaker's descent from a Union veteran, invoking the memory of fathers who were active not just in helping their families survive slavery, but in fighting to end it. In this respect, Omelia Thomas was not simply passively reminiscing but actively passing on, to future generations, her father's message when she recalled that "he'd tell us many a day, 'I am part of the cause that you are free'" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 6, p. 297).

2. Conclusions

The importance of fathers in the narratives of former slaves recorded by the WPA serves as a corrective to the widespread assumption that enslaved families comprised mothers and children, with fathers a shadowy or altogether absent element in the family structure and, consequently, in the genealogical narratives that emerged from the slave community. In this respect, the direction of late-twentieth and twenty-first century scholarly enquiry has largely, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, pursued a nineteenth-century pattern. Academic debate over the paternal role is usually located in two main areas: the political, public one, concerned with social stability, fiscal planning, the ordering of the family with the state; and the private, personal one, with its roots in what historian John Demos termed the "hothouse family," a nineteenth-century familial ideal and one from which the father was largely excluded (Demos 1978, p. 27). Too often, however, the 1965 Moynihan Report continues to cast a long shadow over the questions that scholars ask about the slave family, influencing to an unhelpful degree the resultant debates over whether, in fact, the familial unit to emerge from slavery was "mother and child . . . the biologically given" (United States Department of Labor 1965, chp. III). The questions we ask of the slave experience, and its legacy, can be reframed, however, if we understand and approach the WPA interviews as examples of the genealogical narratives composed by and working for the African American community in the South. As such, they emphasise the significance of the role of the father in the individual life narratives of those born on the very edge of slavery, in the years immediately prior to America's civil war.

In this respect, locating the slave experience in the wider history of the American family can be helpful, and further research in this direction may prove to be instructive. In the antebellum years, as Demos (among many others) noted, the American family became identified as distinct from rather than part of wider society, and the domestic environment one that protected its inhabitants from the evils and agitations of what was becoming, for many Americans, an increasingly urban life. Along with this shift came "the equation of home-life with the development of individual character," and a concomitant division, along both gendered and generational lines, of responsibility for said character. "In the brave new world of nineteenth-century America," Demos noted, "there was no alternative to home life for the proper rearing of children" (Demos 1978, pp. 29–31). Within the home, it was maternal influence that mattered most, especially as far as male children were concerned. For nineteenth-century Americans, in short, any flaw in or weakening of maternal power risked the creation of Delbanco's "monsters", men growing "into potency with no sense of empathy or love" (Delbanco 2019, p. 157). Slaves hardly had the opportunity to construct anything approximating the ideal, middle-class home, but, as Demos noted, that does not mean that there was no structure to their child-rearing practices. The African American experience under slavery, he argued, more closely resembled an earlier epoch, when "responsibility for character-training was shared among a variety of people and institutions (parents, other kin, neighbors, churches, courts, and local government)" (Demos 1978, pp. 28–29).

Historians of slavery generally concur in this, highlighting a range of familial options: "Matrifocality, polygamy, single parents, abroad spouses, one-, two-, and three-generation households, all-male domestic residences of blood, marriage, and fictive kin, single- and mixed-gender sibling dwellings—these, along with monogamous marriages and co-residential nuclear families," existed in Virginia at least (Stevenson 1997, pp. 160–61; see also Manfra and Dykstra 1985). The evidence for this is stronger in some slave states than in others, but the WPA narratives offer us the opportunity not simply to search for how the slave family was in practice, but assess how it was in *memory*. Further

quantitative or qualitative research in this area may shed further light on the importance of the paternal role for slaves, and the value of the WPA narratives in this regard. Such research, however, might also be usefully informed by the growing field of oral history, since it is childhood memory, conjoined with an adult's perspective on race relations that forms the evidential base here. As oral historians have stressed over the years, the reality rarely matches the recollection of childhood. "Oral sources are credible but with a *different* credibility," Alessando Portelli stressed. "The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge" (Portelli in Perks and Perks and Thomson 2015, p. 53).

From a state perspective, the WPA, as Stewart has argued, spoke to "a new role for the federal government as author of a narrative of national identity that was inclusive in its approach to the various ethnic groups, communities, and diverse cultures that comprised the United States." In this context, the former slaves "became the case study—a metonym—for discussing the possibilities or problems of full integration into the national body" (Stewart 2016, pp. 38, 65). Many of the problems, in the 1930s and ever since, were associated with the absent father trope, itself predicated on enslavers' denial or acknowledgment of the father's role—biological, emotional, social, or material (Stevenson 1997, p. 221).

The WPA narratives support the conclusions of those historians who argue that slave fathers did play an active role within the family unit, in the form of "emotional support and affection, moral instruction, discipline, and physical protection," as well as practical and vocational skills such as "metal and wood working, carpentry, and blacksmithing along with a host of other traditional skills such as folk medicine" (Stevenson 1997, p. 251). Crucially, the interviews reveal how significant this support was to the formerly enslaved, how significant it was to their autobiographical memories, how central to the life narratives they constructed and passed on, because the most significant aspect of the WPA interviews was not what they provided the state, but what they represented for the African American community in the South in the 1930s. These were claims for recognition reaching across both generational and genealogical space. Generational, because it is hardly likely that the WPA interviews were the first time that these former slaves had narrated their memories of slavery. Anyone who has interviewed individuals in the later stages of the life course or has family members at that stage knows that these stories are repeated and refined over and over again. The scholarly approach to these interviews can sometimes give the impression that this was the first and only time that these narratives were uttered, but this is unlikely. Yes, they were provided in what Stewart noted was state-sponsored space, but that does not mean it was the first time they had been heard (Stewart 2016, p. 2).

As both reminiscences for blacks and reckonings for whites, the WPA narratives were in part intended to instruct African American youth, who had not experienced slavery but for whom life in the South in the 1930s remained traumatic. They were genealogical because they served as reminders that there was a lineage, even for those born in slavery; a biological lineage, a familial one, and, for some, a military one. They bore witness to the fact that slavery, for those trapped in it, was not simply "a factory for manufacturing monsters" (Delbanco 2019, p. 157). Undoubtedly, slavery produced some monsters. More certainly it was created by those who fitted that description to a greater or lesser degree. However, for those who endured it, for those who lived in its final years and inherited their parents' memories of it, survival meant not becoming a monster, but remaining a man, such that, in future years, a former slave like Perry Madden could tell his interviewer with confidence, "my daddy ... he was a good man" (*Slave Narratives*, Arkansas II, Part 5, p. 42).

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Generations Comparison: Father Role Representations in the 1980s and the New Millennium

Maria Letizia Bosoni * and Sara Mazzucchelli

Department of Sociology, Catholic University of Milan, 1, 20123 Milano MI, Italy; sara.mazzucchelli@unicatt.it
* Correspondence: marialetizia.bosoni@unicatt.it

Abstract: In the light of relevant and current debate on the changing role of fathers, this contribution is aimed at analysing the international literature on fatherhood, comparing two distinct periods of time, from the social, cultural and demographic point of view: the years 1980–1999 and the new millennium. This will contribute to identifying features of the fatherhood transformation in these two contexts, which in fact refer to two generations of fathers. The research questions to be answered are: Which aspects characterize the process of fatherhood transformation, in an intergenerational perspective? How are paternal childcare practices represented in different historical and social periods? An analysis of the academic publications on fathers in Scopus and Google Scholar will be conducted, in the two temporal periods indicated, using T-Lab software, in order to map fathers' role representations.

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1. Introduction

Reflection on fatherhood and its transformation is now a global phenomenon, with many studies highlighting that men and fathers are more visible and present in the care of their children, compared to the past. However, how it clearly indicates a radical transformation of the paternal role is the subject of great debate in many countries (Miller and Dermott 2015; Craig and Mullan 2010).

Research from different countries (Magaraggia 2013; Bosoni 2014a, 2014b; Bosoni et al. 2016; Ruspini and Tanturri 2017) reports the growing importance of the father figure in the family context and a greater desire and willingness of the father to be present in childcare, with more involvement in practical care activities (O'Brien and Wall 2015; Miller 2011; Gregory and Milner 2011; Lamb 1999). Thus the complex issue of reconciling family and work, long considered purely feminine, is increasingly seen as a paternal responsibility. In this sense, policies (in particular leave schemes) have certainly given a significant impetus: the paternal role is increasingly recognized in the contemporary debate.

Despite the greater involvement of fathers in the care, they still play a secondary role in the family and are mainly dedicated to ludic activities rather than to physiological care, especially in early childhood (Bosoni 2014b; Tanturri and Mencarini 2009; O'Brien 2009). Therefore, although the studies highlight a greater emotional connection between fathers and sons and the rise of a new model of fatherhood and masculinity (the terms "new fathers" and "loving fathers", in opposition to traditional terms, are particularly widespread), we cannot conclude that there has been a radical overcoming of the breadwinner model (Gillies 2009; Perra and Ruspini 2013). This applies to many countries, including Italy; traditional models coexist with new paternal practices and styles and it is not possible to identify a single prevailing model.

From 2000, studies on fatherhood have increased, reporting a process of transformation and renewal of fathering practices. In particular, qualitative studies have revealed the relevance of

intergenerational transmission: contemporary fathers define themselves in relation to the previous generation (i.e., one's own father) and often in terms of differences ("I am different from my father") from the traditional model, while the traditional model still serves as a form of internalized reference that is no longer seen to be applicable in today's society. However, the relationship between one generation and the next is complex, as the old interiorised model is in tension with new life style (Bosoni and Baker 2015).

In this contribution we intend to discuss in particular this generational difference, by analysing the literature about fathers in two different periods, corresponding to two distinct generations: the years 1980–1999 and 2000–2017.

It is important to point out how we intend the meaning of generation, inspired by relational sociology (Donati 2011): generation is conceived as the set of people who share a relationship, linking their place in the family–parental sphere (i.e., child, parent, grandfather, etc.) with the position they have in the whole society according to their social age (i.e., according to age groups: young people, adults, elders, etc.) (Terenzi et al. 2016). Considering generation as a relationship between the intra-family dimension and social collocation allows us to think about generations in a new way: as a phenomenon that characterizes individuals, families and society in different ways but linked to one another. A generation cannot be made by a single family, just as it cannot be done by society alone. A generation instead consists of the subjects who are in a context of relationships in which the same age—not merely biological but according to a historical and social time—connects the way of being in the family and in the society (Donati and Colozzi 1997).

In doing our analysis we take in mind this definition of generation. In the following paragraphs we will firstly review the studies on fathers, highlighting the main features and themes and then we will analyse the international literature by using T-lab software, comparing two distinct periods from the social, cultural and demographic point of view—1980–1999 and 2000–2017—in order to identify the distinctive features of fathering/fatherhood in these two contexts, which represent two generations of different fathers[1]. The specific research questions we will try to answer are these:

- Which aspects characterize the process of transformation of fatherhood, in an intergenerational perspective?
- How are paternal childcare practices represented in different historical and social periods?

2. Research on Fatherhood: Between Change and Continuity

Studies on fatherhood agree in highlighting in the contemporary context, albeit with different emphasis, an image of loving and tender father, in opposition to the traditional ideal (severe and not accustomed to the expression of emotions). In particular, the expectations on fatherhood highlight a desire to be actively present: the fathers even before birth identify themselves as an involved and caring parent and define themselves as a "good father" (Miller 2011). At the same time, however, some authors have begun to reflect critically on this fatherhood transformation process, questioning what is really "new" in the parenting style of today's fathers. Male identity seems to be still strongly associated with the idea of breadwinner, the man who takes care of the economic support of the family through extra-domestic work, so that alongside the desire to be a good father and a father involved in childcare there is also a desire to be a good economic provider. According to Dermott (2008), the distinction of the two elements (breadwinner and involved father) as opposites is produced by our instinct to dichotomize reality and use opposite categories, although the two elements can also coexist. Dermott, in fact, described paternity through the concept of "intimate fatherhood", where the idea of intimacy

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[1] The choice of these periods originated above all by the fact that according to Scopus database publications on fatherhood increased from 2000, particularly in the Social Sciences. Therefore, the selected publications in these two time periods represent on the one hand research on men involved in the transition to fatherhood in specific life-span (although with age differences), on the other hand they report the representation of eminent scholars in two distinct time and social periods.

refers to a personal and particular relationship, characterized by presence; closeness; expression of emotions; reciprocity; and dyadic, one-to-one relationship.

The relationship between fatherhood and motherhood is also central in the father's identity formation (Bosoni 2014b): male identity is formed starting from an imaginary set of ideas and representations deriving both from an intergenerational legacy and from current relationships, in particular the relationship with the partner. What seems to emerge more and more clearly—though not always consciously—is a relational dynamic where fatherhood can be understood in relation to motherhood. Moreover, this tendency to bring parenthood closer to motherhood (sometimes called "homogenization" or "de-differentiation" of parental roles) does not actually produce a flattening of differences, which are enhanced (Doucet 2006).

Studies have also revealed the intergenerational transmission of fathering/fatherhood (Brannen and Nilsen 2006; Bosoni 2014b): the relationship with the previous generation is fundamental as it constitutes the internalized reference model, with referent to both meanings and practices of being a father, which need however be adapted to the contemporary social and family context.

Furthermore, the debate on the fathering transformation is strongly connected with the cultural dimension, namely "the rules, values, beliefs and symbolic representations of paternity" (LaRossa et al. 2000, p. 375). These aspects define the expectations connected to being a father, which can assume various connotations in different social-historical contexts, for example, in Western industrialized societies we can identify at least three socially and normatively recognized aspects: "the father as an economic provider for the family", "the father as a male model of reference for sons and daughters" and "the father as a playmate" (LaRossa 2007, p. 89).

The symbolic-cultural dimension of fatherhood also indicates the importance and relevance of the paternal figure: how fathers are considered as competent caregivers, what is transmitted between generations about being a father (specific tasks and activities, work vs. care) and expectations about what fathers do towards the children. Moreover, the symbolic dimension of fatherhood reveals a great deal about the culture of fatherhood: the Father's Day, the male and paternal representation in films or books (LaRossa 2007). This contributes to defining the social expectations of fatherhood—what a father is expected to do or not.

Under great discussion is also how much the cultural dimension of fatherhood has changed over time. LaRossa and colleagues (LaRossa and Reitzes 1993; LaRossa et al. 2000) analysed the media representations of Father's Day and Mother's Day in America between 1940 and 1999, highlighting a drop of the patriarchal and absent father since the 1950s in favour of a father more involved in the care of children and less authoritarian that they found with greater force in the 1990s. This study highlights a change in the culture of fatherhood, although authors conclude that it is not possible to describe the extent of this transformation as it is characterized by a non-linear process. What is clear is that the cultural dimension of parenthood changes over the centuries but not in a linear or simple way. As a consequence, paternal practices in terms of activities and involvement with their children vary widely in different social, economic and political contexts (Coleman and Ganong 2003). This is also confirmed by more recent studies (Marsiglio et al. 2000) that highlight the presence of different fathers' styles, defined as "fatherhood diversity" to indicate the presence and coexistence of traditional and new models, not necessarily in conflict. The renewal process of fatherhood (well expressed by the term "new fathers") is actually linked with a tension between tradition and modernity, in which the new coexists with the old, as paternity is expressed in different ways and there is not a single model of reference. Several research studies in the European context have agreed on this variability (Zajczyk and Ruspini 2008; Naldini and Torrioni 2015; Crespi and Ruspini 2016).

Thus, the cultural dimension of fatherhood—including symbolic and normative aspects—and fathering practices—aspects related to the care of a child—are two different but strongly linked dimensions of fathers' experience. The cultural dimension is certainly not easy to detect, as the operationalization of values and orientations behind the paternal role is a very debated question; even the definition of the concept of value is so complex that some authors speak of a terminological

jungle (Halman 1995) or black box (Hechter 1993), pointing out that in social research we can only grasp beliefs, attitudes and opinions, which are assumed to refer to values guiding human action (Cipriani 2012).

For this reason, many studies have focused on paternal practices (fathering), highlighting in particular involvement with young children (Yeung et al. 2001; Brotherson et al. 2005) and the desire to be good fathers (Morman and Kory 2006); less explored is the process by which men come to define themselves as fathers (fatherhood). Regarding this last aspect, the studies also agree in highlighting an intergenerational dimension of fatherhood, namely the need to relate with one's father to define the actual experience. This suggests that the perception of what a father should be in the family context always occurs in relation—and by difference—with the previous generation, which represents the internalized reference model although it is not completely pertinent to the contemporary context (Brannen and Nilsen 2006). It should be noted, however, that despite the emphasis on the greater recent involvement of fathers in family care, data still show the presence of a gap between tasks and responsibilities in the couple, confirming that the father often assumes a role of secondary caregiver, especially when children are young (Finn and Henwood 2009). Although research studies have mainly taken into consideration the relationship between fathers and young children, recently some research has highlighted the relational dynamics underlying the bond between father and son in adolescence (McKinney and Renk 2008).

Moreover, fatherhood can be considered as a transition influenced by different personal, social and family factors (Palkovitz and Palm 2009): it is a process of skills learning (fathering)[2] that contributes over time to define their own experience (Coleman and Ganong 2003; Dermott 2008; Featherstone 2009; Hobson 2002). Recently, the debate on fatherhood has highlighted the important link between fatherhood (often emphasizing the "right" of fathers to care for their children) and work, thus contributing to redefine the complex issue of family–work reconciliation as a problem that is not only female (Bosoni 2014a; Mazzucchelli 2011). The role of policies (leaves) in particular has been highlighted in supporting fathers to share parental responsibilities (Rossi et al. 2009).

Scholars have more recently focused on childcare tasks and their division in the family as well as work and family balance, with a gender perspective (Tanturri and Mencarini 2009; Magaraggia 2013; Ruspini and Tanturri 2017). Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly clear that choices regarding the division of tasks between parents have undergone a decision-making process by the couple, rather than the individual, in which paternal and maternal competencies are not blurred but valued as different (Rossi and Mazzucchelli 2011).

From what has been said so far, it is clear that the concept of fatherhood is multifaceted and complex; in the same society and historical epoch, in fact, different interpretations of the paternal role can coexist, even in contrast with each other (e.g., "absent father" and "new father"). Therefore, rather than looking for the prevailing/appropriate model, it is interesting to document and explore diversity, which as we said is also and above all generational. For this reason, in this contribution we analyse this last aspect by giving voice to the literature of two different epochs.

3. Analysis of the Studies in Two Historical-Temporal Contexts

In this paper we review the international literature on fatherhood, distinguishing and comparing two distinct time periods, which represent two generations of different fathers: the years 1980–1999 and the new millennium (2000–2017).

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[2] Several studies confirm that fatherhood is perceived as something that must be learned, in opposition to the motherhood that is considered by fathers as a natural and biological (Miller 2011; Bosoni 2014b).

The specific research questions to be answered are:

- Which aspects characterize the process of transformation of fatherhood, in an intergenerational perspective?
- How are paternal childcare practices represented in different historical and social periods?

We carried out an analysis of the most relevant academic publications in Google Scholar concerning the paternal figure in the two time periods indicated, through T-Lab software, with particular attention to the theme of intergenerational transmission of parenthood and parenting, in order to identify the distinctive traits of fatherhood in these two historical-temporal contexts.

These distinctive features are indicated by key words that the TLab software can highlight and analyse, showing the relationships graphically. This method allows us not only to deeply analyse selected literature in a specific period, identifying key concepts but also providing a useful comparison of different studies on fathers.

The thematic analysis allowed us to map the representations of paternity, highlighting the intergenerational aspects and the declinations associated with them.

3.1. Methodology

First we identified the main sociological and psychological publications in Google Scholar in the two time periods (1980–1999, 2000–2017), inserting keywords to guide the research: father's involvement, fatherhood, fathering, intergenerational transmission of fatherhood, fathers and adolescent sons. Then we selected the 10 most relevant papers for each historical period according to the relevance order given by Google Scholar, number of citations and the relevance of journals in which it was published (i.e., Journal of Marriage and the Family, Family Relations, Fathering . . .).

The complete texts of the selected articles were analysed. As a method of analysis we used T-LAB, which consists of a set of linguistic and statistical tools for content analysis and text mining allowing a graphic and synthetic representation of relationships between words and concepts[3].

The wealth of the designated corpus allowed us to carry out analyses of different types and complexities: word associations, radial diagrams and sequence analysis. We will discuss them in order.

From a preliminary analysis of the keywords in the 1980–1999 literature (Table 1, columns 1 and 2) we can see that the words with the highest occurrence values are "father" (1735) and "child" (1181). "Mother" (655), "parent" (605), "family" (601), "relationship" (471) and "adolescent" (421) follow at a distance but with significant values.

In the most recent literature (2000–2017) (Table 1, columns 3 and 4) we can see how the words with the highest occurrence values are again "father" (1169) and "child" (652). "Man" (373), "family" (318), "fatherhood" (282), "involvement" (279) and "mother" (277) follow at a distance but with significant values.

In comparing the two periods, some interesting elements emerge: in the years 1980–1999 the literature deals with the subject of paternity by focusing on the substantial difference present in the parental couple, that is, the difference with the maternal figure; there is also a large focus on the transition to adolescence; in today's literature the focus is on the theme of masculinity in relation to fatherhood (we speak of father but also of fatherhood); paternal involvement assumes a decisive role ("involvement", "involve"), as does that of care ("care") and of the relationship with the world of work. The focus is not on the difference but on the relationship, with the mother figure and between the different areas of life.

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3   There are several valuable elements of this program: its interface is particularly user-friendly and allows an application to very different fields and objects as well as automatic lemmatization available in several languages (Italian, English, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese). T-LAB also uses automatic and semi-automatic processes that allow you to quickly highlight significant patterns of words, themes and variables; finally all software processes are transparent and can be easily customized using a wide and flexible range of analysis tools (for deep explanation visit https://tlab.it/en/presentation.php).

Table 1. Keywords with relative occurrence values: comparative analysis between 1980–1999 and 2000–2017.

1980–1999		2000–2017	
Keywords	**Occurrence Values**	**Keywords**	**Occurrence Values**
father	1735	father	1169
child	1181	child	652
mother	655	man	373
parent	605	family	318
family	601	fatherhood	282
relationship	471	involvement	279
adolescent	421	mother	277
study	392	time	245
time	362	study	233
difference	303	involve	223
parenting	299	work	195
sex	292	care	193
interaction	273	relationship	179
man	267	experience	177
involvement	261	role	169
behaviour	260	parenting	168
measure	247	change	162
work	246	activity	153
daughter	241	research	147
role	218	parent	146
need	206	good	137
analysis	200	son	137
age	198	social	133
research	197	transition	133
girl	195	important	126

The comparison of key words in the two periods considered which represent two distinct generations highlights continuity rather than discontinuity in fathers representation: father-mother-child relation is central in both periods, then a focus on masculinity emerges along with the idea of being a good father.

We will now analyse in more detail the specificities of the studies on paternity in the two temporal periods, through ad hoc elaborations.

3.2. Studies on Fatherhood in the Period 1980–1999

3.2.1. Radial Diagrams

In radial diagrams the selected lemma is placed at the centre, with the others distributed around it, each at a distance proportional to its degree of association. The relations brought to light are therefore all significant according to a one-to-one relationship between the central lemma and each of the others.

The lemma "father" (Figure 1)—as a central keyword in word associations—is associated with different subjects in relation to which the paternal function is explicit (child, in the differentiation of son and daughter but also mother) and better defined as a role that is played in the family and connected to practical parenting practices ("support", "suggest", "involve", "involvement", "spend time"). Fatherhood is linked to the generative but also the work dimension. The themes of change and masculinity ("man") are also central.
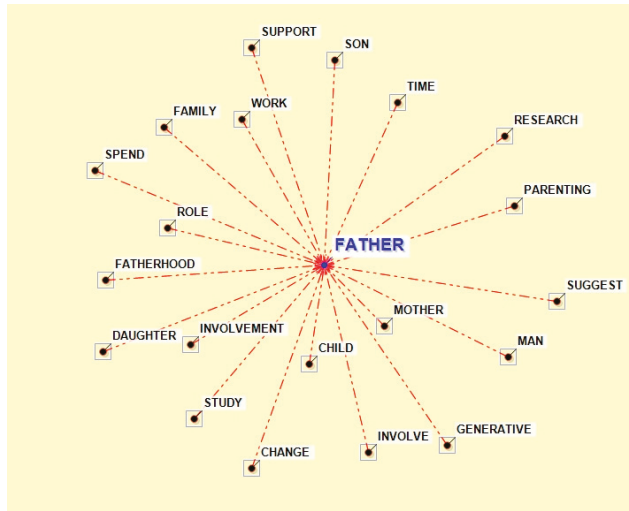
Figure 1. Radial diagram with "father".

The lemma "child" (Figure 2)—in the second place as a keyword in word associations—seems to mirror what has already been highlighted with the lemma "father". It is in fact associated with mother, father, parent and concrete actions in which the dimension of parental care is clarified ("care", "parenting"): "spend time", "involvement", "support". The relational ("relationship", "interaction") and value dimension ("belief") and attention to the needs of the child are central.
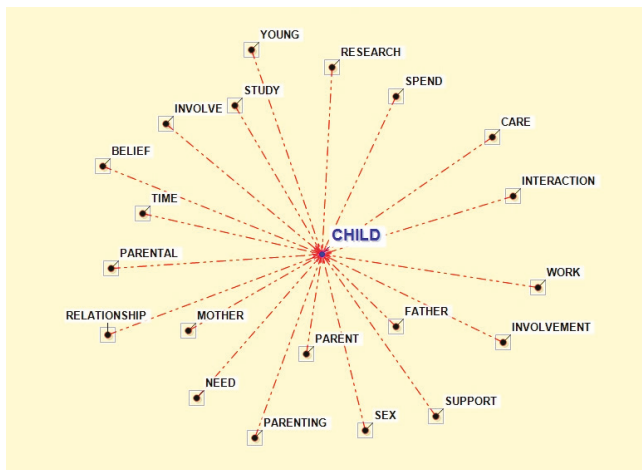
Figure 2. Radial diagram with "child".

The lemma "mother" (Figure 3)—in third place as a keyword in word associations—is also in line with the results highlighted by the lemma "father", albeit with some specificities. The theme of the difference of gender ("boy", "girl", "daughter") and of age ("old", "young", "age") of the children ("child") emerges as decisive; the maternal figure is also defined by difference with the paternal figure ("father") within the family context in which the parental dimension is strongly felt ("parent", "parenting") and has peculiar characteristics. In addition to the theme of involvement and spending

time the relationship that is connoted as supportive is emphasized. The focus on the adolescent condition is also interesting.
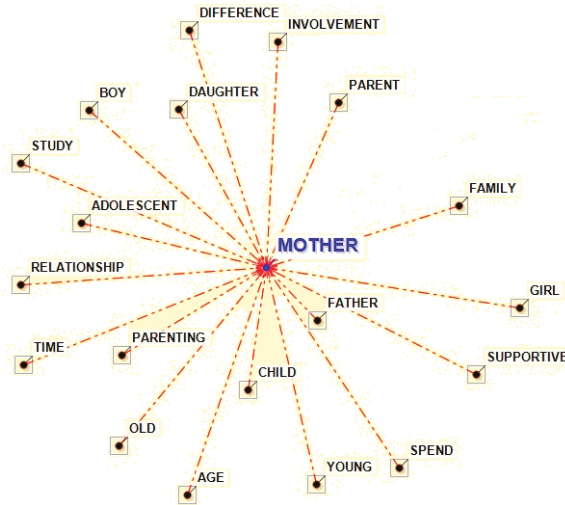

Figure 3. Radial diagram with "mother".

The lemma "parent" (Figure 4)—in fourth place as a keyword in word associations—takes up some elements already mentioned in the other words and emphasizes other new aspects: parenting has to do with specific expectations ("expect") and values ("beliefs") that translate into parenting practices and behaviours in which the relationship ("interaction") is centred on a strong disciplinary aspect ("disciplines"). It is interesting, again, to see the emphasis on difference, either in the paternal or maternal code ("mother", "father") or in relation to the children. Rather than the gender difference ("sex", "boy"), the age difference is more emphasized, focusing on the change in the parental role in the growth of children ("developmental") and especially in the adolescent phase.
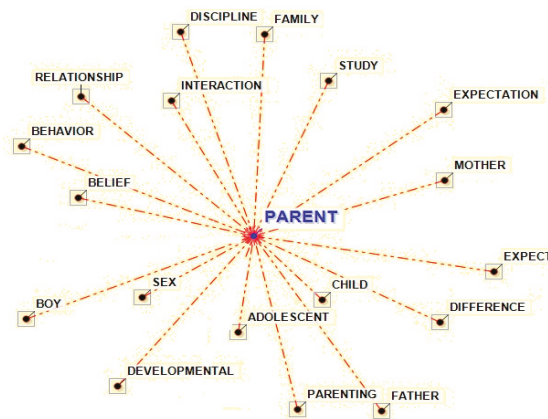

Figure 4. Radial diagram with Parent.

Finally, the lemma "adolescent" (Figure 5) is interesting because it shows us the focus of the studies conducted in the considered period (1980–1999); it is a survey (study, rating, exploration, rate, sample) in which some specific themes related to identity are investigated: "discrepancy", "achievement", "expectation", "belief", "task".
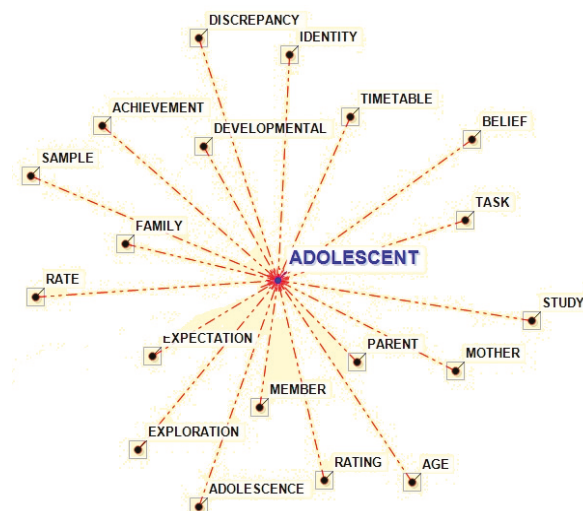

Figure 5. Radial diagram with "adolescent".

What is fundamental is the reference to the family and the relationship with the parental figures (parent), in particular the mother.

3.2.2. Sequence Analysis

T-LAB allows the researcher to calculate for every lexical unit the predecessors and successors: in the produced graphs, lexical units less distant from the selected one are those that are more likely to precede it (predecessors) or follow it (successors)[4].

Focusing on the analysis of keyword sequences, Figure 6 shows all the predecessors and all the successors of the lexical unit "father". The strongest predecessor is "mother", followed by "generative", "responsible" and "child"; predecessors present but less relevant than these are "time", "interest", "influence", "role", "definition" and "work".

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[4] The T-LAB software allows to perform a Markov analysis of three types of sequences and to export the related outputs for a Network Analysis. The types of sequences that can be analyzed are the following:

(A) Keyword Sequences, the elements of which are lexical units (words or lemmas) present in the corpus or in a subset of it. In this case the maximum number of 'nodes' ('types' of lexical units) is 3000;

(B) Sequences of Themes, whose elements are units of context (ie elementary contexts) classified by a T-LAB tool for thematic analysis (Thematic Analysis of Elementary Contexts, Classification Based on Dictionaries or Modeling of Emerging Themes). In this case, since the sequence of elementary contexts characterizes the whole 'chain' (predecessors and successors) of the corpus, T-LAB realizes a specific form of analysis of the speech, whose nodes can vary from a minimum 5 to a maximum of 50;

(C) Sequences stored in a Sequence.dat file prepared by the user. In this case the maximum number of records is 50,000 and the number of 'types' (i.e., nodes) must not exceed 3000.

Starting from a matrix in which all the predecessors and all the successors of each item are registered (lexical unit or theme), T-LAB calculates the transition probabilities (Markov chains) between the various units of analysis thus identifying predecessors and successors.
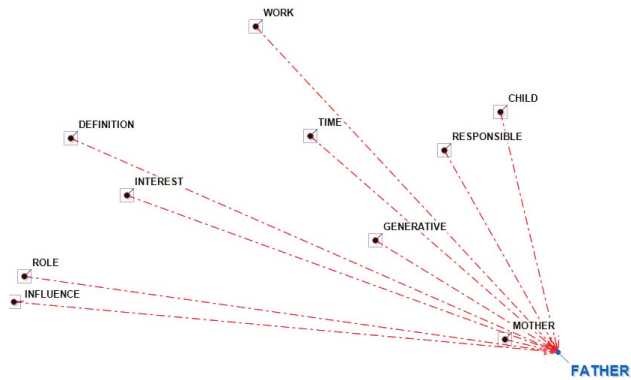
Figure 6. Predecessors of "father".

Stronger successors are "involvement" and, again, "mother"; weaker successors are "involve", "presence", "behaviour", "work", "role", "child" and "spend". The word "absence" appears at a distance (Figure 7).
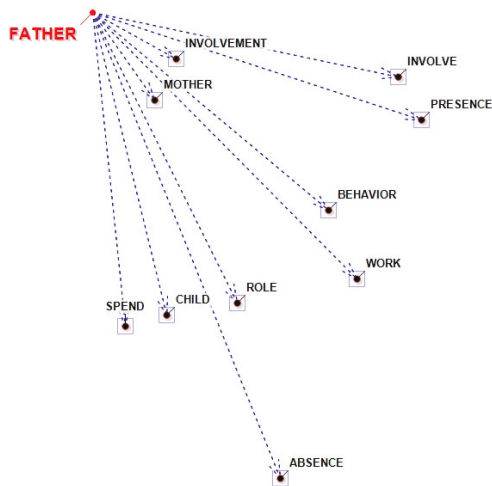

Figure 7. Successors of "father".

Looking at the terms that appear both as predecessors and as successors of the lexical unit "father" is interesting to highlight how fatherhood defines itself as a relationship with two fundamental figures, the mother and the child; the reference to the paternal role and the definition of paternity in reference to the working field ("work") also clearly emerges.

In comparing the predecessors and successors of the lemma "mother", some recursions appear compared to what has already been reported with the lemma "father": the attention to the child and to the topic of time as well as the focus on the relational ("relationship") and parental dimension ("parent") as well as the attention paid to the adolescent phase.

Instead, the accent on the role and its definition as well as on the work disappears; it is interesting to underline a change: while for the fathers "absence" is thematised, for the mothers "waiting" is thematised.

According to graph theory. the predecessors and successors of each node (in our case, lexical units or themes) can be represented with arrows (arcs) in input (in-degree = types of predecessors) or outgoing (out-degree = types of successors). See Figure 8.
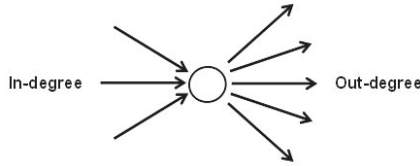

Figure 8. Predecessors and successors sccording to graph theory.

Based on their relationship (successors/predecessors), it is possible to verify the semantic variety generated by each node:

-    if it is greater than it receives (ratio > 1), the node is called "source";
-    if it is as large as it is received (ratio = 1), the node is called "relay";
-    if it is less than it receives (ratio < 1), the node is defined as "absorbent".

In our case, "father" has 10 types of successors (out-degree) and 10 types of predecessors (in-degree), so it can be classified as a "relay" node.

3.3. Paternity in the New Millennium

3.3.1. Radial Diagrams

The lemma "father" (Figure 9)—the leading keyword in word associations—is associated with different subjects in relation to which the paternal function (child, in particular son and mother) is also defined here as a role that is played in the family, as already noted in the analysis of the literature from 1980–1999.
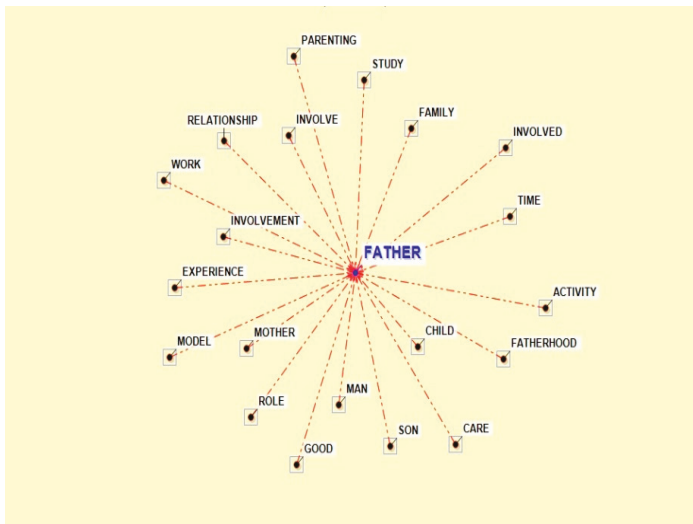

Figure 9. Radial diagram with "father".

A further element of commonality with the literature is that to define fatherhood, the references to masculinity (man) and to work are central; unlike this, however, there is a strong and explicit

reference to the issue of care. Paternity is seen in a relationship in which great emphasis is given to the experiential aspect ("experience"), which is expressed in activities and practical parenting practices where dedicated time and involvement ("involved", "involve") are fundamental; this last aspect is the primary object of study and it is central in defining a model of a good father.

The focus placed on the relational and experiential dimension—where a leading role is reserved for the involvement—and on the modelling underlying the definition of fatherhood (good father model) represents a novelty in contemporary literature.

The lemma "child" (Figure 10)—in second place as a keyword in word associations—is associated with "mother", "father", "parent", "family" and concrete actions in which the dimension of parental care is explicit (i.e., "spend time", "involvement", "involve", "share", "play", "connect", defined as experience, activity and connection. As already noted for 1970–1999, the relational dimension ("relationship") and attention to the needs of the child are central; differently from it, however, the dimension of values and support is not themed but there is rather an emphasis on the ludic experiential and temporal dimension (paternity is displayed both on weekends and on weekdays).
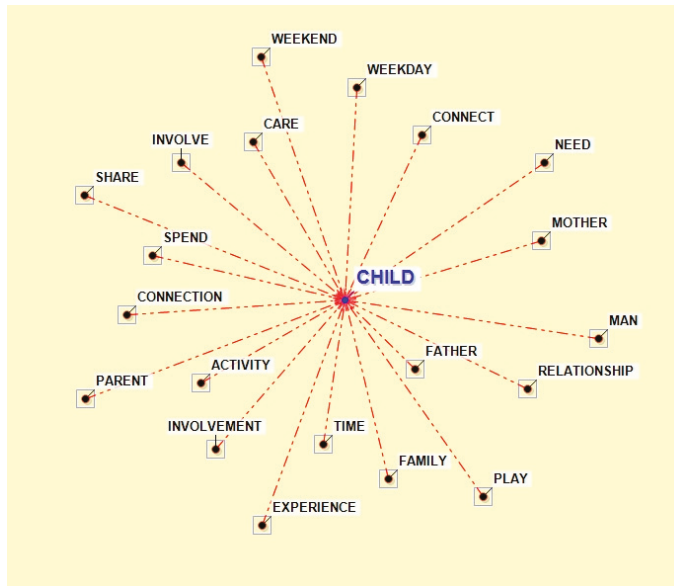

Figure 10. Radial diagram with "child".

The lemma "man" (Figure 11)—in third place as a keyword in word associations—is associated with "father", "father-figure", "fatherhood", "family", "child" and "woman". This confirms what emerged in the list of keywords: in today's literature the focus is on the issue of masculinity ("man") placed in relation to that of the most widely understood paternity; paternal involvement assumes a decisive role ("involve", "involved") as well as that of care and of the relationship with the world of work. In addition to the experiential aspect ("experience"), the attitudes ("attitude") and the different modalities to cover the role ("model") are also discussed. Finally, it is interesting to note the focus on the theme of intergenerational transmission ("generation").
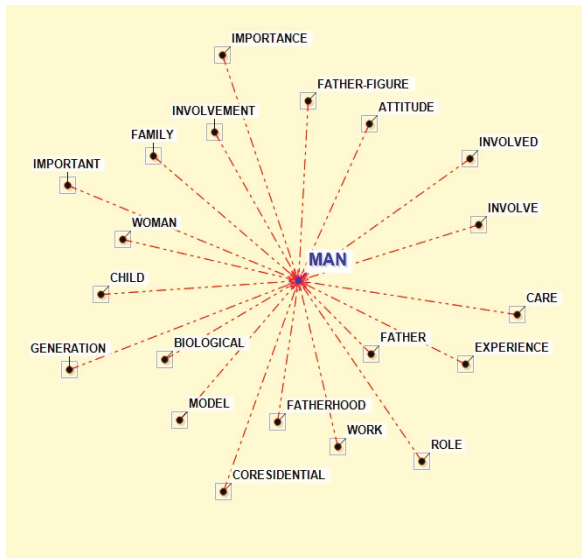
Figure 11. Radial diagram with Man.

Finally, the lemma "family" (Figure 12)—in fourth place as a keyword in word associations—is strongly associated with the themes of fatherhood ("father"), masculinity ("man") and parenting ("parent", "mother", "child"). The family is considered from a structural and relational ("relationship") point of view, focusing in particular on the intact family; membership ("member", "role", "involvement") is thematised, as is the dynamic-temporal aspect that refers to transition and change ("transition", "change", "time", "life"); the reference to the theme of generations is also interesting, as is the focus on the work environment, both as an activity and as remuneration ("income", "work").
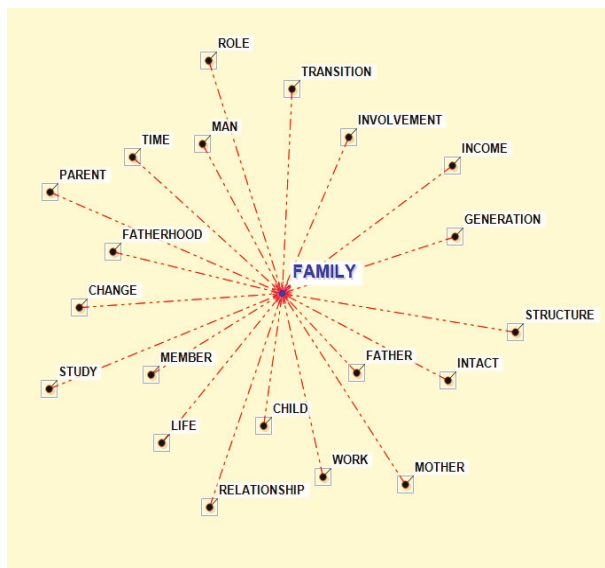

Figure 12. Radial diagram with "family".

3.3.2. Sequence Analysis

Focusing on the analysis of keyword sequences, we identify here the predecessors and successors of the lexical unit "father".

Stronger predecessors are "biological", "good" and "mother"; intermediate predecessors are "time", "generative" and "man"; and weaker predecessors are "transition", "child", "experience" and "involved" (Figure 13).
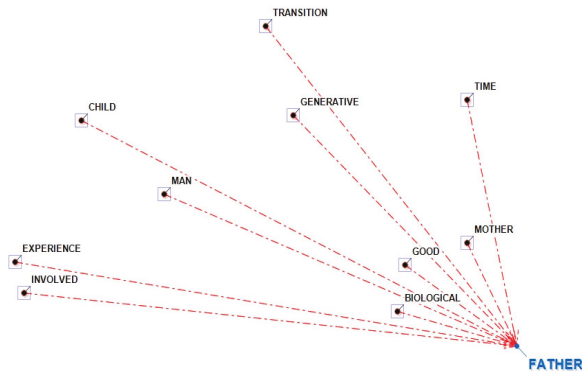
Figure 13. Predecessors of "father".

Comparing these results with what emerged from the years 1980–1999 literature, some recursive terms emerge—"mother", "child", "generative", "time"—and there are some changes: the reference to the workplace ("work") and the definition of role disappears, while the reference to what defines a good father and the link between fatherhood and masculinity ("man") are strong; although weaker, the focus on "transitions" is interesting.

The strongest successor is "involvement", followed closely in distance by "child" and "mother"; intermediate successors are "involve", "son", "role", "experience" and "describe". Weaker successors are "spend" and "family" (Figure 14).
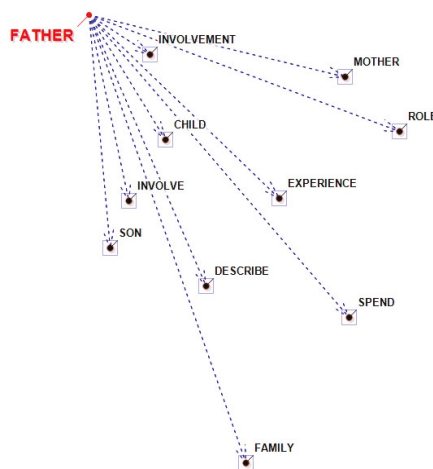

Figure 14. Successors of "father".

Comparing these results with the analysis of the previous literature, here too some recursive terms emerge—"mother", "child", "involve", "involvement", "spend", "role"—and some innovations: the reference to the working field, the presence or absence of the paternal figure and behavioural dynamics ("behaviour") disappear while the reference to the experiential dimension ("experience") is strong.

Looking at the terms that appear both as predecessors and as successors of the lexical unit "father" in recent literature, it is interesting to highlight how fatherhood defines itself as a relationship with two fundamental figures, the mother and the child; the reference to the paternal involvement ("involved") and to the experience of paternity also clearly emerges.

According to graph theory (Section 3.2), finally, having father 10 types of successors (out-degree) and types of predecessors (in-degree) can be classified as a "relay" node.

4. Conclusions

The analysis carried out on a selection of literature in two different historical-social contexts was aimed at gathering possible differences from an international perspective with respect to the emergency representation of paternity. In particular, we asked two questions:

- Which aspects characterize the process of transformation of fatherhood, in an intergenerational perspective?
- How are paternal childcare practices represented in different historical and social periods?

Regarding the first question, the analysis of the keywords present in the two periods highlights first of all the centrality of the relational dimension (with the child, with the mother) already starting from the 1980s; this aspect is amplified starting from the new millennium with a broader meaning, including aspects related to masculinity, the cultural dimension of fatherhood and the different areas of life (family and work in the first place).

Paternity, in the years 1980–1999, is connected to concrete parental practices ("support", "suggest", "involve", "involvement", "spend time") and to both the generative and work dimensions. The theme of change is also central and above all the relational dimension ("relationship"): fatherhood is defined as a relationship with two fundamental figures, the mother and the child.

The theme of difference is also present: gender difference ("boy", "girl", "daughter") and age difference ("old", "young") of children ("child") and difference with the mother figure. The adolescent condition is analysed in relation to paternity and to the change in the parental role in the growth of children ("developmental"). The surveys with adolescent children focus on the theme of identity, on the relationship with the family (in particular with the mother figure) and on other specific topics ("discrepancy", "achievement", "expectation", "belief", "task").

The studies in the new millennium are placed in continuity with the previous ones, highlighting in addition to already known aspects some further themes: fatherhood is in fact associated with different subjects in relation to which one explicates one's role, within a dynamic relationship, especially with children and the mother. Here, however, there is an explicit reference to the theme of care, as well as of work: work and care are not considered as opposites but as dimensions equally present in the paternal experience.

Since the 2000s, paternity has taken on a broader and more complex sense, which includes masculinity ("man"). Great emphasis is also placed on the experiential aspect ("experience") of parenting; the focus is on dedicated time and involvement ("involve", "involved") in an attempt to identify paternity models and the characteristics of a good father.

Involvement is characterized as a key lemma in recent literature and is expressed as being present ("presence"), influencing ("influence") and requiring the devotion of time every day ("weekday") in awareness of diversity (different types or levels of involvement) and concrete activities.

To conclude, the analysis conducted, in line with previous theories (Dermott 2008; Doucet 2006; Miller 2011), seems to suggest a strong relationship between the two generations. Paternity in the 1980s

and 1990s and in the new millennium is marked by great connections, rather than by discontinuity. Continuity is given by the relational dimension (with the mother and the child) as central aspects of paternal identity; recent studies include a specific reflection on masculinity in general. However we cannot conclude that new fathers as totally different from the previous generations, but different paternal style coexist. So, the paternal role is widened and deepened.

Moreover, keeping in mind the definition of generation given by the relational sociology (see the introduction) as the set of people who share a relationship both intra-family and in the social context, it is interesting to note that most of the literature on fatherhood has an intra-familiar focus (relationships with own father, the mother and children); it is rather difficult to see the social dimension of the intergenerational relationship of fatherhood/fathering. A more explicit tension toward a social dimension of fatherhood is given by considering the expression of masculinities in different social contexts as well as the importance of work in fathers life. From this perspective, fatherhood/fathering can be conceived as an intergenerational dimension articulated in different levels (personal, familiar and social) linked to one another.

With respect to the second research question, we also note a greater focus on the relationship with young children but less with adolescents; nevertheless, comparatively, we see a greater interest for the adolescent age in the years 1980–1999 compared to today. While in 1980–1999 some studies with a family perspective put the adolescent age in the spotlight, in the most recent years the reflection on the paternal involvement and on the different modalities with which this is expressed—favouring however the first years of life—prevails; studies on adolescence today do not look at it as a normative phase of the family (Marta et al. 2012; Scabini and Marta 2006) but focus mainly on non-normative transitions connected to it (e.g., adolescence in separate families).

Finally, regarding the relationship between the father and young adult children, we find in the literature that it is an important element for the well-being of the child and its importance emerges above all in the experience of divorce, associated with the removal of fathers from the domestic sphere, which contributes to impoverishment and deterioration of the father–young adult relationship (Greco 2006; Amato 1994).

Moreover, it should be emphasized that the relationship between fathers and young adult children is not particularly analysed, as is also evident from the analyses conducted. The studies that have taken it into consideration, mainly of a psychological nature, tend to analyse the negative aspects of intergenerational relations in terms of psychological distress or poor well-being (Umberson 1992; Lawton et al. 1994).

Sociological studies on the father and the young adult are practically absent. This is because the paternal role is structured in fact from early childhood and in relation to the mother. In this context, the intergenerational relationship immediately appears to be a very strong driver.

Although many studies, even in recent times, have highlighted the importance of maintaining a good parenting relationship after a divorce with a renewed interest in the father–child relationship, especially with young children, the adult father–child relationship is still left in the background.

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Article

Against All Odds? Birth Fathers and Enduring Thoughts of the Child Lost to Adoption

Gary Clapton

School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH8 9YL, UK; gary.clapton@ed.ac.uk

Abstract: This paper revisits a topic only briefly raised in earlier research, the idea that the grounds for fatherhood can be laid with little or no 'hands-on' experience of fathering and upon these grounds, an enduring sense of being a father of, and bond with, a child seen once or never, can develop. The paper explores the specific experiences of men whose children were adopted as babies drawing on the little research that exists on this population, work relating to expectant fathers, personal accounts, and other sources such as surveys of birth parents in the USA and Australia. The paper's exploration and discussion of a manifestation of fatherhood that can hold in mind a 'lost' child, disrupts narratives of fathering that regard fathering as 'doing' and notions that once out of sight, a child is out of mind for a father. The paper suggests that, for the men in question, a diversity of feelings, but also behaviours, point to a form of continuing, lived fathering practices—that however, take place without the child in question. The conclusion debates the utility of the phrase "birth father" as applied historically and in contemporary adoption processes.

Keywords: birth fathers; adoption; fatherhood

1. Introduction

There can be an enduring psychological/attachment bond between the child and their biological father that is of significance both to the child and the father, whether the father is present, absent or indeed has never been known to the child (Clapton 2007, pp. 68–69).

In this paper I wish to further explore the connection to their children experienced by birth fathers[1] in adoption. This exploration takes the form of a review and discussion of the existing literature relating to birth fathers plus the paper will draw upon developments in our understanding of how expectant fathers may develop attachments to their child as a means of the exploring the creation of the "enduring psychological/attachment bonds" found in the birth father literature. But first, a concise statement of context and clarity of definition is necessary.

2. Adoption

The traditional form of adoption in the U.K. has changed. Stranger (out of family) adoptions of healthy babies, voluntarily relinquished by natural parents has declined. In its place in a process that can be charted from the late 1980s, the majority of contemporary adoptions involve older children who have spent time in public care. These are children that have relationships with their parents, siblings and other family members. Many of these adoptions take place against the consent of the birth parents (O'Halloran 2015). This paper focuses on the biological fathers of the children of adoptions in the previous era of so-called "closed" adoptions referring to the sealing of records and practice of secrecy

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[1]   The use of the term 'birth father' is explored in the latter part of this paper but for ease of flow and comprehension, the term will be used throughout to denote the biological father of the child given up for adoption.

relating to a child's familial origins (Ryburn 1995). These closed adoptions are distinct from the more open adoptions of today when adoptive parents, adopted children and birth families are more likely to have some form of contact with each other, either before, during or after the adoption has taken place.[2] The marked increase in the practice of open adoption and decrease in closed adoptions can be dated roughly from the end of the 1980s (Clapton and Clifton 2016). The focus of this paper involves the closed adoptions prior to this period when, invariably, after the adoption, birth parents knew little or nothing about their child.

3. Birth Parents and Adoption

Research, in decreasing degree of attention has focused on adopted children, adoptive parents and families, birth mothers and birth fathers (Clapton 2018). The existing research on the impact of adoption on birth parents demonstrates the extreme and longstanding implications for them of the loss of a child to adoption. Most of this literature concerns birth mothers. The main UK studies (Bouchier et al. 1991; Howe et al. 1992; Hughes and Logan 1993; Logan 1996) concluded that there are continuing negative consequences for many birth mothers' physical and mental health and well-being. Research, especially in Australia, has characterised the birth mother experience as that of disenfranchised grief related to the continuation and domination of maternal feelings towards the child (Robinson 2018). There are far fewer studies of birthfathers.

Birth Fathers and Adoption

In February 2019, I entered the words "birthfathers" and "adoption" into Google and up came the message "Did you mean "birth mothers" adoption?". Well, no I did not. See Figure 1.
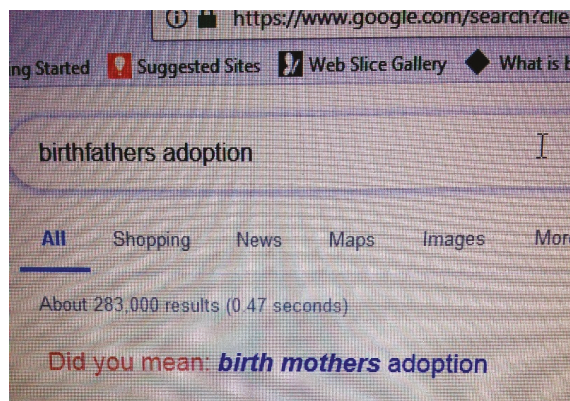
Figure 1. Google and birthfathers.

Working out where the (biological) father fits in adoption is not only problematic for Google. The nature of fathering and fatherhood is a relatively new field of study compared to that of mothers. Much has been done in the last few decades to develop our understanding of how men become fathers, the role of fathers and the unique contribution that they can make to the life of a child (Lamb 2010). However, an equivalent degree of scholarship on birth fathers in adoption does not exist[3]. This may be because of a long-held view that "It sometimes appears that we have actually

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[2] This is not to suggest that adoption is a one-off event.   Adoption is a life-long process for all (Gediman and Brown 1991, p. 254), rather it is to acknowledge efforts to achieve continuity of connections between birth families and adoptive families in contemporary adoptions.
[3] The adoptive father is equally under-researched (Siegel 2017).

been guilty of contributing to a myth that. suggests that a child born out of wedlock has only one natural parent" (Anglim 1965, p. 340) Forty-five years later, Coles refers to what he terms "the common view that birth fathers were not there (at pregnancy and birth), so how could they possibly have an emotional response?" (Coles 2010, p. 25). Research that has raised the possibility of the birth father who has had no or little physical connection with their child, having paternal thoughts and emotions problematises such lasting notions of birth fathers, contributes to our developing insights regarding fathers as a whole and can be said to be part of a general 'catching up' about fathers that has addressed a traditional emphasis on mothers, and a lack of attention as to how men perceive fatherhood (Clarke and Popay 1998). A significant aspect of fatherhood research is that it has focused on what men do (or not) with their child (Ranson 2015) with less work on what it means and feels like to be a father. 'Hands-on', expressive behaviour is seen as the moment when men come into their own as fathers with their children (Brannen and Nilsen 2006). This makes the case of birth fathers who feel for their child yet have had not such experience of contact worthy of study. As will be seen there is a small collection of studies, some individual accounts, magazine and internet contributions, and knowledge that can be gleaned at second-hand via accounts of adopted people meeting their fathers that sheds light on the relatively secret, inner lives of birth fathers. As such the trajectory of our knowledge of birth fathers mirrors how our understandings of fathers started further back in the field from mothers. In the words of birth father Ward's counsellor and intermediary "Birth fathers are about thirty years behind birth mothers in gaining their voices in the adoption process" (Ward 2012, p. 198).

For decades birth fathers have been talked of as shadowy (Mason 1995), shadowy figures (Rawles 2003; Hughes 2015) phantom fathers (Passmore and Chipuer 2009), and invisible men (Coles 2010). Twenty years ago in relation to later-life contact between adopted people and their families of origin, March (1995) counselled that to "focus only on the adoptee-birth mother contact is an injustice too often in the current adoption literature" (p. 104). Unfortunately this advice on the need for further attention has not been taken up in the main, e.g., birth fathers remain overlooked in the adoption literature in general (Neil 2017; Siegel 2017). Adoption-related stories and fiction for children repeat the absence of a biological father. In the classic children's story designed for adopted children, *The Mulberry Bird* (Brodzinsky 2013), Mother Bird's struggles are detailed: her struggle to feed her baby bird; the storm that drives her to seek counsel from the wise Owl; her visit to the seashore birds, who welcome the baby bird into their soft, safe nest. But one figure is all but missing. The male who fathered baby bird is mentioned only in passing. Mother Bird "noticed that some of the other mothers had father birds to help them. Her baby's father had flown away long before she built her nest and laid the pale blue egg." (p. 11).

Our lack of knowledge—and misunderstandings—stands in contrast to some interesting facts on the ground. These are that:

More British men than ever before are trying to track down their adopted kids. Over 1000 birth fathers are officially registered with adoption-contact agencies and hundreds more are believed to be searching for their children independently (Rawles 2003).

According to Australian researchers, Passmore and Chipuer (2009), the little we know of the search behaviour of birthfathers questions any notions of them being marginal or disinterested. In one of the first pieces of birth father research, a survey of 125 American birth fathers, 96% had considered searching for their relinquished child, and 67% had actually searched (Deykin et al. 1988). Similar results have been found in Australia where Cicchini (1993) found that 77% of the thirty birthfathers in his study had taken active steps to seek information about, or make contact with, their child. Clapton (2003) found that nearly 90% of the thirty Scottish and English birth fathers in his study desired some contact with their child. Twenty out of the twenty seven fathers in the study by Passmore and Coles had actively searched (Passmore and Coles 2009). The most recent account of birth father experiences includes the information that nine of the twelve interviewed were searching for their child (Kenny et al. 2012). Applications for information and contact registers are another means of locating and measuring birth father interest. Browning cites New Zealand figures relating to birth parent

applications for identifying information relating to their children and these indicate that birth fathers made up 12% of these (1034/8095) (Browning 2005, p. 4). Elsewhere the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland has a very similar proportion—250/2274—eleven percent of birth fathers registered as seeking contact with their children (Birthlink 2019. personal communication). The number of birth fathers on the Adoption Contact Register for England and Wales is also similar at 1025 out of a total of 10547 birth parents registered (HM Passport Office 2019. Personal communication) There are many reasons for the disproportions (in relation to birth mother expressions of interest). These include men's reluctance to express emotions and their names not being on the birth certificate (Coles 2010) but suffice to say that these statistics add to the cumulative impression that a sizable amount of birth fathers, contrary to the impression of marginal figures, have an enduring interest in their child. So whilst it is acknowledged that most of the men in the above studies were recruited via one form or another of a means to register for news of their child's welfare and hope for a meeting, the repeated refrain of interest in their child is unignorable.

What do the existing works tell us of being a birth father? Deykin et al. (1988), Cicchini (1993), Clapton (2003), Witney (2004), Triseliotis et al. (2005), Passmore and Coles (2009) and Kenny et al. (2012) have in common the finding that some birth fathers have been, or indicated a wish to be, in contact with their child. What might drive this?

4. Enduring Love, Enduring Fatherhood

"The adoption rubbed me out legally but not emotionally" (in Clapton 2003, p. 122).

In Author's study of thirty birth fathers, it was found that after the adoption of their child, whilst nearly half of the men experienced an eventual reduction of feelings of immediate distress, others reported that things either did not get better or that such feelings had intensified. Many of these feelings convey feeling like a father:

As time went by when I'd see a child, I'd think B—must be that age. This feeling has become more pronounced as I've got older. There has never been a time when I was completely free (Clapton 2003, p. 128).

The child was never out of mind for most of these men, on birthdays and Xmases and at "any quiet moment" In *The Birth Father's Tale* Ward (2012) writes of his son being "never far from my mind", that "he's shaped my life", and wanting to tell him "that there's been an invisible hand over him, wishing him well" (p. 3). Birth fathers also speak of rituals of observance and devotion:

Every year when his son's birthday comes around, John buys a bottle of whiskey, goes into a dark room and drinks till he drops. He's been observing this ritual for as long as he can remember. 'I've been pining for my son all my life. There's not a day goes by when I don't think about him' (in Rawles 2003, p. 80).

The men in the Passmore and Coles study (2009) send yearly birthday and Xmas cards to the adoption agency. Others attend the adoption agency every year for an annual up-date on their child's life. Some have left money in their wills to their adopted-out child (Browning 2005).

Much of this, it has to be noted, involves men that never saw or touched their child. Ward (2012) never held his child or saw him yet: "If you spend over thirty years starved of a person, you dearly love, devoid of dialogue with him, all that exists is thinking, writing and imagining" (p. 201). For those that did have sight or touch the loss remains palpable for decades:

The one thing I remember most is the smell, like a new-born smell—comes back now. I suppose that stays with you all the time. It's immediate. (in Witney 2004, p. 56).

Ward and others speak directly of paternity, specifically "My frustrated parenthood" (Ward 2012, p. 200) and "You don't stop being a father just by signing away the adoption papers" (in Rawles 2003, p. 81). The adopted-out child is spoken of as lost ("a lost son" Passmore and Coles 2009, p. 8), and a missing family member "Her absence from our family leaves a hole in my heart. I wish we could be reunited" (Kenny et al. 2012, p. 83). Cicchini (1993) found

considerable evidence of feelings of responsibility. This is echoed elsewhere when fathers speak of having "abandoned their charge" (Clapton 2003, p. 133).

Expressions of parental feelings are intense in many of the accounts. The top reason for searching in Cicchini's study was "I have a sense of responsibility for my child" (1993, p. 19). The associated motivation for assurance as to their child's welfare is present as the highest-rated of search motives in Passmore and Coles (2009).

These fathers identify an ambivalence at the heart of the matter when they acknowledge that their feelings exist in spite of having no experience of day-to-day care, and "have difficulty in responding truthfully when asked how many children we have" (Coles 2010, p. 44). And they also grapple with their identities: "I didn't bring her up, her dad did, I'm her father" (in Clapton's study (2003, p. 165)[4].

The research has also identified incidences of fathers conforming to some of the more popular stereotypes of men who discover they are to become fathers: "I disappeared to London hoping no one would find me. I was distraught" (Witney 2004, p. 55). Whilst it follows that larger and more random studies of birth fathers might reveal greater evidence of such behaviour, present in the accounts that we have are mostly feelings of connectedness (with the child) (Coles 2010), "emotional and psychological ties" (Rawles 2003, p. 81) and a pervasive vein of attachment or bond, albeit a one-way street: " . . . there is evidence of a constellation of feelings and behaviours that indicate the development of a sense of fatherhood" (Clapton 2003, p. 83).

What then are we to make of these beliefs in, and feelings of, fatherhood? Are bonds with the child a result of maturation (Cicchini 1993), guilt (Mason 1995; Passmore and Coles 2009), shame over abandonment (Coles 2010), a combination of all these? Ainsworth makes a difference between relationship bonds which are dyadic, and affectional bonds which can be experienced by the individual in absentia of the other (Ainsworth 1991, p. 37). Are these what birth fathers feel? Whilst it has already been acknowledged that our knowledge of birth fathers is scant and that the research to date has not drawn on random samples, yet there is sufficient repetition of testimony to feelings of fatherhood to warrant a deeper enquiry into the possible source of the feelings of paternal-ness expressed throughout the existing accounts. In the face of normative expectations that fathers provide and care and that the essence of a good father is 'being there' (Plantin et al. 2003), from where might birth father feelings emerge, and what sustains them in the face of never having 'been there' for their children? A small group of recent studies that delves deep into fathers' emotions, their sources and creation, might shed greater light.

5. The Creation and Maintenance of Paternity

Condon et al.'s (2013) study of first-time fathers' ante-natal attachment begins with the pertinent observation that "in the attachment research literature, it is largely behaviours which are the focus of assessment methodology" (p. 15). This is germane because, in the case of birth fathers, aside from the various commemorations and rituals referred to above, there are no behaviours to observe relating to interactions between fathers and children. Condon et al. go on call for a "holistic approach to the understanding of the parent–infant relationship" that requires "consideration of both parental subjective experience as well as behaviour" (ibid. emphasis added). Paternal attachment is a "feeling state", and they conclude that the findings from their analysis of expectant fathers' self-reports suggest that "a father's attachment may not stem solely from actual interaction with the neonate or infant" but "Rather, the predominant contribution may stem from some underlying 'capacity' to form an attachment bond which is activated in fantasy before the baby is even born" (p. 25). The writers speculate that such attachment might reflect "a kind of 'commitment' to the couple relationship" (ibid)—in the case of the birth fathers' adoptions that we know about, the majority of cases involved young people in relationships with each other, though, it has to be said, by no means were the majority

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4 The dad or father question is discussed below.

of pregnancies planned (Clapton 2003). The conclusions of Condon et al. therefore problematise fixed notions of "being there" and "hands-on" as the definitions of how bonds are formed between fathers and their children. In other specific instances e.g., men absent as soldiers; research has shown a sense of fatherhood thrives after the birth without ever having seen the child (Bell 2008; Turner and Rennel 1995). Notwithstanding that the men in the latter studies were in expectation of a future relationship with their child, the fact that in some of the birth father cases, the men were disabused of this expectation, makes signs of attachment in birth fathers ever more arresting.

Given the latter proviso about thwarted expectations and the evidence of mixed reactions to the pregnancy, nevertheless, it can be said that, whether they embraced the role or not, the birth fathers in the studies were expectant fathers. A second study that may be of use in understanding and appreciating birth fathers' paternal bonds is the enquiry by Edelstein et al. (2015) into hormonal changes in expectant fathers. The researchers find hormonal changes in expectant fathers that they suggest are associated with the development of fatherhood (p. 322). In her discussion of the "neurochemistry of fatherhood", Machin covers the same territory of hormonal changes and makes a similar observation concerning the expectancy stage of fatherhood (Machin 2018). Could such changes also be at work for birth fathers in amongst the mix of conflicting emotions during the pregnancy and birth, whether or not they were present, banned or took themselves away?

Remaining with expectant fathers, the systematic review by Baldwin et al. (2018) notes that for many new fathers the transition to fatherhood was the "best experience" in their lives (p. 2139) and goes on "The ability to father a child made men feel like they were accomplishing an important phase in their lives" (ibid.) There is some evidence of the pleasure of having fathered a child and looking forward to a familial relationship in the birth father literature (Clapton 2003; Witney 2004; Coles 2010) Whether or not wholly embraced, and by no means all did so as noted above, the majority of the birth fathers that we know of experienced a transition to fatherhood that was to make and retain a decisive impression on their lives.

Lastly of this small group of studies on expectancy and fathers, although a small sample was used, Khambatta's study of eight birth fathers using a 'Parent Attachment Questionnaire' of her own devising (Khambatta 2011), found that "biological fathers in the current sample consider genetic ties to be an important component of interaction with their child(ren), and an even greater element of their attachment relationships with the genetic child(ren)" (p. 35).

All told then, it is suggested that developments in our understanding of how men transition to fatherhood posits an empirical basis for birth fathers' enduring paternity or paternal-ness and their attachment to their children. This seems to be a combination of genealogical, biological, psychological and emotional factors. But do they have a "right to call themselves a father" (Coles 2010, p. 156)? It seems that we have gone a long way around to arrive at what most people would acknowledge, and certainly most people involved in adoption do—the basic truth that "all adopted persons have two mothers and two fathers" (ibid. p. 186). In a recent paper on adoption reunions Clapton (2018) argued that our developing understandings of the experiences of reunions leads to the conclusion that hierarchies of family in adoption are unhelpful. That is, the notion of equating the family with those that have done the work of raising the adopted child as the primary one, and the birth family as secondary—and provisional or contingent—was problematised by reunions between adopted people and their families of origin: reunions with birth fathers (and those with siblings) both disrupt any fixed essentialist ideas of kinship between adoptive people and birth mothers, but also poses the question, as Hughes does, of the helpfulness of ideas of kinship hierarchies (Clapton 2018, p. 41).

The present paper applies this notion of a more flattened, less hierarchical approach to relations between adopted people and their fathers whether the birth father is in the life of the child or not.

6. Who's the Daddy?

California law, like nature itself, makes no provision for dual fatherhood Michael H. v. Gerald D. 1989, p. 118 quoted in (Hubin 2014, p. 76)

Hubin ([2014](#)) however goes onto note that "There is nothing in nature that declares that a child cannot have more than one legal or social male parent" (p. 79). He counters with difference between genetic parentage and social parentage, the key determinant of 'who's the daddy', being the father who has the "responsibility-for-dependent-life" with the "agent", the father holding "a special duty to promote the well-being of that dependent life and, a fortiori, to prevent its suffering" (p. 86). Hubin approvingly quotes Mahowald:

A real mother, then, is first and foremost a woman who cares for a child, from any state of development, until the child no longer needs that care. A real father is a man who does the same when he can, i.e., after the child is born. . . . it is hard to see how genetic ties alone ever provide an adequate basis for defining real mothers or real fathers (Mahowald 2000, p. 526 cited p. 84).

This harks us back to the distinction made between birth fathers and adoptive fathers with the latter the ones 'being there' ("real fathers are those who are there", Gadd, birth father, (Gadd 2003)). However, Hubin concludes that the rise of various and differing family formations in the 20th century has seen increasing involvement of what he terms "genetic fathers" in the lives of children being raised by the child's mother and her husband, the non-biological father (p. 89). For now it is worth noting that such involvement of two fathers in the life of a child is very clearly the case in the 21st century adoptions from care. Family practices in such adoptions can blur binary constructs of "real" father and "genetic" father and I return to this at the conclusion of this paper.

So although it might seem uncontroversial that "father" can be used interchangeably in many of the more fluid of contemporary Western family practices[5], the title "dad" still seems sacrosanct, fit only for one man. But what of the outpouring of parental feelings documented in the birth father literature, the dedication to their children's welfare, the constant references to affection, bonds and enduring love, and the activities designed to achieve a reunion with their "lost son" (Brown 2015), or missing family member?[6]. It is true that to a man, birth fathers have repeatedly acknowledged that "their child's adoptive father is the "dad"" (Passmore and Feeney 2009, p. 103). Some men go as far as to say that to call themselves anything more, or have a greater or equivalent claim on paternity as the adoptive father would be discreditable: "For me to act as your father would be inappropriate and morally wrong" (Trinder et al. 2004, p. 67). But yet, a deeper delving in our (albeit scanty) knowledge of birth fathers reveals less conviction, greater disruption to the accepted definition, more blurring and hesitancy over fixed categories of "dad" and "father". Additionally, the accounts of adopted people and birth fathers relating to later-life reunions also give pause for greater consideration of what we call the fathers in adoption. On a first reading, in the birth fathers accounts, there seems little debate about being and feeling like fathers (though Ward lists over ten terms from "blood to "proper", (Ward 2012, p. 112)). And it is also clear that irrespective of objective reality, many of the birth fathers refer to their son or daughter using the possessive—writing about counting off the years, Ward is typical: "Three years later when my son was nine" (2012, p. 155 emphasis added). In response to a question about what he was seeking one day, one of the respondents in Author's study of thirty birth fathers confessed: "The simple reason is that she's not mine at this moment in time. At this moment in time—probably the wrong thing to say—she's on loan to someone else" (2000, p. 258). Birth fathers' attitudes to possible reunions and actions in reunion share a variety of 'takes' on the relationship. Reunions have the effect of making corporeal the father-child relationship between birth fathers and their children. The reunion literature certainly shows a spectrum of views following later-life contact. For adopted people, one woman declares: "you can't be my father, you are my biological father and there's no getting away from that, but you are not emotionally my father and you didn't bring me up"

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5   It must be noted that the debates and controversies visited in this paper are very much anchored in Western culture, especially the anglophone world of the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand all of which societies have experienced similar trends and developments in adoption. Elsewhere in the majority world, the issue of hierarchical distinctions and roles in fatherhood and fathering can be less controversial.

6   See Hughes (2015) in which the word "reunion" as applied to birth fathers in adoption is problematised.

(Trinder et al. 2004, p. 66). Another (about her birth father), " . . . even though someone conceived me and gave birth to me, those people can never be a parent and I've told them that. They physically can't be a parent because there's no history there." (Passmore and Chipuer 2009, p. 98). The seven adopted people in the latter study were clear that their relationships with their birth fathers ranged from "no relationship, to distant relative, to close friendship". After a reservation about small sample size, Passmore and Chipuer go on to note that "It is interesting that none of the adoptees regarded it as a father–daughter relationship" (ibid, p. 100). At the other end of the spectrum there are instances of a conferring of both the title of dad and role by the adopted person: "me dad" as one person says in Trinder et al.'s *Adoption Reunion Handbook* (2004, p. 62). Another refers to his birth father as "my old man" (Clapton 2000, p. 172) and another in the study by Hughes (2015) is "happy to call her biological father "dad" and herself "his girl"" (p. 163). Whilst it is difficult to estimate prevalences it is clear that "father" far outweighs "dad" in the accounts of adopted people, for example, in Browning's study only one of the twenty adopted people uses the term "dad" to describe her birth father.

And yet, as far as birth fathers are concerned, after contact and establishment of a relationship, Clapton (2003) notes that in some cases of the birth fathers in his study, "there were indications that the two roles of biological and social father were converging during contact and the subsequent relationship with the adopted child" (p. 176). For most of the birth fathers we have knowledge of such a convergence may be a pipe dream because "They are aware that their child will not view them as their father. However, they still identify their child as their own but the label of father versus birth father is difficult for them to establish as their own" (Christensen 2017, p. 22). In a similar vein to the expressions of possessiveness referred to above, in his blog, on meeting with his (adult) son Brown (2015) writes of his relief "to know that he had been well cared for" and although he meets with his son's adoptive parents, there's a sense of his son being returned to him.

Thus there are many points along a spectrum of lived paternal-ness from no grounds to be called father to many reasons t to have the title and so what can be suggested is that the role of the father is disrupted and rendered more fluid in adoption. Such ambiguity is crystallised in disputes and debates over terminologies.

7. Conclusions: It's Only Words

Words matter. Yet it remains the case that the vast majority of the literature speaks of birth mothers and fathers and adoptive mothers and fathers. The distinction has been made hesitantly: "Birth mother or father" acknowledges the associated reproductive relationship and in the absence of a term to best describe the relationship, would seem the best among the alternatives available" (Browning 2005, p. 7).[7]

In *The Birth Father's Tale*, Ward (2012) worries away at the word "birth": "why birth son? Why not just son? Oh, I see. Well that's how we are known in the adoption business isn't it? I'm his birth father and he's my birth son" (p. 29). He visits the names discussion. Is he "Father Number One, Father One?" and decides that "Our society still has no words for mothers and fathers who surrender their child for adoption (pp. 192–93). Further discrepancies are apparent in evidence which shows the widespread lack of use of the prefix "birth" in accounts of meetings and contact between adopted people and non-parent members of their birth families. For example, in Author's study of the long-term outcomes of reunions (2018), none of the accounts relating to sibling contact of any of the forty adopted people used the phrases "birth brother" or "birth sister", in fact one respondent went out of her way to eschew what she regarded as demeaning prefixes: "I feel so lucky to have found an amazing brother and sister. We don't like to say 1/2 half brother and 1/2 half sister" (p. 10).

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[7] Understandably, given the relative maturity of the birth mother research, the debate about maternal nomenclature emerged earlier (Affleck and Steed 2001). This too has not been settled (Gair and Moloney 2013).

Phrases matter too. And perhaps the phrase that is most problematised in exploring the experiences of birth fathers (and birth mothers) is "as if born to". Adopted children are treated in law "as if born to" the adoptive parents in adoption legislation (see The Adoption and Children Act 2002, England and Wales, s. 67). It is clear from the accounts of the birth fathers we know of that, this is patently not felt to be the case. Furthermore, the accounts of adopted people in the literature convey the obvious appreciation that whilst they have a mother and father, they were not born to them (Beauchesne 1997).[8]

Yngvesson (2007) challenged the long-standing viewpoint in adoption that "a child can only be one thing or the other and whose adoptability requires the cancellation of one identity, so that identity can be replaced by another" (p. 569). What if this argument were applied to the fathers in adoption? When both adoptive father and birth father can say that they have a daughter, what if that daughter were enabled to comfortably say that she has not one father but two? (with the proviso when necessary that only one would be "dad").

Such clarity would put an end to the wrangling over nomenclature for birth parents e.g., "biological", "natural", "blood", "original", 'first' have all been used. The most popular titles continue to be "birth mother" or "birth father" (albeit that the discourse is dominated by academics and professionals). That is to say, that from now on, could an adopted person being permitted to contentedly say that they have two fathers, without one being termed "the birth father"? After all, today's adopted children, adopted at the age of four or five or older, will grow up in the full knowledge, derived from practical experiences, that they have another father 'out there'. In relation to these contemporary adoptions, where there might very well be up to two mums and two dads in play (Jones and Hackett 2012), it seems unnecessarily divisive and inimical to a child's welfare and interests to insist on familial hierarchies.

In conclusion, the agonies of birth mothers whose children were adopted before the 1990s have been documented (see for example, Charlton's *Still Screaming*, (Charlton 1998)) and those of birth fathers from the same period (Cicchini 1993; Clapton 2003; Witney 2004). Increasingly, the despair, anger and traumas of today's fathers and mothers whose parental rights have been forcibly extinguished and their children adopted are being charted (Clifton 2012; Lewis and Brady 2018; Smeeton and Boxall 2011). This paper has argued that dropping the 'birth' from fathers and mothers of children adopted out in the era of 'closed' adoptions is worth debate. The debate is all the more pressing for today's mothers and fathers involved in the adoptions of the children that have known them and may know them again in later life. It is suggested that the words birth mother and birth father are not only anachronisms but are demeaning and perpetuate a falsehood that the adopted children had only a biological or genetic connection to them. In such cases, a maintenance of the 'as if born to' principle flies in the face of reality for all concerned, but also, as we have seen with the studies of birth fathers discussed in this paper, discounts the fathers who are legally rubbed out but hold their child in mind daily for the remainder of their lives–against all odds.

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[8] During the debate on the Adoption and Children Bill (England and Wales) in 2002, the British Association of Social Workers called for the removal of the phrase 'as if born to' because the wording "unhelpfully implies a legal pretence or fiction which is at odds with the facts" https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmstand/special/st011128/11128s01.htm (accessed on 2 March 2019).

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Father Involvement, Care, and Breadwinning: Genealogies of Concepts and Revisioned Conceptual Narratives

Andrea Doucet

Faculty of Social Sciences, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON L2S 3A1, Canada; adoucet@brocku.ca

Abstract: This paper addresses an enduring puzzle in fathering research: Why are care and breadwinning largely configured as binary oppositions rather than as relational and intra-acting concepts and practices, as is often the case in research on mothering? Guided by Margaret Somers' historical sociology of concept formation, I conduct a Foucauldian-inspired genealogy of the concept of "father involvement" as a cultural and historical object embedded in specific histories, conceptual networks, and social and conceptual narratives. With the aim of un-thinking and re-thinking conceptual possibilities that might expand knowledges about fathering, care, and breadwinning, I look to researchers in other sites who have drawn attention to the relationalities of care and earning. Specifically, I explore two conceptual pathways: First the concept of "material indirect care", from fatherhood research pioneer Joseph Pleck, which envisages breadwinning as connected to care, and, in some contexts, as a form of care; and second, the concept of "provisioning" from the work of feminist economists, which highlights broad, interwoven patterns of care work and paid work. I argue that an approach to concepts that connect or entangle caring and breadwinning recognizes that people are care providers, care receivers, financial providers, and financial receivers in varied and multiple ways across time. This move is underpinned by, and can shift, our understandings of human subjectivity as relational and intra-dependent, with inevitable periods of dependency and vulnerability across the life course. Such a view also acknowledges the critical role of resources, services, and policies for supporting and sustaining the provisioning and caring activities of all parents, including fathers. Finally, I note the theoretical and political risks of this conceptual exercise, and the need for caution when making an argument about fathers' breadwinning and caregiving entanglements.

Keywords: father involvement; care and breadwinning; provisioning; indirect care; genealogies; historical epistemologies; relational ontologies; historical sociology of concept formation

1. Introduction

> Concepts are not answers, solutions ... Instead, they are modes of address, modes of connection, what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) sometimes call "moveable bridges" (p. 32) between those forces which relentlessly impinge on us from the outside to form a problem and those forces we can muster within ourselves, harnessed and transferred from outside, by which to address problems. This is why concepts are created. They have a date, often also a name; they have a history that seizes hold of them in inconsistent ways, making of them new concepts with each seizure and transformation insofar as each concept has borders and edges that link it up and evolve it with other concepts. (Grosz 2011, pp. 78–79)

In 1990, historian Thomas W. Laqueur (1990, p. 205) bemoaned that he was "annoyed that we lack a history of fatherhood", that "history has been written almost exclusively as the history of men and therefore man-as-father has been subsumed under the history of a pervasive patriarchy", and

that "Fatherhood, insofar it as has been thought about at all, has been regarded as a backwater of the dominant history of public power". Although Laqueur (1990, p. 205) admitted that he wrote his chapter in a "grumpy, polemical mood", his reflections resonated with those of other fatherhood researchers and historians who aimed to counteract dominant fathering narratives that employed "deficit" perspectives of fathering (which judged men to be inadequate parents) and presented men only in their roles as breadwinners (for overviews see Hawkins and Dollahite 1996; Dermott 2008), absent fathers (e.g., Popenoe 1996), or "deadbeat dads" (Boumil and Friedman 1996).

Throughout the 1980s and afterwards, fathering scholars, especially in countries in the Global North (LaRossa 1997; Lewis 1986; Pleck 1997), sought to recover positive historical and contemporary fathering narratives, documenting fathers' caregiving potential, capacities, and practices. Across a broad spectrum of theoretical, methodological, and ideological approaches, feminist, fatherhood, and family scholars argued that father involvement has significant generative benefits for children's development (e.g., Lamb 1981), for families, for both men and women (e.g., Chodorow 1978; Okin 1989), and for the attainment of gender equality and wider social change. Gender and feminist scholars speculated that father involvement could overturn the metaphoric and oppositional relationship between "the rocking of the cradle and the ruling of the world" (Dinnerstein 1976, p. 27) and that "the most revolutionary change we can make in the institution of motherhood is to include men in every aspect of childcare" (Ruddick 1984, p. 226).

By the early 1990s, scholarly attention to fathers' caregiving and to the possibilities of "revolutionary change" for men, women, children, and societies was burgeoning. Fathering had become a "hot topic" (Marsiglio 1993, p. 484) in cross-disciplinary scholarship. Today, studies on fathering and caregiving constitute a massive academic research field. While fathering now exists as a parallel and overlapping field with mothering, there are, on my reading, at least two large differences between them. First, considerable effort has gone into defining, conceptualizing, assessing, and measuring "father involvement" or "paternal involvement" over the past thirty years (e.g., Day and Lamb 2004; Lamb et al. 1985; Lamb 2000; Pleck 2010; Palkovitz 2002; Devault et al. 2015; Dermott 2008; Dermott and Miller 2015; LaRossa and Reitzes 1995; Marsiglio et al. 2000). Little attention has been given, however, to the idea of "mother involvement", despite extensive historical, cross-cultural, and contemporary research on how mothers have taken on most of the labor and responsibilities for children. Most concepts of mothering are thus synonymous with mothering involvement. Researchers have instead focused on delineating motherhood as an institution and as an experience (Rich 1995), detailing its diverse representations (Bassin et al. 1996) and its varied personal, political, social, and cultural aspects (Ruddick 1995). The complexity of mothering and its cross-cultural and intersectional variations, such as motherwork and othermothers (Hill Collins 1994, 2000), intensive mothering (Hays 1996), and mothering as "concerted cultivation" (Lareau 2011), have also been taken up by many scholars.

A second, related difference is that whatever the site or set of practices, research on father involvement is largely premised on the separation of care and breadwinning as concepts and as practices. Father involvement is defined by what fathers do as caregivers, with little consideration given to how financial provisioning or breadwinning might also be *part of* caring for children. When attention *is* given to breadwinning, it is seen in a negative light. Rather than highlighting the possible complex conceptual intra-connections between care and earning, emphasis is usually placed on how fathers' earning activities take *away from* their caregiving. Notable exceptions to this include research on low-income fatherhood (see Edin and Nelson 2013) and selected fathering research on breadwinning and care that acknowledges "providing as a form of involvement and care" (Christiansen and Palkovitz 2001, p. 99; see also Eerola 2014; Pleck 2010; Schmidt 2017). I would argue that, overall, as research on fathering and care has proliferated, however, attention to fathers' breadwinning/providing and care entanglements have remained largely unexamined. In contrast, there is a growing body of research and analysis that attends to how mothering responsibilities also include breadwinning or financial provisioning, especially for low-income mothers and racialized

mothers (e.g., Damaske 2011; Hill Collins 1994, 2000; Neysmith et al. 2010). One reason for the lack of attention to breadwinning in contemporary fathering research is that in comparison to care, which is a massive field, breadwinning has rarely been theorized or conceptualized within the social sciences (see Warren 2007). Still, this begs the question: If mothers' caring and breadwinning can be conceptualized as relationalities, why are father involvement and breadwinning so often approached as oppositional binaries?

Guided by the epistemological insights of historical sociologist Margaret Somers (2008, p. 209), I take up this puzzle here by conducting a Foucauldian-inspired genealogy of the concept of father involvement as a cultural and historical object embedded in "histories, networks, and narratives". I explore historical narratives of how the care/breadwinning distinction came into effect, its consequences, and why it matters for how we think about, do research on, and advocate for social change in paid work, care work, and gender equality. My aim is to un-think and re-think conceptual possibilities that might expand knowledges about fathering, care, and breadwinning.

I make three arguments in this paper and lay out one important caveat. First, I argue that the concept of father involvement is founded on an enduring binary opposition between practices and concepts of care and breadwinning. Second, I maintain that in addition to now well-developed narratives of fathering and care, including scholarship on father's caregiving, caring masculinities, and fathering embodiment (e.g., Doucet 2018; Dermott 2008; Ranson 2015; Elliott 2015; Robb 2019), we need fatherhood narratives that attend to the conceptual and practice-based interplay between breadwinning and caregiving. This is especially true in current historical socio-economic contexts, when rising levels of employment precarity, which translate into "care deficits" and "care crises" (Fraser 2016, p. 100), require us to consider how parents' care work and related caregiving services are financially supported. Third, I posit revisioned conceptual narratives that attend to the integration of caring and financially providing for care.

My caveat, which is partly addressed in the genealogical approach that I lay out below, is that the arguments I make here could inadvertently lead to *exactly the opposite* of what I am hoping to achieve. I am aware that I am taking on a conceptually challenging exercise because arguments about how mothering should include breadwinning have supported struggles around gender inequality in paid work and care work. To make similar arguments about fathering could unintentionally let fathers "off the hook" in terms of caregiving, bolster now debunked notions of "separate spheres", and reverse a hard-fought recognition of the potential and power of men's caregiving. It could also obscure the critical role fathers' caregiving has had in promoting gender equality and in changing masculinities, among other socio-cultural benefits. I thus have to make this argument carefully, drawing a conceptual distinction between breadwinning as a broad earning practice and provisioning work directed towards supporting children and family life. Moreover, as I will detail below, my approach to genealogies recognizes the politics and ethics of knowledge making and the effects (both intended and inadvertent) of my claims.

Like all genealogies, this excavation is also undertaken "with a certain degree of caution and humility" (Saar 2002, p. 123, drawing on Saar 2002) because it "unsettles objects that appear to us as self-evident by dislodging them from their usual frames and placing them in new series" (p. 130). A genealogy is a "multi-layered conceptual practice" (p. 115) and the argument I am making needs to attend to the relationality, historicity, and ethico-political character of all related narratives, including conceptual narratives.

This paper is informed by a two-decade-long research program focused on fathering and caregiving as exemplified in three longitudinal studies conducted mainly in Canada, but also in the United States, on caregiving fathers, breadwinning mothers, and families with parents who shared care and earning responsibilities in varied ways across time. These studies included in-depth interviews with fathers who self-identified as primary or shared primary caregivers of children, fathers who took leaves to be at home with their children (by not working, by working part-time and/or in home-based work, or by using paid or unpaid paternity or parental leaves), breadwinning mothers, and women and

men who shared caregiving and earning responsibilities. For these three studies, I conducted or co-conducted interviews (in-depth individual interviews, couple interviews, and four focus groups) with one-hundred-and-forty fathers and fifty-one primary breadwinning mothers (mainly white and middle class parents, but also Indigenous, second-generation immigrant, and gay fathers) with follow up interviews five to ten years later with nineteen men and seventeen women (for details on two of these studies, see (Doucet 2018, 2015, 2016); for details on my study on fathers and parental leave, see (Doucet and McKay)). I do not draw directly on these interview data in this paper, but they do form the conceptual and analytical terrain for the arguments I develop here.

This paper is organized as follows: First, I lay out my genealogical approach to concepts, which is broadly based on that of historical sociologist Margaret Somers and her informing influences, including epistemic reflexivity, relational ontologies, and a Foucauldian-inspired approach to genealogies (e.g., Foucault 1984) and historical epistemologies (Foucault 2002). Second, I develop a historical case study of the concept of father involvement, giving attention to its larger conceptual network, including the concepts of care, breadwinning, and paternal responsibilities. Third, I argue for a conceptual reconfiguration of father involvement, drawing on a small selection of research on fathers and on mothering.

2. Methodology: Genealogies

Although there are many ways to do genealogies, most are loosely influenced by a "Nietzschean/Foucauldian legacy or lineage" (Knauft 2017, p. 1) albeit with a recognition that "readings of Foucault's work have revealed that there is no clearly stated, well-defined or prescribed methodology for investigations" (Reich and Turnbull 2018, p. 13). Genealogical work can be considered "broadly reconcilable with Foucault's" (Kendall and Wickham 1999, p. xii) when it exhibits the following three traits (among others): First, this is the case when genealogical work overlaps with scholarship that is widely defined as "the history of the present" (e.g., Dean 1994; Rose 1999; Scott 1988). Generally speaking, "Foucaultians are not seeking to find out how the present has emerged from the past", but rather "the point is to use history as a way of diagnosing the present" (Kendall and Wickham 1999, p. 4) and "to re-conceptualize the dilemmas of the present, describing the varied pathways that are entangled within the present moment" (Kretsedemas 2017, p. 2). Second, a genealogical methodology aligns with Foucault's when it focuses on contingencies or conditions of possibility rather than on causes, meaning that the emergence of any particular event is thought to be just "one possible result of a whole series of complex relations between other events" (Kendall and Wickham 1999, p. 5). Third, genealogical work is broadly consistent with Foucault's approach when there is a general suspension of judgment.

This last point has proven to be contentious for some scholars, including feminist researchers who draw on Foucault's writing without fully embracing it due to their "reading of Foucault as an antihumanist thinker who refused to engage in normative discussions" and their view that "his theory undermines attempts at social change, because his conception of power obscures the systematic nature of gender oppression" (Deveaux 1994, p. 232). This Foucauldian dimension of genealogical methodologies is also challenged by Somers (2008, p. 22), who is broadly informed by Foucault, yet holds to the view "that the empirical and the normative are mutually interdependent". Somers characterizes her knowledge making practices as a form of *relational and pragmatic realism*, which entails recognizing "the impossibility of an innocent positioning, while striving to achieve a politically-epistemically responsible one" (Code 2006, p. 219). Relational and pragmatic realism is, as Somers (1998, p. 766) puts it, "a minimalist realism" that "presumes that if one is going to be a realist at all—that is, assign mind-independent status to elements of the world—then, by definition (*and humility*), one must be agnostic about the absolute truth of any given theory about the world (emphasis added)" (p. 744). Moreover, this is a vision of knowledge making as negotiated politico-ethico-onto-epistemological entanglements. The questions we pursue, Somers (2008, p. 9) explains, "*are driven by [our] place and concerns in the world*"; they are "inherently ontological (because they) contain a priori decisions about *how we understand the social world to be constituted* (emphasis added)" (Somers 1996, p. 71).

The genealogical approach that I employ in this paper is guided by Somers (2008, p. 209) *historical sociology of concept formation*, which is a "genealogical accounting of conceptual configurations" that approaches concepts by thinking about what they *do*, rather than what they *are*. It views them as "cultural and historical objects" that "lack natures or essences; instead, they have histories, networks, and narratives". I engage in what Hacking (1990, 2002) and Somers (1996) call "taking a look" at the "relational patterns" (Somers 2008, p. 204) of concepts in order to practice what Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 2) describe as "the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts" and of rethinking "revisionary conceptual frames". The overall aim of such an exercise (the beginning of which I take on here) is to gain a "sense of *how we think and why we seem obliged to think in certain ways* (emphasis added)" (Hacking 1990, p. 362, cited in Somers 2008, p. 254) while also figuring out "how to begin the process of unthinking" (Somers 2008, p. 265).

3. Genealogies of Concepts: A Historical Sociology of Concept Formation

In addition to the broad points made above about Foucauldian-inspired genealogies, Somers' genealogical approach to concepts is guided by the wide and deep fields of epistemic reflexivities, historical epistemologies and the historicity of concepts, and relational ontologies and the relationality of concepts. I briefly lay out my reading of Somers' approach below and then apply it broadly to a case study of the concept of the involved father.

3.1. Epistemic Reflexivities and Concepts

Somers (2008, p. 172) notes: "Social scientists in recent years have come increasingly to recognize that the categories and concepts we use to explain the social world can *themselves be fruitfully made the objects of analysis* (emphasis added)". This process of "turning social science back on itself to examine often taken-for-granted conceptual tools of research" (Somers 2008, p. 172) is part of the process of "epistemic reflexivity" (Bourdieu 1993), which refers to a "constant questioning of the categories and techniques of sociological analysis and of the relationship to the world they presuppose" as well as a consideration of the "'epistemological unconscious' and social organization of the discipline and field" (Somers 1992, p. 41).

Epistemic reflexivity also means turning from questions of "what" to questions of "how", "radically shifting the context of discovery (at least initially) from the external world to the cognitive tools by which we analyze this world" (Somers 2008, p. 265). In the projects that inform this paper, the first twenty years of my research focused on questions of *what*—meanings and practices of fathers' (and mothers') caregiving as well as related concepts and practices (i.e., masculinities, gender equality, embodiment, and gendered divisions of labor) (See Doucet 2018). As I attended more and more to epistemic reflexivities, my questions about *what* I was studying became increasingly intra-connected with questions about *how* I was studying. I focused on how our "conceptual vocabularies and categories, our ways of constructing standards of knowledge, our definitions of significant projects, and our methods of justifiable explanations themselves all have histories" (Somers 1998, p. 56). In addition to the potential they illuminate for thinking about conceptual histories and rethinking new possibilities, these points are connected to historical epistemologies: the second dimension of Somers' historical sociology of concept formation.

3.2. Historical Epistemologies and the Historicity of Concepts

Historical epistemologies are a set of philosophical and epistemological ideas about how "successful truth claims are historically contingent rather than confirmations of absolute and unchanging reality" (Somers 2008, p. 267) and how "things we take as self-evident and necessary . . . simply take on the appearance of being the only possible reality" (p. 10). This approach to historical epistemologies is very similar to what Hacking (2002, p. 8) calls "historical ontologies" or "historical meta-epistemology", which are different from conventional understandings of epistemology that are often connected to issues of "knowledge, belief, opinion, objectivity, detachment, argument, reason, rationality, evidence,

even facts and truth". Rather, historical epistemologies are about how objects, including concepts, come into being as "a series of contingent becomings" (Walters 2012, p. 115).

Somers (2008, p. 268) argues that "Understanding how concepts gain and lose their currency and legitimacy is the task of historical epistemology, which entails reconstructing their making, resonance, and connectedness over time". This means looking at the historicity of concepts, recognizing not only how they came into being, but what keeps them in place, and thinking about other conceptual possibilities. Influenced by "the Foucaultian notion of the historically contingent but nonetheless internal integrity of the cultural pattern or logic", this "does not translate into a coordinated, systemic integrity in the larger domain of culture as a whole, which itself is composed numerous, *often competing conceptual networks* (emphasis added)" (Somers 2008, p. 206.) As I take up below, there are always *other* possible conceptual narratives, which lead, in turn, to differently crafted scholarly narratives.

3.3. Relational Ontologies and the Relationality of Concepts

The third part of Somers (1998, p. 767) genealogical approach to concepts addresses their "relational configurations". This aspect builds on Hacking (2002, p. 24) insight that "concepts are 'words in their sites'" in that "all concepts are located and embedded in conceptual networks" (Somers 2008, p. 257). In other words, a particular concept "is not an isolated object but has a relational identity" and the "subject of research should be the entire conceptual network or the relational site, in which it is embedded" (p. 268). This calls for a relational approach because we can only understand an object (including a concept) "within the space of that network" (Somers 1995, p. 235). Put differently, Somers (2008, p. 206) argues that "concepts cannot be defined on their own as single entities, but only deciphered in terms of their 'place' in relation to the other concepts in the web". Her point, informed by relational theories, including relational sociology (Emirbayer 1997), is that "instead of employing a language of categories and attributes, a historical sociology of concept formation *substitutes a language of networks and relationships to support relational thinking* (emphasis added)" (Somers 2008, p. 207).

Somers (2008, p. 109) relational thinking about concepts and how they do not have "essences" but, rather, "histories, narratives, and networks" is very similar to that of Elizabeth Grosz. Drawing on Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari (1994), Grosz (2011) maintains that concepts are not connected to truth claims; they are contingent on their changing landscapes, *and any change affects not just the concept but also the landscape*. Their ontological relationalities are revealed in how

> Each concept produces out of its diverse components a provisional but tightly contained consistency that is both an endoconsistency and an exoconsistency, which regulates its relation with its neighboring, competing, and aligned concepts. This means that even a *slight change* (emphasis added) in the relations of these neighboring concepts begins a process of *producing new concepts* (emphasis added). (Grosz 2011, p. 66)

In the context of this paper, this means we must think about the concept of the involved father as part of a relational network of concepts that includes care, breadwinning, and gender equality. These concepts are themselves constituted within and by historical developments, shifting social institutions, changing ideologies about these concepts and practices, and geo-political processes of capitalism and neoliberalism. As these landscapes and neighboring concepts change, or as concepts are introduced from other sites, new concepts and conceptual configurations can emerge.

4. Father Involvement, Care, Breadwinning, Equality: Genealogies of Concepts

In this section of the paper, I am guided by my reading of Somers' genealogical approach, which explores the historicity and relationality of concepts. Like all narratives, this scholarly narrative is selective because "*genealogy entails active practices of selection* (emphasis added)" as "our questions are always the product of our situated selves" (Somers 2008, p. 9). Although historical mappings must refer to "events, irruptions, discourses, and social practices" that occur within "a particular time space", the mapping process is still, as Dean (1994) argues, "an activity that is irrevocably linked to its

current uses" (cited in Somers 2008, p. 10). My overall aim is to map how concepts are embedded in particular histories and are part of "*a structured web of conceptual relationships*" (Somers 1995, p. 229).

Mapping historical epistemologies entails reading history theoretically and conceptually. For this, I draw on feminist theorist Nancy Fraser's account of the different phases of capitalism and her multilayered analysis of two centuries of earning, caring, gender, and intersectionality. She describes three historical phases that she suggests form "an account of the social contradiction of capitalism", reading "today's 'care deficits' as expressions of capitalism's social contradiction in its current, financialized phase" (Fraser 2016, pp. 100–1). The first phase she describes is "the 19th-century regime of liberal competitive capitalism", which created the gendered ideal of "separate spheres" that divide paid and unpaid work, breadwinning and care (p. 100). I focus mainly on the second and third phases she describes: "The state-managed capitalism of the 20th century" and the "globalizing financialized capitalism of the present era", characterized by the "ideal of the 'two-earner family'" (Fraser 2016, p. 104) and rising inequalities in access to care services and supports.

4.1. "Separate Spheres", the "Family Wage", and Fathers and Breadwinning (Early 20th Century)

According to Fraser (2016, p. 108), this historical phase of state-managed capitalism of the twentieth century was typified by "large-scale industrial production", dual processes of "domestic consumerism in the core" (or the Global North) and "ongoing colonial and postcolonial expropriation in the periphery" (or Global South), and the rise of the social welfare state, which "defused the contradiction between economic production and social reproduction" through social welfare and social protection policies. It also exhibited a widespread valorization of "the heteronormative, male-breadwinner, female-homemaker model of the gendered family" (p. 111). Although historical dates for this period vary between and within nations, many commentators, including Fraser (p. 112), argue that it began in the 1930s (after WWI and during the Depression) and that "By the 1980s, prescient observers could discern the emerging outline of a new regime" partly connected to women's rising rates of employment in the formal economy in many countries in the Global North.

Two central ideas that dominated this historical phase were "separate spheres" and the "family wage". American sociologist Parsons (1967) famously promoted the notion of "complementary spheres" corresponding to distinct gender divisions of labor, with women engaging in unpaid care work in the "private" sphere of the home and men taking on paid work (breadwinning) in "public" workplaces (see also Parsons and Bales 1955).

As with all histories, however, there are always alternative narratives. One is that despite the evidence of distinct gender divisions between breadwinning and caregiving (spatially, ideologically, and in practice), these spheres were in fact not as separate as they appeared: women routinely participated in earning or breadwinning and men were involved in caregiving. Fraser (2016, p. 104) herself notes that while the family wage was a dominant ideal, "relatively few families were permitted to achieve it". In North America and some Europeans countries, historical research demonstrates that in many households, women and mothers, especially racialized women and in low-income families, actively contributed to household economies by intensifying provisioning work inside the home (e.g., taking in boarders, caring for others' children, informally selling homemade clothes or baked goods), by participating in family agriculture and businesses, or by working part-time or full-time outside the home for wages (e.g., Tilly and Scott 1987; Bradbury 1984, 1993; Hill Collins 1986). As for fathers, a small literature on fatherhood histories highlights how fathers were more than breadwinners throughout this phase of state managed capitalism. Sources dating back to the 1930s, including diaries, letters, newspaper accounts, and interviews with fathers all reveal that they were, indeed, involved in varied ways in caring for children (see Griswold 1993; LaRossa 1997).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, several theoretical developments occurred in research on fathering, mothering, and care, and new concepts and conceptual narratives began to take shape. First, the view that domestic labor and care work were indeed "work" entered the scholarly and activist agenda. Instigated mainly by feminist scholars researching mothering and care as well as by

particular strands of feminism (e.g., radical feminism and socialist feminism), scholars began to study the meanings and practices of the daily caregiving and domestic tasks of women, both as forms of work and as subjects worthy of scholarly attention (e.g., Luxton 1980; Oakley 2008). The recognition that women continued to be mainly responsible for all dimensions of care, from infant care to eldercare, inspired conceptual innovations highlighting the intra-connections between care and work, including the notion that mothering is not only an act of love, but also labor (e.g., Graham 1983; Luxton 1980).

Second, an acknowledgement of the conceptual integration of paid work and care work prompted many commentators to argue that all societies and economies rely on women's care labor. Initial versions of the feminist concept of social reproduction, a sister to the concept of care, sought to integrate women's labor into broader Marxist analyses of production and capitalist relations (e.g., Hartmann 1981; Molyneux 1979). For example, an early iteration of the concept of social reproduction was "the domestic labor debate", which began in the late 1960s, mainly in the United Kingdom and North America, about how capitalist production and waged labor were intricately dependent on women's unpaid, unvalued, and invisible labor in the home (e.g., Dalla Costa and James 1973).

Third, the late 1970s saw the burgeoning of a field that came to be called the "ethic of care", largely initiated by Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, (first published as an essay in 1977 and then a book (Gilligan 1993)). It was "one of most influential books of the 1980s", because it "revolutionized discussion of moral theory, feminism [and] theories of the subject" (Hekman 1995, p. 1). Early on, the ethic of care sought to move beyond liberal conceptions of the subject as autonomous and independent towards views of subjects as relational and inter-dependent in order to make women's caregiving practices empirically and theoretically visible and to highlight the transformative power of care as a social ethic for both women and men (e.g., Ruddick 1995; Larrabee 1993; Noddings 1984).

A fourth theoretical development in the 1970s concerned the potential for care to be a social ethic for men and for fathers. Countering Parsons' notion of complementary spheres, early examinations of fathering pointed to the deep social and personal problems that ensue when mothers and fathers adopt gendered and largely separate social and domestic roles. This focus on the social costs of constrictive gender roles was well expressed by leading feminist psychoanalytic scholars, including Dorothy Dinnerstein in her classic, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur (1976)*, and Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering (1978)*. Referring to "sexual arrangements" as the "division of responsibility, opportunity, and privilege that prevails between male and female humans, and the patterns of psychological interdependence that are implicit in this division", Dinnerstein (1976, p. 4) argued that a central "human malaise" thus "stems from a core fact that has so far been universal: the fact of primary female responsibility for the care of infants and young children".

Fathering scholars also picked up on the effects of narrowly prescribed gender roles and the need to study and understand men not only as breadwinners but also as carers of children (e.g., Lamb 1981; Lewis 1986). Socio-economic and demographic changes, such as men's declining wages, increasing male unemployment, sustained growth in women's labor force participation, increasing numbers of two earner families, and changing ideologies associated with men and women's caring and breadwinning activities and identities, all led to an increased interest in reconceptualizing father involvement.

4.2. The "Two Earner Family", Father Involvement, Care, and Breadwinning (Financialized Capitalism of the Present Era)

Fraser (2016, p. 104) argues that "the financialized capitalism of the present era" with its dominant ideal and practices of the "two earner family" is a neoliberal regime that

> Promotes state and corporate disinvestment from social welfare, while recruiting women into the paid workforce—externalizing carework onto families and communities while diminishing their capacity to perform it. The result is a new, dualized organization of social reproduction, commodified for those who can pay for it and privatized for those who cannot, as some in the second category provide carework in return for (low) wages for those in the first.

This new regime is entangled with widened and deepened concepts of care that attend to shifting socio-economic and geo-political geographies of care, as well as to other conceptual and empirical developments.

By the early 1990s, interest in the concept of care had expanded to the point that feminist theorist Alison Jaggar (1991, p. 83) noted that scholarship on the ethic of care had "become a small industry within academia and outside the academy". Care ethics then moved into a "second wave" (Williams 2001) in which theorists attended more closely to overlaps between care and justice, the socio-economic structuring of care, and the socio-political dimensions and effects of how care is performed, delivered, and managed. An even stronger emphasis was placed on how all care work and care research demands a shift from autonomous, liberal conceptions of subjectivities towards relational, inter-dependent notions of human subjectivities (Kittay 1999; Tronto 1993; Sevenhuijsen 1998). More recently, what could be called a "third wave" of care work is attending to transnational and migrational dimensions of care, "global care chains" between the Global South and North, and newly configured patterns of gendered, classed, and racialized dimensions of caregiving and care-receiving (e.g., Boris and Parreñas 2010; Duffy 2011; Mahon and Robinson 2011).

As noted earlier, Somers (2008, p. 268) genealogical approach is informed by insights from the field of historical epistemologies, which aims to understand "how concepts gain and lose their currency and legitimacy" while also "reconstructing their making, resonance, and connectedness over time". As I detail below, connections between care and breadwinning, and how these connections differ across contexts and diversity, have deepened in several ways over the decades.

Looking back to the early 1980s, as women's employment increased in many countries in the Global North, a surge of attention was given to the indivisibility of women's experiences of earning and caring, as evidenced partly in scholarly work that included "women, work, and family" in their titles or as central themes (e.g., Lamphere 1987; Lewis et al. 1988; Zavella 1987). The focus on this indivisibility has deepened in current scholarship. For fathers, on the other hand, research has consistently demonstrated how, overall, men's working lives and earning capacities are more linear, being largely unencumbered by care responsibilities partly or fully taken on by the women in their lives. This state of affairs has led to different scholarly narratives about fathers' working and caring lives. Men have experienced what Connell (2005, p. 79) has aptly called their "patriarchal dividend", while women have borne "motherhood penalties" (Budig et al. 2012), and "care penalties" (Folbre 2001).

Empirical observations about gendered differences in working and caring experiences led to considerable public debate and scholarship throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including on questions of how to define and measure father involvement and its connection to gender equality and child well-being. One of the most comprehensive definitions of father involvement comes from the scholarship of leading fathering scholars (Lamb et al. 1985, p. 884), who envisioned it as a set of three practices that meet children's needs: "*interaction*", meaning a "father's direct contact with his child, through caretaking and shared activities"; "*accessibility*", defined as "being present or accessible to the child"; and "*responsibility*", which refers to "the role fathers take in making sure that the child is taken care of and arranging for resources to be available for the child" (Lamb et al. 1985, p. 884).

Accessibility has, on my reading, received less attention than the other two dimensions: fathering interaction (or what has also been called "engagement" (Lamb 2000)) and paternal responsibilities. Fathering interaction is connected to the expansion of time use studies, which attempt to measure "the father's direct contact with his child, through caretaking and shared activities" (Lamb et al. 1985, p. 884). Indeed, Pleck (2010, p. 63) notes that the relationship between time and father engagement (as part of fathering involvement) came "full circle" as research on time use "and the way that it typically defined and reported father's engagement in the 1980s, contributed to the initial conceptualization of engagement as fathers' total time spent with his children or a particular child".

The description of paternal responsibility provided above seems to be implicitly connected to breadwinning in its focus on arranging resources and ensuring children's care. Yet, the broader description of this dimension, both in the original article (Lamb et al. 1985) and in subsequent work

(e.g., Lamb 2000), plays down the breadwinning dimensions and focuses instead on wider sets of responsibilities that are more about planning and scheduling; these include, for example, "arranging for babysitters, making appointments with pediatricians and seeing that the child is taken to them, determining when the child needs new clothes, etc." (Lamb et al. 1985, p. 884). This research on paternal responsibilities did not include breadwinning because in the 1980s, scholars had "yet to consider paternal behavior in (a) more comprehensive fashion" (Lamb et al. 1985, p. 884) and although financial provisioning "is obviously a precondition for providing goods and services to the child", breadwinning was excluded because "earning income does not automatically translate to it *being spent on the child* (emphasis added)" (Pleck 2010, p. 86).

Feminist scholars also veered away from including breadwinning as part of fathering involvement. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2000, p. 87) puts it so well:

> Men are often said to be "taking care of their family" when they earn and bring money into the household. Despite the use of the term *care* in this phrase, breadwinning would not be considered "caring". In fact, economic support has historically been seen as men's contribution in lieu of actual care giving; simultaneously, care giving has been viewed as women's responsibility, an exchange for being supported by the primary breadwinner.

Although these early cautions about the complexities of including breadwinning as part of father involvement and paternal responsibilities do make sense in light of their conceptual "histories, networks and narratives", new contexts and conceptual developments provide opportunities to explore and reconsider concepts, such as a concept of father involvement that includes the parental responsibility of providing for children. Indeed, on my reading, one of the most significant developments in care concepts during this present stage of financialized capitalism, with its growing socio-economic inequalities, is that connections between care work and paid work and between earning and caring have deepened. These developments are part of new theoretical iterations, including a field called "care economies", developed by international feminist scholars and advocated by organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), which now fuses care and work concepts into an "unpaid care work–paid work–paid care work circle" (Addati et al. 2018, p. 10). I believe that these conceptual shifts call for researchers to think, again, about the utility and implications of widening the concept of father involvement to include breadwinning. In the next section of this paper, I highlight some of the scholarly literatures that have helped to create new conceptual narratives that support this move.

5. Revisioned Conceptual Narratives

Grosz (2011, p. 79) writes that "each concept has borders and edges that link it up and evolve it with other concepts". Below, I attempt to draw attention to some of these "borders and edges" and to make a case for revisioned conceptual narratives that challenge the enduring oppositional binaries of care and breadwinning that underpin research on father involvement.

5.1. Widening Father Involvement: Paternal Responsibilities and Indirect Care

Joseph Pleck (2010) recently amended the highly cited conceptualization of father involvement as engagement, accessibility, and responsibilities (Lamb et al. 1985) that he helped to define by extending the meaning and scope of the practices originally envisioned over thirty years ago. He now includes the "fostering of community connections" as "process responsibility", which refers to ensuring that needs are met (Pleck 2010, p. 67). Although Pleck does not explicitly reference ethics of care scholars, overlaps with Sara Ruddick (Ruddick 1995, p. 22) earlier approach to parental responsibilities as a set of processes and practices involving "preservation, growth and social acceptability" are apparent. Pleck's recent reflections also resonate with Joan Tronto (2013, pp. 22–3) writing on "processes of care" as a series of interconnected practices that are "nested" together: caring about someone's unmet needs, caring for these needs, caregiving or making sure the care work is done, and care-receiving or assessing the effectiveness of care acts.

I am especially interested in how, in widening this definition of father involvement and, specifically, its component of paternal responsibility, Pleck (2010, p. 67) focuses on "*material* indirect care", which, as per its initial formulation, still includes arranging goods and services for the child, but also "purchasing" these goods and services. Pleck (2010, p. 88) acknowledges that although the key focus of fathering research should remain the initial "primary components of paternal involvement" (e.g., engagement, accessibility, and responsibility), "much more study is needed of indirect care", including material care (e.g., breadwinning), mainly because parents' capacity to financially provide for their children "may also benefit child development". He writes: "Whether construed as an aspect of paternal involvement or not, more research on fathers' breadwinning and how it influences developmental outcomes is also needed" (p. 88).

A similar point is made by researchers who study the lives of marginalized or vulnerable fathers. Ethnographic research and interviews that address fathers who fit one or more of the categories low-income, non-residential, and young fathers, highlight how father involvement includes both provisioning or breadwinning and emotional involvement. As Katheryn Edin and Timothy Nelson (Edin and Nelson 2013, p. 7) write from their seven-year research with "disadvantaged fathers" in "America's inner cities" (p. 7): "These fathers now want roles more like conventional mothers' roles" (p. 223). But they also point to what others have called a "paradox of a pattern of involved fatherhood emerging alongside a retreat from family commitment" (Waller 2002, p. 41; see also Gerson 1993), including breadwinning. According to Edin and Nelson (2013, p. 223):

> Meanwhile, mothers have been forced by sheer necessity to take on more of the traditional father's tasks. A cynical interpretation of this attempted role swap is that it excuses the men from financial and moral responsibility—that they're trying to claim a poor man's version of the Disneyland Dad, one that reduces a father to a buddy while skipping the harder tasks of providing financially and setting a good example.

Edin and Nelson (2013, p. 223) also point to the differences in their research study between fathers who live with the mothers of their children, where "live-in fathers look much more like their middle-class counterparts—combining breadwinning with nurturing" whereas men who lived apart from their partners "couldn't flee, or even try to flee, from the breadwinner role and attempt to 'elect' instead to invest in relational fathering".

Overall, a focus on father involvement as defined only by caregiving and care time ignores broader structural constraints within which fathering (and mothering) occur, including those linked to an increasingly precarious labor market. Father involvement will not be fully realized until workplace structures and state policies support men and women in their roles and identities as both caregivers and financial providers (see Fraser 1994a, 1994b; Williams 2010). If policies and public discourses that support men's caregiving are needed, then policies and public discourses that support men's breadwinning—so that they can both provide for and care for their children—are also needed. As Fraser (2016, p. 117) writes, there is a "demand for a massive reorganization of the relation between production and reproduction: for social arrangements that could enable people of every class, gender, sexuality, and color to combine social-reproductive activities with safe, interesting and well-remunerated work".

5.2. Provisioning

Another way of thinking about the connections between care and breadwinning is illustrated in the concept of provisioning, defined as "all the work women do to provide for themselves and others—whether paid or unpaid in the market, home, or community spheres" and "the daily work performed to acquire material and intangible resources for meeting responsibilities that ensure the survival and well-being of people" (Neysmith et al. 2010, p. 152). The concept builds on the interventions of feminist economists who have studied the many forms that unpaid care work and paid employment take in the lives of women in the Global North and South (e.g., Barker 2005; Power 2004;

Taylor 2004)—researchers who have sought to avoid being "impeded by conceptual barriers of public and private spheres that interrupt and thus hide the extent of the work" (Neysmith et al. 2010, p. 164). Provisioning includes "recognized provisioning activities" (e.g., formal and informal labor market activities, domestic labor and caring activities, and formal and informal volunteer commitments in the community), "invisible provisioning activities" (e.g., activities focused on sustaining and advocating for the health of oneself and significant others and looking for and applying for "financial assistance and other resources), and "ensuring safety" for oneself and one's children (i.e., "finding safe housing and dealing with violence against themselves and others") (p. 156).

The concept of provisioning resonates with the metaphor of weaving paid work and care work, which highlights how concepts, practices, and identities are not only connected, but deeply intra-connected for many mothers, especially those in "Native America, Latino, Asian American, and African American families and communities" (Hill Collins 1994, p. 374). Referring specifically to African American women, Hill Collins (2000, p. 71) notes that provisioning is less an issue of "achieving economic parity with their Black male counterparts and more one of securing an adequate overall family income". This echoes other feminist scholarship on motherhood that argues that for many women, caring and earning are not "opposed categories", but are unfolding in constant relationship with one another in "changing patterns over the life course" (Garey 1999, p. 164).

The metaphor of weaving care and earning has been taken up by cross-cultural researchers since the 1980s. Whether they are referring to breadwinning, earning, or provisioning, feminist scholars have argued that just as care *is* work, financial provisioning is intricately interwoven with care. Hill Collins (1994, p. 372) expressed this eloquently when she wrote: "examining racial ethnic women's experiences reveals how these two spheres" of paid work and family are not only connected but *"actually are interwoven* (emphasis added)". In a similar way, Garey (1999, p. 191) wrote that women's care and employment practices and identities are "not independent categories—they are overlapping, connected, interwoven" (see also Balbo 1987; Davies 1990).

These two conceptual moves—to see breadwinning as a form of material indirect care and to envision provisioning as the weaving of care and earning—both enrich and widen the concept of father involvement in a way that resonates with research on the diverse contexts and experiences of mothering and fathering. These new conceptual narratives lead, in turn, to different relational configurations of inter-woven concepts of father involvement, care, and breadwinning.

The genealogical work of un-making and re-making concepts of father involvement, care, and earning can also reconfigure our notions of human subjectivity. Rather than viewing humans as workers *or* as earners (a distinction lodged in concepts like the stay-at-home father/mother (Doucet 2016)), we might view humans as needing to provide and be provided for, to care and be cared for at varied points across the life course. This perspective acknowledges the "secondary dependence in those who care for dependents" (Kittay 1995, p. 11) and the critical role of resources, services, and policies (such as childcare and employment leave policies and social protections for parents) for sustaining the provisioning activities needed to support caregivers and the work of caring. As Fraser (1997, p. 61) argued in the late 1990s, "deconstructing the opposition between breadwinning and caregiving" leads to theorizing and designing policies "for people whose lives include breadwinning *and* caregiving (emphasis added)" (Fraser 1994b, p. 85). This could also inspire a more sustained and convincing socio-political argument for high quality childcare services and state and employer social protection policies that allow people to care *and* to financially provide for that care.

6. Conclusions

This paper has undertaken a genealogy of the concept of "father involvement", guided by Somers' historical sociology of concept formation and wide and deep literatures on Foucauldian genealogies, epistemic reflexivities, historical epistemologies, and relational ontologies. Genealogical work brings attention to the taken-for-granted concepts and categories that we use in our research, their histories, and their relationalities in wider conceptual webs. I have thus explored the concept of father involvement

as a cultural and historical object embedded in my reading of particular "histories, networks, and narratives" (Somers 2008, p. 209) with the aim of un-thinking and re-thinking conceptual possibilities that might lead to expanded knowledges about fathering and care-breadwinning entanglements. This genealogical exercise brings attention to how the concept of father involvement has developed within oppositional binaries of care and breadwinning, rather than through an acknowledgement of the relationality of these concepts. There are sound historical and socio-cultural reasons for this. Father involvement, particularly in mother/father households, has often been synonymous with breadwinning, and most social institutions still consider fathers to be secondary caregivers and treat them accordingly. Although I am cognizant of these lingering narratives about fathering, my main argument, with one caveat, is that breadwinning is conceptually intra-*connected* with care, and can, *in some contexts*, be regarded *as a form* of material indirect care.

The caveat that I cautiously laid out earlier partly explains my many abandoned attempts to write this paper (starting a decade ago as I was analyzing my research interviews with breadwinning mothers). I began this inquiry by asking: If mothers' caring and breadwinning are conceptualized as relationalities, why are father involvement and breadwinning so often approached as oppositional binaries? It is one thing to make arguments, now well supported across several feminist fields, about the intra-connections between mothers' care and breadwinning, but it is another thing altogether to make this same argument about fathers. To point out the relationality of care and breadwinning in fathering poses theoretical and political risks. Its unintended effects could include, for example, a return to a "separate spheres" ideology that genders caring and breadwinning, or the strengthening of still deeply entrenched social and structural gendered inequalities in paid and unpaid work, which have everyday and long-term consequences. I thus reiterate in concluding this paper, that the inclusion of provisioning *as part of* father involvement must attend to the complex relationality, historicity, and ethico-political character of concepts, conceptual narratives, and their wider "relational configurations" (Somers 1998, p. 767). As concepts are "words in their sites" (Hacking 2002, p. 24), my argument for a revisioned concept of father involvement thus requires a close examination, not only of the concept itself, but of its articulations within wider sites, including "the entire conceptual network or the relational site, in which it is embedded" (Somers 2008, p. 268).

This work is more than an academic exercise. Revisioning concepts opens up new ways of thinking and acting. This is because concepts are *performative* in that they not only "describe social life" but "are also active forces shaping it" (Fraser and Gordon 1994, p. 310). Concepts that connect or entangle caring and breadwinning recognize that people are care providers, care receivers, financial providers, and financial receivers in varied and multiple ways across time. Widening our concepts of care and earning can shift our understandings of human subjectivity as relational and intra-dependent, with inevitable periods of dependency and vulnerability across the life course. This also draws attention to how policies, resources, and services that adequately support *all* parents in their roles as caregivers and income earners are essential for the sustenance, growth, and well-being of families and communities.

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